

***GEORGE  
WASHINGTON***



***THE MEMOIRS  
OF GEORGE  
WASHINGTON***

**George Washington**

# **The Memoirs of George Washington**

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# Table of Contents

## **Journal of My Journey Over the Mountains**

Preface

Introduction

Journal

A Book of Survey's

## **The Journal of Major George Washington: Sent by the Hon. Robert Dinwiddie to the Commandant of the French Forces in Ohio**

Advertisement

The Journal

Copy of His Honour the Governor's Letter to the Commandant of the French Forces on the Ohio, Sent by Major Washington

Translation of a Letter From Mr. Legardeur De St. Piere, a Principal French Officer, in Answer to the Governor's Letter

# Journal of My Journey Over the Mountains

[Table of Contents](#)

[Preface](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Journal](#)

[A Book of Survey's](#)

## **Preface**

### [Table of Contents](#)

Washington's Journal here given to the public, if we except his version of the "Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation," is the earliest literary effort of this, the most admirable character in all history. The editor has long been engaged in collecting accurate copies of all the obtainable writings of this great man. Wherever it has been found practicable to examine and critically compare even his generally accepted writings with the originals, it has been, or will be done to secure a copy of exact and verified conformity, in every particular, with the text as it left the hand of the writer.

It is a well-known fact that editors have taken great liberties with Washington's writings, not for the purpose of falsifying history, or aspersing his character, but from a variety of reasons, often to suppress caustic expressions, or to substitute a more euphonious word to give to his sentences a fine, rhetorical finish. Such editorial dressing, even where the motive is well intended, is vicious in principle and liable to abuse; and, in the case of Washington's writings, is neither justifiable nor desirable. The time has come when the people want to know intimately and without glamour or false coloring, the father of his country as he actually lived and labored, and to possess his writings, just as he left them, on every subject which engaged his attention. It is the purpose of the editor to prepare a complete collection of all the writings of George Washington, from his youth to the close of his eventful life, with that literal exactness as to text which can only be assured by the careful efforts of an experienced copyist and

expert proof reader having access to and comparing in every possible case the copies with the originals. This initial Diary of Washington opens with his sixteenth year, and plainly shows the energy and the maturity of his judgment, and his capability to discharge even then important trusts with efficiency.

Forthcoming volumes will give, in chronological order, his co-operation in the march of events on this continent, and his life and opinions as seen through the writings he left. This volume must be viewed as the work of a youth, making a few, brief and hurried memoranda while in the depths of the forest and intended for no eye but his own. The time is not far distant when an edition of Washington's more important papers will be called for in facsimile by some one of the photogravure processes now available for such purposes, because of the unquestionable fidelity to the original it secures and which is approximately arrived at in this publication.

This is the first systematic attempt to produce the writings of Washington with literal exactness as to abbreviations, the use of capitals, punctuation, spelling, etc. It is possible that the plan pursued may not, at first, meet with an unqualified commendation from the public. But if the editor does not much mistake the desire of students, the admirers of Washington and the demand of historians, this method, if faithfully executed, must produce the preferred edition of his writings.

A few miscellaneous pieces in Washington's youthful handwriting are preserved in this Journal, and are here printed with the same effort for literal accuracy which has been bestowed upon the Journal itself, and upon his field notes of land surveys.

# **Introduction**

## [Table of Contents](#)

This journal of George Washington, now for the first time printed entire and with literal exactness, was begun, as shown by the date in the opening lines, when he was but one month over sixteen years of age. It is his own daily record of observations during his first remunerated employment. His proficiency as a surveyor, and his fortitude in encountering the hardships of the forest in this expedition were, considering his age, truly remarkable. With him the beginning determined the end. Biographers have made us acquainted with the character of his worthy parents, and with the sturdy stock from which they were descended. It does seem as though Providence called our Washington into being, and educated him in the western world just at the time when a great leader was wanted to direct a revolution, and to found on this continent a new and a free, English-speaking nation. Every factor, whether of lineage or culture, in the admirably balanced character of Washington, as well as every aspiration of his heart, from his cradle to his grave, is of high interest to the world. Although deprived of a father's care at the age of eleven years, he was, however, especially blessed in having such a mother as the noble Mary Washington, who conscientiously discharged her sacred duty as his guardian, counselor and friend. Hence filial reverence grew with his growth and strengthened with his maturing years into fixed principles, making him throughout all his eventful life loyal to every virtue and heroic in every trust.

When George Washington set out on the enterprise herein narrated, he was just out of school, where he had

received the best education the neighborhood could supply, supplemented with good private instruction. We may well believe that his mother and his brothers then supposed that George had attained an age and proficiency when he should either go to college to acquire a higher education, or embark speedily in some respectable calling; and we may further conclude that this precocious youth was eager to take part in the affairs of life, and deferentially announced his preference for the latter course. Possibly he was influenced in this selection by his great admiration for his half-brother, Major Lawrence Washington, who was actively and prosperously engaged in various business enterprises, who made much of George, and had him visit Mount Vernon whenever it was practicable.

George Washington's aptitude for mathematics early attracted the attention of his teachers, and his beautifully kept copy-books, which are still preserved, attest his unusual ability in mathematical demonstration and diagrams. Mr. Williams, the principal of the Academy in Westmoreland county, Va., where young Washington was, to give a practical value to this mathematical talent, had added surveying and navigation to his other studies; and these were soon mastered by this bright pupil. Land surveying was then a profitable and genteel pursuit in the colonies, and it comported well with Washington's tastes and inclinations. While visiting his brother at Mount Vernon, he had repeatedly amused himself and entertained guests of the house by surveying, in their presence, the garden, or a field, and rapidly drawing plats of them as an exercise. A few maps of such early surveys have been preserved. One of them, of Lawrence Washington's turnip field, bearing date 27 Feb., 1747-8, is reproduced in fac-simile in this publication. The others are without date, but are of about the same period; although one, namely that of "Hell Hole," a part of the Mount Vernon estate, and frequently mentioned



in Washington's later diaries, may have been an earlier production. A fac-simile of it may also be found in this work.

Washington's efficiency and enthusiasm as a surveyor were observed and admired not only by his friend and companion, George William Fairfax, but also by the Hon. Wm. Fairfax and by Lord Fairfax, who were constantly employing surveyors to lay off lands for sale in the latter's large domain known as "The Northern Neck" of Virginia. During the early spring of 1748 the demands for surveys were more than usually pressing by actual settlers in the Shenandoah valley. Lord Fairfax engaged the youth, George Washington, to proceed with George William Fairfax, his agent, as recorded in this journal, to execute certain commissions and meet a pressing demand. His surveys and reports gave entire satisfaction and led to his steady employment by his titled patron, principally as a director of his lordship's land office and of the surveys, preparatory to sale. Washington filled this position for about three years, when he was called upon to accompany his brother Lawrence, who, from failing health, was constrained, in the fall of 1751, to visit the West Indies in the hope of finding relief.

The journal kept by George Washington during his visit to Barbadoes in company with his brother, will be given in a separate work soon to be issued in its chronological order by the editor. The journal here presented to the public is, in the main, confined to Washington's daily entries, memoranda and field notes of surveys of land situated between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghany mountains.

Unfortunately the records of his surveys are not consecutive, and it is quite evident that they represent but a part, and probably but a small part, of the land surveyed by Washington for Lord Fairfax and others. The notes of surveys here published are all that can be found or that are now known to exist. It is to be hoped, however, that if other books of his field notes of surveys have escaped

destruction, they may yet be discovered. This hope is encouraged from the fact that the laws of the colony required surveyors, upon retiring from their official stations as county surveyors, to deposit their field books of notes of surveys with the records of the county. How far this law was complied with, the editor is unable to say. It is a mistake, however, to infer that Washington was constantly employed in actually running lines and taking field notes. He was largely charged with the supervision of Lord Fairfax's land office, and the records thereto belonging, and was his principal adviser in his land surveys, directing the men employed in the field work.

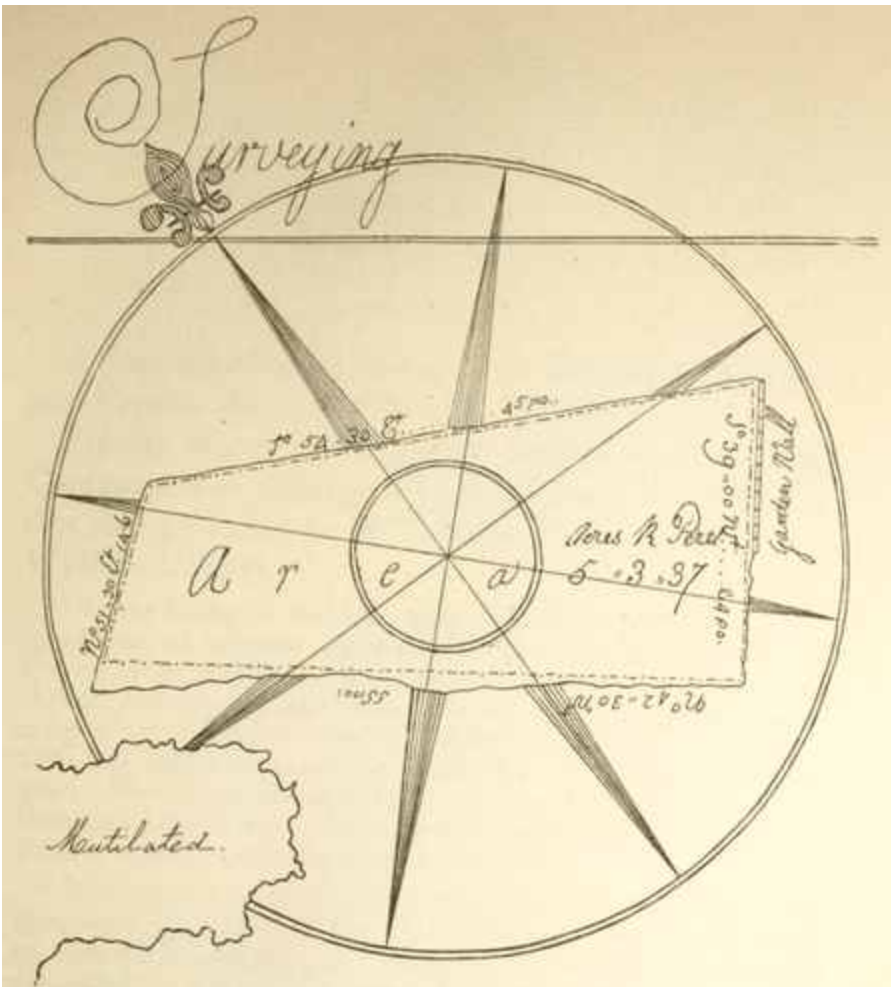
This journal, with its memoranda and surveys, makes a valuable addition to our knowledge of the life and employments of Washington in his youth. Here are also preserved the names of nearly three hundred of the early settlers and first land owners in the great valley of Virginia, for whom Washington made surveys, or who assisted him in this business.

It was a cherished hope of the editor that he might be able to give, in notes, brief sketches of the pioneers in the valley here named, through the assistance of their descendants, who, in many instances, reside upon lands surveyed by Washington for their ancestors. In this, however, he has been disappointed.

The journal, memoranda and surveys found in these books have all been copied with literal exactness and are here printed just as they were recorded by the hand of their author. This literalness is adhered to in the interest of truth and for the benefit of earnest students of history unable to consult personally the originals. Washington requires no apology for any apparent want of style or other marks of hasty composition in this journal. It was written in the nature of a memorandum intended for himself alone. His thoughts, even in these youthful productions, flow easily and in an orderly and consecutive manner. His sentences are never

involved or obscure, and his observations are always apt and instructive; and, although a youth in years when this journal was written, he was dealing ably with important interests, and deporting himself in a manly manner, and associating on terms of intimacy with the foremost men of the day. He seems to have had no idle boy life, but was a man with manly instincts and ambitions from his youth. Time and accidents are slowly, but effectually, destroying the precious original manuscripts, so that a literal and authentic copy is a great desideratum. No liberty whatever is taken by the editor with the text as recorded by Washington. The notes which are added, it is hoped, may prove of interest.

J. M. T.



*A Plan of Major Law: Washingtons Turnips Field as  
 Surveyed by me  
 This 27 Day of February 1747/8*

*GW*

# Journal

## Table of Contents

A Journal of my Journey over the Mountains began Fryday the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1747-8.<sup>1</sup>

Fryday March 11<sup>th</sup> 1747-8. Began my Journey<sup>2</sup> in Company with George Fairfax, Esqr.;<sup>3</sup> we travell'd this day 40 Miles to M<sup>r</sup> George Neavels<sup>4</sup> in Prince William County.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Double dating of the year, as is done here, was an old custom observed between January 1st and the 25th of March. For all other portions of the year a single date was used. Although January 1st had been generally accepted as the beginning of the historical year in Christian countries, yet March 25th was held by some as the beginning of the civil or legal year. The Gregorian chronology or new style had not, at the time this journal was written, been adopted by England, and, indeed, was not until September 2nd, 1752.

<sup>2</sup> The party on this expedition set out from "Belvoir," the home and plantation of the Hon. William Fairfax, described by General Washington as "within full view of Mount Vernon, separated by water only, is one of the most beautiful seats on the river." (Letter to John Sinclair, 11 December, 1796.) It was founded by William Fairfax, cousin and agent to Lord Thomas Fairfax, and was his residence until his death in 1757. The estate then passed to his eldest son, George William Fairfax, also one of Lord Fairfax's agents, and was his residence until July, 1773, when, accompanied by his wife, he went to England to attend to some property he had inherited there. Washington, his friend and neighbor, consented to act as his agent during his absence, which, at the time, neither anticipated would be of long continuance.

"Law's delay" and business interests making it important for Mr. Fairfax to remain in England, he directed Washington to dispose of his stock, farm fixtures and household effects at public sale. After due advertisement, this was done August 15, 1774. A second sale at "Belvoir" took place December 5, 1774.

The following bill of household effects bought at this first sale at Belvoir by George Washington has been preserved among his private papers and was in the possession of one of his inheritors, Lawrence Washington, in January 1891. The bill in the auctioneer's handwriting was folded and endorsed in Washington's known hand:—"Articles bought by G<sup>o</sup> Washington at Col<sup>o</sup> Fairfax's Sale 15 August 1774."

"Inventory of House Furnishings bought by Col<sup>o</sup> George Washington at Col<sup>o</sup> Fairfax's Sale at Belvoir 15 August 1774.

	£	s.	d.
Gilbert Simpson's 5 Bott. or Pickle Pots		7	6
2 Potts from Lawson Parkerdodo		2	
6 Pickle Potts different sizes		4	6
2 Doz. mountain wine	1	4	
4 Chariot Glasses frames		12	6
Irons for a boat canopy with tiller		12	6
12 Pewter Water Plates	1	6	
1 Mahogany Shaving Desk	4		
1 Settee-bed and furniture	13		
4 Mahog'y chairs	4		
1 Chamber Carpet	1	1	
1 Oval Glass with guilt frame in the Green room	4	5	
1 Mahog'y chest and drawers in M <sup>rs</sup> Fx chamber	12	10	
1 Mahog'y Side Board	12	5	
1 Mahog'y Cistern & stand	4		
1 Mahog'y voider a dish tray & a knife tray	1	10	
1 Japan Bread tray		7	
12 Chairs & 3 window curtains from y <sup>e</sup> dining room	31		
1 Looking glass & Guilt Frame	13	5	
2 Candlesticks & a bust of the Imortal Shakespere	1	6	

3 floor carpets in the gent's room	3	5	
1 Large carpet	11		
1 Mahog'y wash Desk bottle &c.	1	2	6
1 Mahog'y Close Stool—part broke	1	10	
2 Matrasses	4	10	
1 Pair andirons, tongues, fender & shovel	3	10	
1 Pairdo""""	3	17	6
1 Pairdo""""	1	17	6
1 Pair Dogirons in Great Kitchen	3		
1 Pot Rache""	4		
A Roasting Fork		2	6
A Plate Basket		3	
1 Mahog'y Spider make tea table	1	11	
1 Old Skreen		10	
1 Carpet	2	15	
1 Pair Bellows & Brush		11	
2 Window Curtins	2		
1 Large Marble Morter	1	1	
1 Pot Rache in the cellar	1	7	6
2 Mahog'y Card Tables	4		
A bed a pair of blankets & 19 quilts or coverlets Pillows Bolsters &c 1 Mahog'y card	11		
Table for Col <sup>o</sup> Lee			

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£169.12.6

The following admirable description of the estate is taken from an advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of Philadelphia, October 19, 1774:

"To be rented from year to year, or for a term of years,—Belvoir, the beautiful seat of the Honorable Geo. W. Fairfax, Esq., upon the Potomac river, in Fairfax county, about 14 miles below Alexandria.

"The mansion is of brick, two stories high, with four convenient rooms, and a large passage on the lower floor; five rooms and a large passage on the second; servants' hall