Americaâ??s 250th Series: George Washington â?? Surveyor, The Early Years

Description

Article by Julie Ann Rutledge

Looking back on Americaâ??s 250th Anniversary, we embrace the opportunity to understand the leaders who helped to mold our country. Hindsight offers us an opportunity to review how their life experiences influenced their leadership approach. George Washington, who was born on February 22, 1732, and lived until December 14, 1799, is prominently known as the commander and leader of the Continental Army who led Patriot forces to victory in the American Revolutionary War against the British Army. He is commonly referred to as a Founding Father and was the first President of the United States, serving from 1789 until 1797.

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George Washington was born in 1732 in Westmoreland County, Virginia, British America and lived there until age 3. Today his homeplace is memorialized by The George Washington Birthplace National Monument governed by the National Park Service, which sits on approximately 661.7 Acres and is located at the convergence of the Popes Creek and the Potomac River.

â??Built to commemorate the birthplace of First President George Washington, the monument was placed in 1896 by the U.S. War Department at the then believed location of his birthhouse. It was moved to its current location at the entrance to the park in 1931. The album includes images from the old location and todayâ??s site.â?• https://www.nps.gov/gewa/learn/photosmultimedia/photo-gallery-of-the-birthplace-monument.htm

Photo of George Washingtonâ??s home at Popes Creek also referred to as Wakefield:

Members of the Wakefield Association pose before the Memorial House at the newly created George Washington Birthplace National Monument in the 1930sâ?•.
https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/view.htm?id=26DB3D06-1DD8-B71B-0B7A-C06144651808

George Washingtonâ??s father was Augustine Washington (1694-1743), who had four children with his first wife Jane Butler, who died in November 1729. Augustine married his second wife Mary Ball Washington (1708-1789) on March 6, 1731, and together they had 6 children, with George Washington being their eldest. His father was a Virginia planter, slave owner, iron mine speculator, and merchant who lived with his family on Popes Creek at the convergence with the Potomac River in Westmoreland County, Virginia, British America. In 1735 the family moved to Little Hunting Creek, which was renamed Mount Vernon. Then he later moved his family in 1738 to a Plantation located in Stafford County, Virginia, which the Washingtons referred to as their Home House or Home Farm on the northern side of the Rappahannock River across from Fredericksburg City, Virginia. Augustine Washington died April 12, 1743, leaving the Home Farm to George as the third son at the age of eleven. Mary Ball Washington was a strong and independent woman, who raised her children and managed the family farm on her own.

Delving deeper into the upbringing and lifetime of George Washington, we find that many factors played a role in developing his leadership style. Although Georgeâ??s two older half-brothers were more formally educated in England, he had an informal education comprised of tutoring, primarily taking place in Fredericksburg. As the third son of his father, Augustine Washington, George needed to find a means in which to support himself. George had a particular interest in math, with a focus in geometry and trigonometry. His education later developed into a career with a profession as a skilled surveyor beginning at the early age of 16. At this point in time, the surveying profession was a well-respected and lucrative career and becoming a surveyor was thought to be a great accomplishment. Surveyors were responsible for determining the legal boundaries of property and carving off parcels, which would later be claimed by European settlers moving into Colonial Virginia. Early in 1748, having completed only a small number of surveys, Washington was asked to join a survey group with his neighbor George William Fairfax to survey lots in the Western portions in the Northern Neck of Virginia. He joined Fairfax and a county surveyor on a month-long surveying expedition west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

CITATION: â??George Washingtonâ??s Professional Surveys,â?• *Founders Online,* National Archives: https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0004

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In 1748, his early years as a surveyor, George Washington at age 16 assisted the Deputy Fairfax County surveyor John West, Jr., in surveying Belhaven, containing approximately 51.95 acres, near the Washington home of Mount Vernon. Then in 1749, he drew the survey map of the Belhaven Plan containing 84 Lots, now known as the Town of Alexandria.

Washington, G. (1748) Plat of the land where on stands the town of Alexandria. [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/99466767/.

https://www.mountvernon.org/preservation/maps/a-plan-of-alexandria-now-belhaven

Georgeâ??s professional career began in 1749 when he received a commission from the College of William and Mary to become the official surveyor for newly formed Culpeper County, and began using the designation after his name on his survey maps, SCC (Surveyor of Culpeper County). On November 1, 1749, George Washington completed this survey for Edward Hogan of 330 acres on the Cacapon River in Augusta County, Virginia, now being a part of West Virginia.

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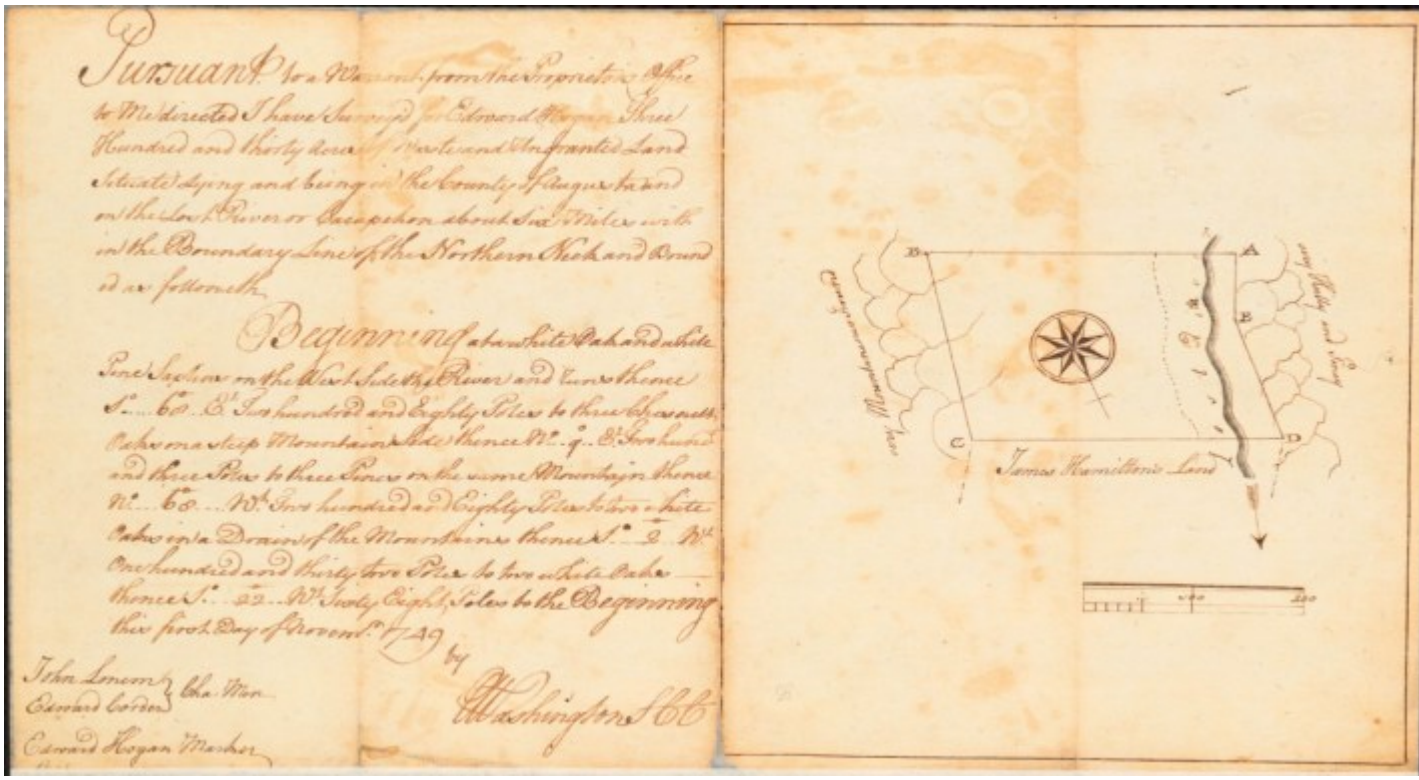
CITATION: â??George Washinton, Augusta County Land Survey, 1749â?• Library of Virginia, lva.virginia.gov/

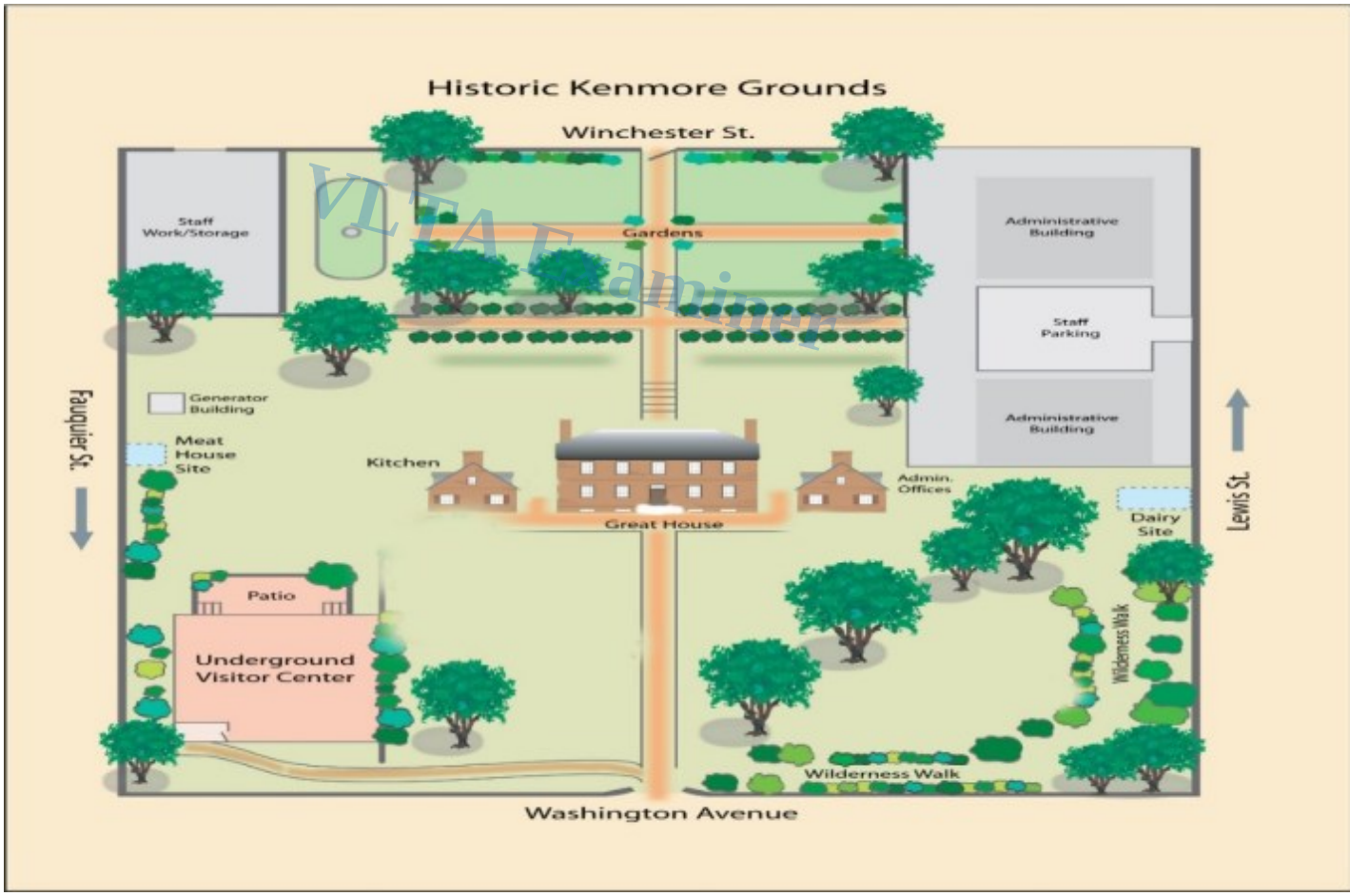


CITATION: Survey of 330 Acres in Augusta County for Edward Hogan, 1 November 1749, George Washington (1732â??1799), Northern Neck Surveys, Land Office Records, Record Group 4, Library of

Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Between 1750 and 1752, he continued to survey land near the western area of Lord Fairfaxâ??s Northern Neck Proprietary. As a surveyor, Washington earned a reputation of trustworthiness and dependability. In 1752 George surveyed an 861 Acre parcel out of a 1300 Acre tract for his brother-in-law Fielding Lewis and sister Betty Washington Lewis in Fredericksburg. Fielding and Betty Lewis approved the survey map by George, and later bought the 861 Acre parcel, and built what is now known as the Historic Kenmore Mansion.

For more information on Historic Kenmore visit the website: https://kenmore.org/visit-historic-kenmore/ and https://kenmore.org/



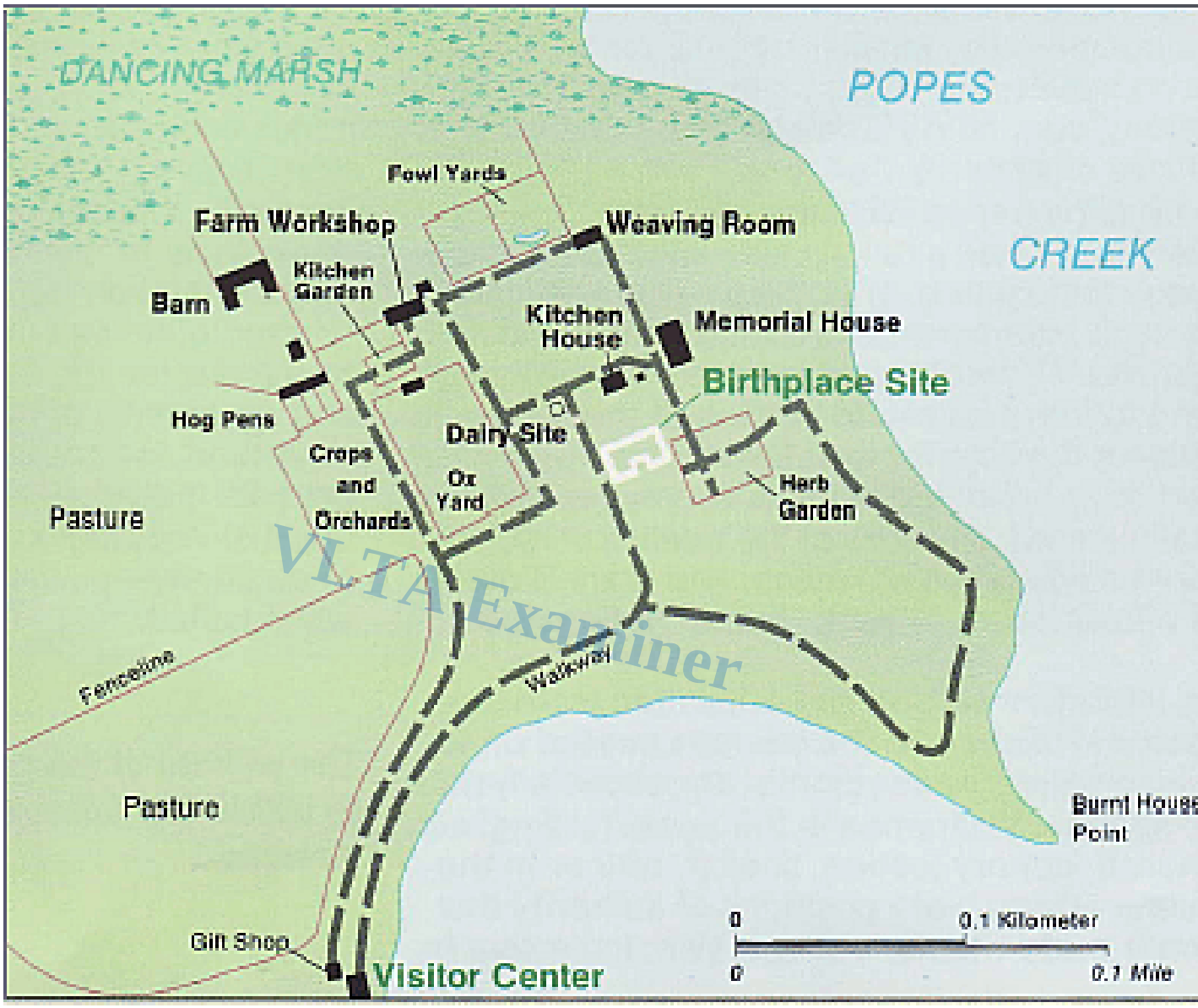
https://kenmore.org/visit-historic-kenmore/

By 1752, George Washington had completed over 200 surveys, only 75 of which are known to exist today. He later ended his surveying career to purchase a commission for a military appointment as adjunct for Southern Virginia. His education was later supplemented with practical experience when George surveyed his family property at Mount Vernon in the late 1740â??s and he continued surveying his family home in Mount Vernon until his death in 1799. Along with surveying lands in Virginia and West Virginia, George Washington was able to acquire properties containing over 60,000 Acres between the Potomac and Ohio Rivers.

While doing research for this article, my findings revealed three significant home places of George Washington and his family in Virginia during his lifetime:

- His birthplace at Popes Creek from 1732 to 1735, now designated as The George Washington Birthplace National Monument

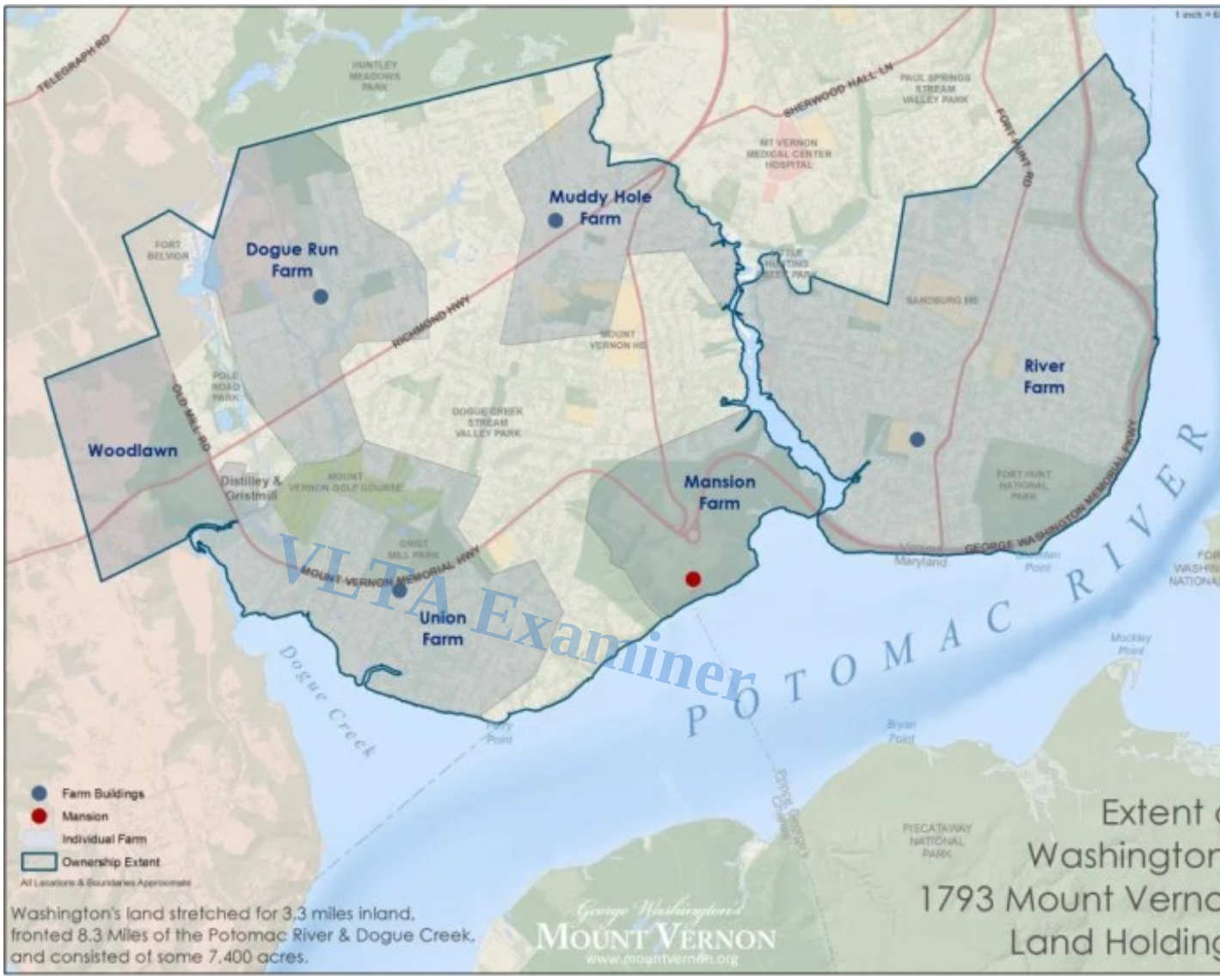
CITATION: http://www.mountvernon..org/birthplace/



National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior â?? Visitorsâ?? brochure, w:National Park Service
Map of **w:George Washington Birthplace National Monument**, w:Westmoreland County, Virginia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_Birthplace_National_Monument#/media/File:Geo_Wash

- Little Hunting Creek, which was later renamed as Mount Vernon, was the Washington family homestead from 1735 to 1738.

CITATION: George Washingtonâ??s Mount Vernon Surveying: https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/washingtons-youth/surveying



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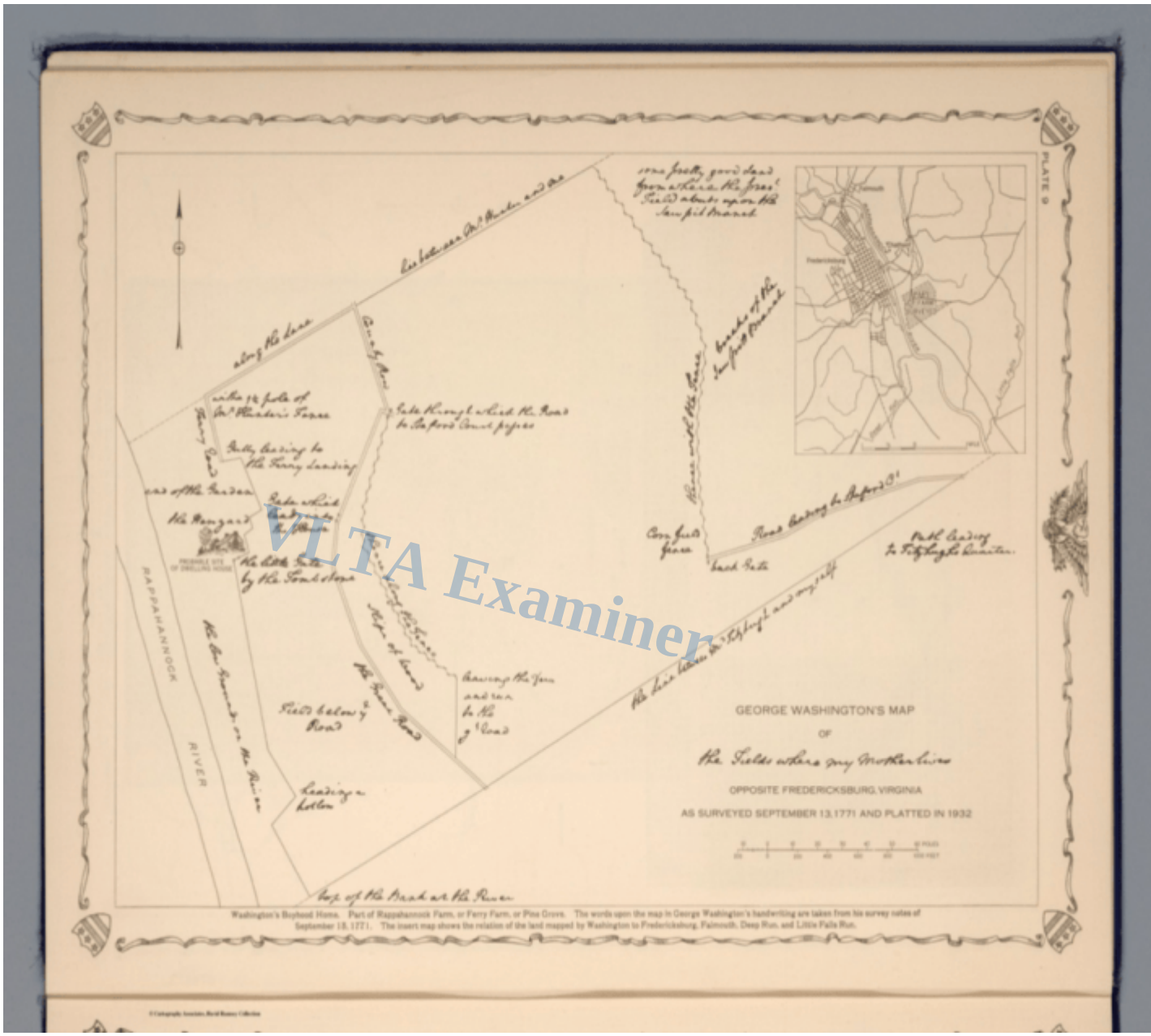
This map shows the historic boundaries of George Washingtonâ??s five farms at Mount Vernon superimposed over todayâ??s modern landscape.
https://www.mountvernon.org/preservation/maps/extent-of-washington-s-1793-mount-vernon-land-holdings

George Washington Survey Map of Mount Vernon in 1793:

A map of U.S. President George Washingtonâ??s Mount Vernon estate from a drawing transmitted by the General. Published in 1801. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division/99466780

- Ferry Farm Plantation, also referred to as Pine Grove, Stafford, Virginia:
  The plantation which the Washington family referred to as the Home Farm, also as the Washington Farm, where they lived from 1738 to 1754, is located on the north side of the Rappahannock River. Today this is known as Ferry Farm, also referred to as Pine Grove, and designated as *George Washingtonâ??s Boyhood Home* in Stafford County, Virginia, and was granted historic designations and protections in 2000 as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) and a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Extensive archaeological investigations began in 2002. It is interesting to note that the name Ferry Farm, derived from the necessary use of a Ferry in order to cross the Rappahannock River to visit the City of Fredericksburg. CITATION: https://kenmore.org/visit-george-washingtons-ferry-farm/

Survey Map of Ferry Farm Plantation in 1771 by George Washington:



George Washingtonâ??s Map of the â??Fields Where My Mother Livesâ?• surveyed 9/13/1771, and platted 1932. https://archive.org/details/dr_george-washingtons-map-of-opposite-fredericksburg-virginia-as-surveyed-s-0465013

As a Title Examiner in Fredericksburg and the surrounding areas, driving from Courthouse to Courthouse, it is commonplace to see signs identifying George Washingtonâ??s homes and the places that he lived. In fact, we often overlook the amount of history we are actually surrounded by while living and working in Virginia. For instance, in Stafford, bordering Fredericksburg, we find what is known today as Ferry Farm, now designated as *George Washingtonâ??s Boyhood Home*. Over the years as an examiner, sifting through the many land record documents and plats, I have come across Deeds by the Washington family, but I have not come across survey maps prepared by George Washington. Researching George Washingtonâ??s early years as a Surveyor for this article has been an eye-opening experience.

For a list of surveys prepared by George Washington visit the National Archives at: https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0004

While doing research for this article, I learned so much about George Washingtonâ??s early years. George Washington was more than just a Founding Father and 1st President; his life was made up of many valuable experiences that contributed to his leadership style. George Washingtonâ??s early years of experience and travel as a Surveyor in Virginia gave him an appreciation for the land and the value of property ownership. Additionally, his time spent as a Surveyor forged him a strong reputation built on the characteristics of fairness, honesty, and dependability, which are traits he carried forward throughout his life. Later as a Commander, soldiers admired his willingness to expose himself to danger and lead by example. As a Founding Father, George Washington presided over the 1787 Constitutional Convention. As the 1st President of the United States of America, he set the precedent of stepping down after two terms with the peaceful transfer of power. In George Washingtonâ??s farewell address in 1796, he left us with what is now a famous quote:

â??I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is the best policyâ?•

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Julie Ann Rutledge is President and owner of Land Title Research Inc. in Stafford County, Virginia, and is a graduate of James Madison University. Julie held a Title Insurance Agent License for 18 years, and currently holds the VLTA VCTE Certification designation.

Julie Ann Rutledge served on the VLTA Board of Directors as VLTA Past President 2021-2022. She has been a member of the VLTA Board of Directors since 2015, has served as the Director/Editor of the VLTA *Examiner* Magazine, and has been a member and volunteer of the VLTA since 1996. She has served on the VLTA *Examiner* Magazine Editorial Board since 1997.

Julie Ann Rutledge was appointed to the Stafford County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) in 1992, serving through 2006 and was elected as Chairman of the Stafford County BZA for three terms. She graduated from the Virginia Board of Zoning Appeals Certification Program conducted by VA Tech in 2000. After graduating, Julie was called upon to be an assistant instructor for the Virginia Board of Zoning Appeals Certification Program.

In August 2012, Julie developed the VLTA Virginia Certified Title Examiner (VCTE) Classroom Course serving as the instructor, and then went on to develop the VLTA VCTE Online Course, which was launched in 2016 and ran through March 2022.

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