

COVERTURE, COLONIAL FAMILY ETHIC, AND WIDOWHOOD

LEVEL:

High School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately 30 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine 18th-century primary source documents to analyze coverture and widowhood through Martha Washington's own words.

Student will analyze the ways in which Martha Washington both fits, and is the exception, to the social norms of coverture, widowhood, and colonial family ethic.

STANDARDS:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| · Colonial America | · Reading For Perspective |
| · Civic Values and Social Norms | · Integrating Evidence from Multiple |
| · Revolution and the New Nation | Relevant Historical Sources into a |
| · Analysis of Primary Sources | Reasoned Argument About the Past |
| · Evaluating Sources | |
-

PROCEDURE:

1. Provide students with the *Background Information* handout (included in PDF) for definitions of “colonial family ethic” and “coverture” as well as information on Martha Washington.
2. Distribute the *Primary Source Set* handout for students to read (included in PDF).
3. Ask students to analyze the primary sources using the *Primary Source Set Short Answer* worksheet (included in PDF) to help build historical interpretations and document analysis skills.
4. Instruct students to answer one of the *Primary Source Set Essay* worksheet (included in PDF) for each primary source listed.

COVERTURE, COLONIAL FAMILY ETHIC, AND WIDOWHOOD

Colonial Family Ethic was the organization of families and marriage during the colonial period. It was a stable system and had common elements throughout the various geographic regions of Britain's North American colonies. The four basic principles of Colonial Family Ethic are marriage, complementary roles for helpmeets (spouses), child bearing and child rearing, and literacy. Unmarried women had a few options. Literate women could become governesses or teach school. Women skilled at cloth making could produce textiles. Unskilled women could work as maids or domestics. Remarriage after the death of a spouse was encouraged as too many unmarried women was seen as destabilizing to a town.

Coverture was a system of laws that defined a women's position in society as subordinate to that of men. Once she became a wife, a woman was seen as being one and the same as her husband. A married woman was connected to her husband's identity and did not have her own political citizenship. Women were acknowledged as mothers and wives, but only under the governance of men. Married women, under coverture, could not own property or control finances; nor she have rights to her own body. Widows whose husbands died without a will, which was known as intestate, were entitled to a dower share of their husband's estate. The dower was the use of one-third of the husband's estate for the widow's lifetime. This "the widow's third" was under the control of the widow until she remarried, at which time her new husband would take over control. The rest of the estate would be placed into a trust for any children of the marriage. When a husband died with a last will and testament written he often included the name of a trustee to control his estate property.

Background Information: Martha Washington

In 1750, the eighteen-year-old Martha Dandridge married Daniel Parke Custis, who was twenty years her senior. Though Martha grew up as a member of the lower gentry her marriage into the wealthier Custis family made her part of the upper gentry. The Custis family owned hundreds of enslaved people and thousands of acres of plantations and land. Martha and Daniel Parke Custis had four children; however, only John (Jacky) Parke Custis and Martha (Patsy) Parke Custis survived infancy. After only seven years of marriage, Daniel died intestate in 1757. Martha became the wealthiest widow in Virginia and took control of roughly 17,500 acres of land and nearly 300 enslaved people, and oversaw the business of selling tobacco to England and ordering goods for the family. As a widow whose husband died intestate, she was free from the bonds of coverture and could act as the head of household in ways that married women could not.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The expectations of the Colonial Family Ethic were that most widows and widowers under the age of forty would remarry. Martha Dandridge Custis had several suitors from which to choose. Her pick was Colonel George Washington. When she married Colonel Washington on January 6, 1759, he took over management of the Custis estate for both Martha and her two children. Martha and George Washington moved to his home Mount Vernon, to raise their family. Unfortunately, George and Martha never had children of their own; however, they did raise Jacky and Patsy together. Patsy died of epilepsy in 1773 and Jacky died in 1781 after the Battle of Yorktown during the American Revolution. After Jacky's death, the Washingtons raised his two youngest children as their own, Eleanor "Nelly" Parke Custis and George Washington "Washy" Parke Custis. Martha was also particularly close to her niece Frances "Fanny" Bassett. Fanny married George Washington's nephew George Augustine Washington in 1785. After his death in 1793, she married Washington's personal secretary Tobias Lear.

Martha and George Washington were married for over forty years at the time of Washington's death in 1799. Because of her age, wealth, and status as former First Lady, there was no expectation that Martha Washington would remarry. Following instructions in his will, George Washington was buried at Mount Vernon. Soon after Washington's funeral, President John Adams wrote to Martha Washington expressing the desire of Congress to inter Washington's body in a vault built under the Capitol. Despite her immense grief, Martha reluctantly agreed, while asking that her own body be placed there beside her late husband's. Neither of the Washingtons' bodies was moved to the Capitol and they remain together in the New Tomb at Mount Vernon.

SOURCE A - MARTHA CUSTIS TO ROBERT CARY AND COMPANY, AUGUST 20, 1757

Virginia Aug 20, 1757

Gentlemen

I imagine before this you will hear of the great misfortune I have met with in the Colony my late Husband Mr. Custis your Correspondent, by which all his Affairs fall under my management, I believe to both your satisfaction correspondence with you and I now having admon of his Estate I hope I shall continue the Correspondence and that it will be lasting and agreeable to us both. I shall yearly ship a considerable part of the Tobacco I make to you which I shall take care to have made as good as possible and hope you will do your endeavor to get me a good Price, Yours by Capt. Coxen of the 10th of March & by John Hanbury Captn Talman of the 17 & 21st & the Goods you sent came safe to Mr. Custis's hands before his Death.

11 I wrote you sometime ago insurance on 34 Hhds of Toba which I informed you would come in
12 Capt. Coxen which I hope you have put 2 more Hhds on board which I have not insured, the
13 whole Shipped to you by him is now 36 Hhds which I have inclosed a Bill of Lading for, I have
14 reason to believe they are as good as they can well be and hope you will get me a Price suitable to
15 them. I shall want some Goods this Year for me Family which I have inclosed an Invoice of and
16 hope you will take care they are well bot and sent me by your first Ship to this river. . . . As soon
17 as you have sold all of the Toba. Shipped to you by Mr. Custis last year, please to make out an
18 Account Current and send it to me by the first Opportunity. As Mr. Custis died Without Will and
19 left but two Children his Estate will be kept together some time and I will it will be proper to
20 continue this Account with you in the same manner as if he was living, as most of the goods I
21 shall send for will be for the use of the Family, I am Gentlemen Your most hble Servt.

22 Martha Custis
23 To Robert Cary Esq. & Co.
24 Merchts in London

SOURCE B - MARTHA WASHINGTON TO FRANCES “FANNY” BASSETT, SEPTEMBER 29, 1794

1 My dear Fanny, I wish I could give you unerring advise in regard to the request contained in your
2 last letter; I really dont know what to say to you on the subject; you must be governed by your
3 own judgement, and I trust providence will direct you for the best; it is a matter more interesting
4 to yourself than any other[.] The person contemplated is a worthy man, esteemed by every one
5 that is acquainted with him; he has, it is conceived, fair prospects before him;—is, I believe, very
6 industri[ous] and will, I have not a doubt, make sumthing handsome for himself.—as to the
7 President, he never has, nor never will, as you have often heard him say, inter meddle in
8 matrimonial concerns. he joins with me however in wishing you every happyness this world can
9 give.—you have had a long acquaintance with Mr Lear, and must know him as well as I do.—he
10 always appeared very attentive to his wife and child, as farr as ever I have seen; he is I believe, a
11 man of strict honor and probity; and one with whom you would have as good a prospect of
12 happyness as with any one I know; but beg you will not let anything I say influence you either
13 way. The President has a very high opinion of and friendship for Mr. Lear; and has not the least
14 objection to your forming the connection but, no more than myself, would wish to influence your
15 judgement, either way—yours and the childrens good being among the first wishes of my heart.

**SOURCE C - TOBIAS LEAR ON BEHALF OF MARTHA WASHINGTON TO PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS,
DECEMBER 31, 1799**

1 Mount Vernon December 31st, 1799

2 Sir,

3 While I feel, with ~~the~~ keenest anguish, the late dis-

4 pensation of Divine Providence, I cannot be insen-

5 sible to the ~~respectful~~ mournfull ~~and respectful~~ tributes

6 of respect & veneration, which are paid to the memory of my dear deceased

7 Husband. - And as his best services and anxious wishes

8 were always ~~employed in promoting~~ devoted to the welfare and

9 happiness of his Country; ~~it affords~~ to know that they were

10 truly appreciated and gratefully remembered affords ~~the~~ me

11 ~~highest service of consolation~~ no inconsiderable consolation.

12 Taught by the great Example, which I have So

13 long had before me, never to oppose my private wishes to the

14 Public Will, I must consent to the request ~~the~~ made by

15 Congress, which you have had the goodness to transmit to me.

16 And in doing this, I need not, - I cannot Say what a sacrifice

17 of individual feeling, I make to a Sense of public Duty.

18 With ~~grateful unfeigned thanks for~~ grateful

19 acknowledgements & unfeigned thanks for the personal respect & evidences of condolence

20 expressed by Con-

21 gress and yourself – ~~and with unfeigned thanks for your ex-~~

22 ~~pression of Condolence I remain~~ I remain, very respectfully,

PRIMARY SOURCE SET
COVETURE, COLONIAL FAMILY ETHIC, AND WIDOWHOOD

23

Sir

24

your most ob.d most Hble Serv

25 The Presint of the U.S.

26

M. Washington

Answer the following questions using evidence from the primary source documents.

**SOURCE A - MARTHA WASHINGTON TO ROBERT CARY AND COMPANY, AUGUST 20, 1757
(MARTHA CUSTIS, AGE 26)**

1. What was Martha Custis' goal in writing to Robert Cary and Company? What she she want as the outcome of this letter?

2. What was the previous relationship between Daniel Parke Custis and Robert Cary?

3. Why would Martha Custis mention that her husband died without a will?

WORKSHEET: PRIMARY SOURCE SET
SHORT ANSWER

**SOURCE B - MARTHA WASHINGTON TO FANCES “FANNY” BASSETT, SEPTEMBER 29, 1794
(MARTHA WASHINGTON, AGE 63)**

1. What was Martha Washington’s opinion of Tobias Lear?

2. What was Martha’s ultimate advice to Fanny regarding the marriage proposal?

3. Why would Fanny write to Martha Washington for advice on remarrying?

WORKSHEET: PRIMARY SOURCE SET
SHORT ANSWER

SOURCE C - TOBIAS LEAR ON BEHALF OF MARTHA WASHINGTON TO PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS, DECEMBER 31, 1799 (MARTHA WASHINGTON, AGE 68)

1. What reasoning does Martha Washington give for consenting to Congress on moving George Washington's body?

2. What can you infer about this letter from the stricken words?

3. What can you infer from Tobias Lear's help in framing the letter?

[illegible]

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MARTHA WASHINGTON

LEVEL:

High School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately 20 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine secondary sources to understand the changing historiography of Martha Washington and women's history.

STANDARDS:

- | | |
|--|--|
| · Colonial America | · Evaluating Sources |
| · Civic Values and Social Norms | · Reading for Perspective |
| · Revolution and the New Nation | · Integrating Evidence from Multiple Relevant Historical Sources Into a Reasoned Argument About the Past |
| · Explaining How and Why Perspectives of People Change Over Time | |
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PROCEDURE:

1. Define the term “historiography” for students as the study of how historians write about the past. Share the *Background Information* handout (included in PDF) to ensure that students are comfortable with the concept of historiography.
2. Distribute the *Secondary Source Set - Historiography of Martha Washington* handout (included in PDF) for students to read.
3. Distribute the *Historiography of Martha Washington* worksheet (included in PDF) and ask students to compare and contrast the secondary sources and analyze how historians have changed their approaches to studying Martha Washington throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MARTHA WASHINGTON

Historiography is the study of how historians write about the past. This is typically divided into different schools of thought based on common elements of historians' writings in different time periods. The study of women's history as a new specialty for historians derived from the New Left Historiography that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s during the Civil Rights Movement and Women's Rights Movement. New Left Historiography focuses on primary source driven analysis and seeks to broaden the perspective of history by studying race, gender, and ethnicity.

Martha Washington is often relegated to "George Washington's wife" as her only achievement of note in the majority of historians' writings on early United States history. As the first First Lady, Martha Washington is admired but little studied. Most 20th-century writings view her as a grandmotherly figure no matter her actual age. More recent, 21st-century studies re-examine Martha Washington as a more complex figure with a personality and goals of her own.

Source A – Excerpt: Flexner, James Thomas. *Washington, the Indispensable Man*. New York, NY: New American Library, 1969, page 37

1 After his recovery from his seemingly mortal illness and before he marched with Forbes,
2 Washington became engaged to Martha Dandridge Custis, a widow slightly his senior and with
3 two small children, who had inherited from her first husband a rich estate. The future Mrs.
4 Washington, being about five feet tall, came up only to her suitor's chest. She was plump, with
5 small hands and feet. Her large eyes, wide brows, and strong curved nose would have created
6 bold beauty had not timidity imposed a gentle charm. Despite her grand first marriage, her own
7 family background had been modest; she preserved simple manners, unsistent dignity. She was
8 not given to startling ideas or brilliant talk; her intelligence and imagination ran to relations with
9 other people.

Source B – Excerpt: Schwartz, Marie Jenkins. *Ties That Bound: Founding First Ladies and Slave*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2017, page 17

10 Martha [Washington] understood that slavery supported the economic, social, and political world
11 in which she and her grandchildren lived, and her handling of her husband's affairs shows that
12 she accepted this reality. Her goals and values differed in important ways from those of her
13 husband. He had been concerned about the fate of Mount Vernon's slaves and had devised a plan
14 to free some of them after his demise. She too was concerned about the slaves, but she focused
15 mainly on how to prevent her husband's plan from adversely affecting her and her grandchildren

Source C – Excerpt: Bryan, Helen. *Martha Washington, First Lady of Liberty*. New York: NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2002, page 77

16 Although historians have dismissed Martha's intellectual capacities and her formal education, the
17 way Martha [Custis] rose to the occasion [after the death of her first husband, Daniel Parke
18 Custis] and shouldered the business of the estate suggests the opposite. She was clearly familiar
19 with the practical aspects of tobacco growing and shipping, and when she said she believed the
20 quality of her tobacco was good, she was speaking from experience, because she had known
21 tobacco from an early age. She also consulted Daniel's lawyers over the Dunbar Suit. She may
22 have taken the advice of friends, consulted her brother Bartholomew, or referred to Daniel's file
23 of correspondence to assist her, but she wrote as good a business letter to her London factors as
24 any planter. She showed herself to be shrewd, capable, and efficient. Clearly Martha did not
25 simply sigh helplessly and fall into the arms of the next available man willing to deal with it all on
26 her behalf

Source D – Excerpt: Brady, Patricia. *Martha Washington: An American Life*. New York: NY: Penguin Books, 2005, page 52

27 Unlike most widows in colonial Virginia, [Martha] Custis was rich and independent, free to make
28 any decision she pleased about her own future. In contrast, slave women were forced to keep
29 working despite their sorrow; poor women might be reduced to beggary, their children taken
30 away and apprenticed; the middling sort often ran their husband's businesses, taverns, or farms if
31 they had sons old enough to work the fields; planters' widows had money and social position, but
32 their property was sometimes controlled by male trustees set in place by the wills of distrustful
33 husbands.

34 Free from such galling conditions, Patsy [a nickname for Martha at the time] controlled and
35 immense property. English common law ensured dower rights of the widows of property-owning

SECONDARY SOURCE SET
HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MARTHA WASHINGTON

36 men; such women automatically inherited one-third of their husbands' estates for their own
37 lifetimes, and Patsy had no trustees to interfere with her decisions

Analyze the four excerpts about Martha Washington using the focus questions below. Cite specific evidence from the source in the column labeled “Evidence from the Source” and explain your own interpretation in the column labeled “In Your Own Words”. Finally, answer the question at the end using full sentences and specific examples from the sources.

| Focus Question | Flexner | | Schwartz | | Bryan | | Brady | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words |
| What is Martha Washington’s key personality trait? | | | | | | | | |
| Does the historian have a favorable or unfavorable view of Martha Washington? | | | | | | | | |

| Focus Question | Flexner | | Schwartz | | Bryan | | Brady | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words | Evidence from the Source | In Your Own Words |
| How is Martha Washington's relationship with other People described? | | | | | | | | |

What are the commonalities between each author? What are the major differences in their interpretations of Martha Washington?

PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF MARTHA WASHINGTON

LEVEL:

High School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately 20 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine 18th-century primary source documents to analyze the varied and changing perspectives of Martha Washington by her contemporaries.

Student will examine 18th-century artwork and images to analyze how artists portrayed Martha Washington during her lifetime and how that influences the way historians view her legacy today.

STANDARDS:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| · Colonial America | · Evaluating Sources |
| · Civic Values and Social Norms | · Reading For Perspective |
| · Revolution and the New Nation | · Integrate Evidence from Multiple |
| · Explain How and Why Perspectives | Relevant Historical Sources into a |
| Change Over Time | Reasoned Argument About the Past |
| · Analysis of Primary Sources | |
-

PROCEDURE:

1. Instruct students to read the *Document Source Set - Perspective Analysis of Martha Washington* handout and look at the *Artwork Source Set – Perspective Analysis of Martha Washington* handout (both are included in PDF).
2. Split students into small groups and provide each group with copies of the *Worksheet – Primary Source Document Guiding Questions* handout and the *Worksheet – Primary Source Artwork Guiding Questions* handout (both are included in PDF).
3. As a group, ask students to fill in the worksheets, answering questions for each primary source document and artwork.
4. Instruct groups to match each of the primary source descriptions of Martha Washington to the piece of artwork they believe best conveys the description. Students should create an argument for each match supported by their own analysis.
5. Ask groups to present their findings to the class. Students should be sure to include evidence from the sources and their own analysis in their presentation.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Compare perceptions of Martha Washington over time. How did her place in society influence how others perceived her? How did the relationship between Martha and the author influence their perception of her?
2. Compare Martha Dandridge to Martha Custis to Martha Washington.

Source A –

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



Source B –

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



Source C –

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



Source D –

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



Source E –

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



Source F –

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



Source A – Excerpt: J. Power to Daniel Parke Custis, no date (probably 1749) in Mary Custis Lee, “Memoir of George Washington Parke Custis” *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* (Philadelphia: J.W. Bradley, 1861, 9-72), 20n

Background Information: Martha Dandridge married Daniel Parke Custis, twenty years her senior, at the age of eighteen. Daniel’s father, John Custis, and his mother, Frances, had a tumultuous and unhappy marriage and John successfully encouraged his son not to marry. John Custis finally relented to his son’s marriage to Martha after she impressed him during one of their meetings.

1 ...This comes at last to bring you the news that I believe will be most agreeable to you of any you
2 have heard—that you may not be long in suspense I shall tell you at once—I am empowered by
3 your father to let you know that he heartily and willingly consents to your marriage with Miss
4 [Martha] Dandridge—that he has so good a character of her, that he had rather you should have
5 her than any lady in Virginia—nay, if possible, he is as much enamored with her character as you
6 are with her person, and this is owing chiefly to a prudent speech of her own. Hurry down
7 immediately for fear he should change the strong inclination he has to your marrying
8 directly....he enslaved population at Mount Vernon did not meekly accept their bonded lot in life.
9 Many...

Source B – Excerpt: John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, November 25, 1775

Background Information: Mercy Otis Warren was a writer, poet, historian, and patriot during the American Revolution. She was good friends with Abigail Adams who introduced her to Martha Washington.

10 ...The General [Washington] is amiable and Accomplished and judicious and cool; You will soon
11 know the Person and Character of his Lady. I hope She has as much Ambition for her Husband’s
12 Glory, as Portia [Abigail Adams] & Marcia [Mercy Otis Warren] have, and then the Lord have
13 Mercy on the Souls of [Generals William] Howe and [John] Burgoyne & all the [British] Troops

14 in Boston....

Source C – Excerpt: Thatcher, James. *Military Journal, During the American Revolutionary War, from 1775-1783* (Silas Andrus & Son, 1854) p. 160

Background Information: James Thatcher was a doctor who travelled with the Continental Army during the American Revolution. He wrote one of the first histories of the war from his diaries.

15 [Middlebrook, New Jersey] Yesterday [Thursday, 2/25/1779] I accompanied Major Cavil to head
16 quarters, and had the honor of being numbered among the guests at the table of his Excellency,
17 with his lady, two young ladies from Virginia, the gentlemen who compose his family, and
18 several other officers....Mrs. Washington combines in an uncommon degree, great dignity of
19 manner with the most pleasing affability, but possesses no striking marks of beauty. I learn from
20 the Virginia officers that Mrs. Washington has ever been honored as a lady of distinguished
21 goodness, possessing all the virtues which adorn her sex, amiable in her temper and deportment,
22 full of benignity, benevolence and charity, seeking for objects of affliction and poverty, that she
23 may extend to the sufferers the hand of kindness and relief. These surely are the attributes which
24 reveal a heart replete with those virtues which are so appropriate and estimable in the female
25 character....

Source D – Excerpt: “An Account of a Visit Made to Washington at Mount Vernon, by an English Gentleman, in 1785, From the Diary of John Hunter,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (Volume VXII, 1893, 76-82).

Background Information: John Hunter was an English gentleman who toured Canada and the United States from 1785-1786 and made a visit to Mount Vernon during this time. George and Martha Washington entertained hundreds of guests who all wanted to meet the General.

26 [Wednesday, 11/16/1785]...We arrived at Mount Vernon by one o'clock...When Colonel
27 Fitzgerald introduced me to the General I was struck with his noble and venerable
28 appearance....After having sat with us some time he retired and sent in his lady, a most agreeable
29 woman about 50 [she was 54], and Major [George Augustine] Washington his nephew, married
30 about three weeks ago to a Miss Bessot [Fanny Bassett]: She is Mrs. Washington's niece and a
31 most charming young woman. She is about 19. After chatting with them for half an hour, the
32 General came in again....[Thursday, 11/17/1785]...It's astonishing with what raptures Mrs.
33 Washington spoke about the discipline of the army, the excellent order they were in, superior to
34 any troops she said upon the face of the earth towards the close of the war; even the English
35 acknowledged it, she said. What pleasure she took in the sound of the fifes and drums, preferring
36 it to any music that was ever heard; and then to see them reviewed a week or two before the men
37 disbanded, when they were all well clothed was she said a most heavenly sight; almost every
38 soldier shed tears at parting with the General when the army was disbanded: Mrs. Washington
39 said it was a most melancholy sight....

Source E – Excerpt: Colonel Thomas Rodney, June 9, 1790, quoted in Stephen Decatur, Jr. *Private Affairs of George Washington: From the Records and Accounts of Tobias Lear, Esquire, his Secretary* (Boston, MA: Printed by The Riverside Press for Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), p. 135-136

Background Information: Colonel Thomas Rodney was a militia colonel who also served in the Continental Congress representing Delaware.

40 ...I intended to have staged at ferry & went into N.Y. today, but finding
41 Expenses very high every day & that the President and all the State officers were gone out of
42 town & frolicking [sic], I thought it best to return homeward....A little after passing the ferry met
43 Mrs. Washington & another lady in a coach, they were preceded by a Servant about ½ mile
44 ahead, and two young Gentlemen on Horseback, Just before them, a Mulatto girl behind the
45 carriage and a Negro man Servant on Horseback behind, this was her Suite, small attendance for
46 the Lady of the President of the United States. Yet the Motions of the President and his lady is
47 the public Talk of all Ranks at & near New York...

Fill in the following chart using evidence from each primary source document.

| Primary Source | What does the style of clothing and hair tell you about how the artist viewed Martha Washington? | What does the background tell you about Martha Washington? Does it convey a sense of time and place? | Does the artist show Martha Washington as an active or passive figure? What choices did the artist make to help you decide if Martha is passive or shown with agency? |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| Source A | | | |
| Source B | | | |

| Primary Source | What does the style of clothing and hair tell you about how the artist viewed Martha Washington? | What does the background tell you about Martha Washington? Does it convey a sense of time and place? | Does the artist show Martha Washington as an active or passive figure? What choices did the artist make to help you decide if Martha is passive or shown with agency? |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| Source C | | | |
| Source D | | | |

| Primary Source | What does the style of clothing and hair tell you about how the artist viewed Martha Washington? | What does the background tell you about Martha Washington? Does it convey a sense of time and place? | Does the artist show Martha Washington as an active or passive figure? What choices did the artist make to help you decide if Martha is passive or shown with agency? |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| Source E | | | |
| Source F | | | |

WORKSHEET: PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENT GUIDING QUESTIONS

NAME _____

DATE _____

Fill in the following chart using evidence from each primary source document.

| Primary Source | What do you already know about the time period of each source? | Who is the intended audience for this description of Martha Washington? | What is the purpose of this description of Martha Washington? | What aspects of Martha Washington does this description focus on? |
|----------------|--|---|---|---|
| Source A | | | | |
| Source B | | | | |

WORKSHEET: PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENT GUIDING QUESTIONS

| Primary Source | What do you already know about the time period of each source? | Who is the intended audience for this description of Martha Washington? | What is the purpose of this description of Martha Washington? | What aspects of Martha Washington does this description focus on? |
|----------------|--|---|---|---|
| Source C | | | | |
| Source D | | | | |

POLITICS PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

LEVEL:

High School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine short 18th-century primary source documents related to gender and the private versus public spheres during the American Revolution and the founding of the United States of America.

STANDARDS:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| · Civic Values and Social Norms | · Reading For Perspective |
| · Revolution and the New Nation | · Integrating Evidence from Multiple |
| · Analysis of Primary Sources | Relevant Historical Sources into a |
| · Evaluating Sources | Reasoned Argument About the Past |
-

PROCEDURE:

1. Provide students with the *Background Information* handout (included in PDF) for information on Martha Washington's role during the presidency and her *Republican Court*.
2. Distribute the *Primary Source Set – Politics Private and Public* handout for students to read (included in PDF).
3. Ask students to analyze the primary sources in pairs through the lens of political and public versus family and private concerns using the *Primary Source Set Graphic Organizer* worksheet (included in PDF).
4. Distribute the *Primary Source Set Venn Diagram* worksheet (included in PDF) and ask students to compare and contrast the four primary sources. Students should identify elements from each document that fall into private, public, or private and public concerns.
5. Instruct students to rewrite Martha Washington's obituary using information from the primary sources. Students should be prepared to identify changes made and use evidence to support those changes.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Ask students to answer the following questions. Students can use the *Primary Source Set Short Answer* worksheet (included in PDF) to answer the questions.
 - a. What political and public concerns did George and Martha Washington raise?
 - b. How do these political and public concerns impact their family and private concerns?

POLITICS PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

Women's history is often delineated into debates on the public versus private spheres. Recently, historians have been analyzing how these two seemingly separate worlds interact and influence one another. Martha Washington, as First Lady, is a great example of this new interpretation of women's history. During George Washington's presidency, Martha Washington held Friday evening drawing-room gatherings at their temporary home in Philadelphia. Both men and women regularly attended. This evening gathering, known as *the Republican Court*, was a symbolic gesture of the public (the political and male dominated world) intertwining with the private (the family and female dominated world). While Martha Washington became friendly with well-known women such as Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren (a poet, writer, and historian), she often bristled against the limitations public expectations placed upon her.

Source A – Martha Washington Obituary from the *Augusta Herald*, Augusta, Georgia June 9, 1802

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association

even if
circles
ered an
he cla-
ot un-
favour
ing is
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fewer
are ad-
t were
ark in-
ed mo-
to oth-
he day,
growl
gle pri-
justice
of not
—feel-
whom
he great
nt day,
ve ven-
umani-
our fa-
judges
which
at as le-
corpora-

Two kindest souls alone must meet,
'Tis friendship makes the bondage sweet,
And feeds their mutual loves. —
§ The mighty Power that formed the mind
One mould for every two design'd,
And bless'd the newborn pair ;
This be a match for this ; (he said)
Then down he sent the souls he made
To seek them bodies here.

DIED—At Mount Vernon, on
the 22^d ultimo, Mrs. **MARTHA**
WASHINGTON, widow of the
late illustrious General **GEORGE**
WASHINGTON.—To those amiable
and christian virtues, which adorn
the female character, she added dig-
nity of manners, superiority of un-
derstanding, a mind intelligent and
elevated. —The silence of re-
spectful grief is our best eulogy.

FOR SALE,
A GREAT BARGAIN.
THE BREW HOUSE LOT and
BUILDINGS thereon, it contains
two acres of land and is the entire of
square G. bounding on all sides by public
streets, the purchaser can be accomodated
with one of the best Stills in the State.

Source A – Transcript: Martha Washington Obituary from the *Augusta Herald*, Augusta, Georgia June 9, 1802
Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association

1 DIED – At Mount Vernon, on
2 The 22d ultimo, Mrs. MARTHA
3 WASHINGTON, widow of the
4 late illustrious General GEORGE
5 WASHINGTON. – To those amiable
6 and christian virtues, which adorn
7 the female character, the added dig-
8 nity of manners, superiority of un-
9 derstanding, a mind intelligent and
10 elevated. ----- The silence of re-
11 spectful grief is our best eulogy.

Source B – Martha Washington to Mercy Otis Warren, December 26, 1789

1
2 New York December the 26th 1789
3 My Dear Madam
4 Your very friendly letter of the 27th of last month has afforded me much more satisfaction than all the
5 formal compliments and empty ceremonies of mere etiquette could possibly have done. - I am not apt
6 to forget the feelings that have been inspired by my former society with good acquaintances, nor to be
7 insensible to their expressions of gratitude to the President of the United States; for you know me well
8 enough to do me the justice to believe that I am only fond of what comes from the heart. - Under a
9 conviction that the demonstrations of respect and affection which have been made to the President
10 originate from that source I cannot deny that I have taken some interest and pleasure in them. - The
11 difficulties which presented themselves to view upon his first entering upon the Presidency, seem thus
12 to be in some measure surmounted: it is owing to this kindness of our numerous friends in all quarters
13 that my new and unwished for situation is not indeed a burden to me. When I was much younger I
14 should, probably, have enjoyed the innocent gayeties of life as much as most my age; -but I had long
15 since placed all the prospects of my future worldly happiness in the still enjoyments of the fireside at
16 Mount Vernon –

17 I little thought when the war was finished, that any circumstances could possibly have happened
18 which would call the General into public life again. I had anticipated, that from this moment we
19 should have been left to grow old in solitude and tranquility together: that was, my Dear madam, the
20 first and dearest wish of my heart; - but in that I have been disappointed; I will not, however,
21 contemplate with too much regret disappointments that were inevitable, though the general's feelings
22 and my own were perfectly in unison with respect to our predilections for private life, yet I cannot
23 blame him for having acted according to his ideas of duty in obeying the voice of his country. The
24 consciousness of having attempted to do all the good in his power, and the pleasure of finding his
25 fellow citizens so well satisfied with the disinterestedness of his conduct, will, doubtless, be some
26 compensation for the great sacrifices which I know he has made; indeed in his journeys from Mount
27 Vernon - to this place; in his late Tour through the eastern states, by every public and by every private
28 information which has come to him, I am persuaded that he has experienced nothing to make him
repent his having acted from what he conceived to be alone a sense of indispensable duty: on the

29 contrary, all his sensibility has been awakened in receiving such repeated and unequivocal proofs of
30 sincere regards from all his country men. with respect to myself, I sometimes think the arrangement is
31 not quite as it ought to have been, that I, who had much rather be at home should occupy a place with
32 which a great many younger and gayer women would be prodigiously pleased. - As my grand
33 children and domestic connections made a great portion of the felicity which I looked for in this
34 world. - I shall hardly be able to find any substitute that would indemnify me for the Loss of a part of
35 such endearing society. I do not say this because I feel dissatisfied with my present station - no, God
36 forbid: - for everybody and everything conspire to make me as contented as possible in it; yet I have
37 too much of the vanity of human affairs to expect felicity from the splendid scenes of public life. - I
38 am still determined to be cheerful and to be happy in whatever situation I may be, for I have also
39 learnt from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our
40 dispositions, and not upon our circumstances; we carry the seeds of the one, or the other about with
41 us, in our minds, wherever we go.

42 I have two of my grand children with me who enjoy advantages in point of education, and who, I trust
43 by the goodness of providence, will continue to be a great blessing to me, my other two grand
44 children are with their mother in Virginia. —

45

46 The President's health is quite reestablished by his late journey - mine is much better than it used to be
47 - I am sorry to hear that General Warren has been ill: hope before this time that he may be entirely
48 recovered - we should rejoice to see you both, I wish the best of Heaven's blessings, and am my dear
49 madam with esteem and

50

regard your friend and Hble

51

Sert

52

M Washington

Source C – Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett Washington, October 23, 1789

1 New York October the 23d 1789

2 My dear Fanny

3 I have by Mrs Sims sent you a watch it is one of the cargoe that I have so long
4 mentioned to you, that was expected, I hope is such a one as will please you - it is of
5 the newest fashon, if that has any influence on your tast - The chain is of Mr Lears
6 choosing and such as Mrs Adams the vice Presidents Lady and those in the polite
7 circle wares. It will last as long as the fashon - and by that time you can get another
8 of a fashionable kind - I send to dear Maria a piece of Chino to make her a frock - the
9 piece of muslin I hope is long enough for an apron for you, and in exchange for it, I
10 beg you will give me the worked muslin apron you have like my gown that I made
11 just before I left home of worked muslin as I wish to make a petticoat of the two
12 aprons - for my gown - Mrs Sims will give you a better account of the fashons than I
13 can - I live a very dull life hear and know nothing that passes in the town - I never
14 goe to the publick place - indeed I think I am more like a state prisoner than
15 anything else, there is certain bounds set for me which I must not depart from - and
16 as I can not doe as I like I am obstinate and stay at home a great deal –

17 The President set out this day week on a tour to the eastward Mr Lear and Major
18 Jackson attended him - my dear children has had very bad colds but thank god they
19 are getting better My love and good wishes attend you and all with you - remember
20 me to Mr & Mrs L Wn how is the poor child - kiss Maria I send her two little
21 handkerchiefs to wipe her nose

22 Adieu

23 I am my dear Fanny yours

24 most affectionately

25 M Washington

PRIMARY SOURCE SET:
POLITICS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

- 26 Mrs F Washington
- 27 Mount Vernon
- 28 Favored by
- 29 Mrs. Sims

Source D – George Washington to Martha Washington, June 18, 1775

1 Philadelphia June 18th 1775.

2 My Dearest,

3 I am now set down to write to you on a subject which fills me with inexpressable concern—and this
4 concern is greatly aggravated and Increased when I reflect on the uneasiness I know it will give you—
5 It has been determined in Congress, that the whole Army raised for the defence of the American Cause
6 shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take
7 upon me the Command of it. You may beleive me my dear Patcy, when I assure you, in the most
8 solemn manner, that, so far from seeking this appointment I have used every endeavour in my power
9 to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with you and the Family, but from a consciousness
10 of its being a trust too great for my Capacity and that I should enjoy more real happiness and felicity
11 in one month with you, at home, than I have the most distant prospect of reaping abroad, if my stay
12 was to be Seven times Seven years. But, as it has been a kind of destiny that has thrown me upon this
13 Service, I shall hope that my undertaking of it, is designd to answer some good purpose—You might,
14 and I suppose did perceive, from the Tenor of my letters, that I was apprehensive I could not avoid
15 this appointment, as I did not even pretend (t)o intimate when I should return—that was the case—it
16 was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my Character to such
17 censures as would have reflected dishonour upon myself, and given pain to my friends—this I am sure
18 could not, and ought not to be pleasing to you, & must have lessend me considerably in my own
19 esteem. I shall rely therefore, confidently, on that Providence which has heretofore preservd, & been
20 bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall—I shall feel no pain from
21 the Toil, or the danger of the Campaign—My unhappiness will flow, from the uneasiness I know you
22 will feel at being left alone—I therefore beg of you to summon your whole fortitude & Resolution, and
23 pass your time as agreeably as possible—nothing will give me so much sincere satisfaction as to hear
24 this, and to hear it from your own Pen.

25 If it should be your desire to remove into Alexandria (as you once mentioned upon an occasion of this
26 sort) I am quite pleased that you should put it in practice, & Lund Washington may be directed, by
27 you, to build a Kitchen and other Houses there proper for your reception—if on the other hand you
28 should rather Incline to spend good part of your time among your Friends below, I wish you to do so—
29 In short, my earnest, & ardent desire is, that you would pursue any Plan that is most likely to produce
30 content, and a tolerable degree of Tranquility as it must add greatly to my uneasy feelings to hear that
31 you are dissatisfied, and complaining at what I really could not avoid.

32 As Life is always uncertain, and common prudence dictates to every Man the necessity of settling his
33 temporal Concerns whilst it is in his power—and whilst the Mind is calm and undisturbed, I have,
34 since I came to this place (for I had not time to do it before I left home) got Colo. Pendleton to Draft a
35 Will for me by the directions which I gave him, which Will I now Inclose—The Provision made for you,
36 in cas(e) of my death, will, I hope, be agreeable; I have Included the Money for which I sold my own
37 Land (to Doctr Mercer) in the Sum given you, as also all other Debts. What I owe myself is very
38 trifling—Cary's Debt excepted, and that would not have been much if the Bank stock had been applied
39 without such difficulties as he made in the Transference.

40 I shall add nothing more at present as I have several Letters to write, but to desire you will remember
41 me to Milly & all Friends, and to assure you that I am with most unfeigned regard, My dear Patcy Yr
42 Affecte

43

Go: Washington

44 P.S. Since writing the above I have receivd your Letter of the 15th and have got two suits of what I was
45 told wa(s) the prettiest Muslin. I wish it may please you—it cost 50/. a suit that is 20/. a yard.

WORKSHEET: PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENT SET GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

NAME _____

DATE _____

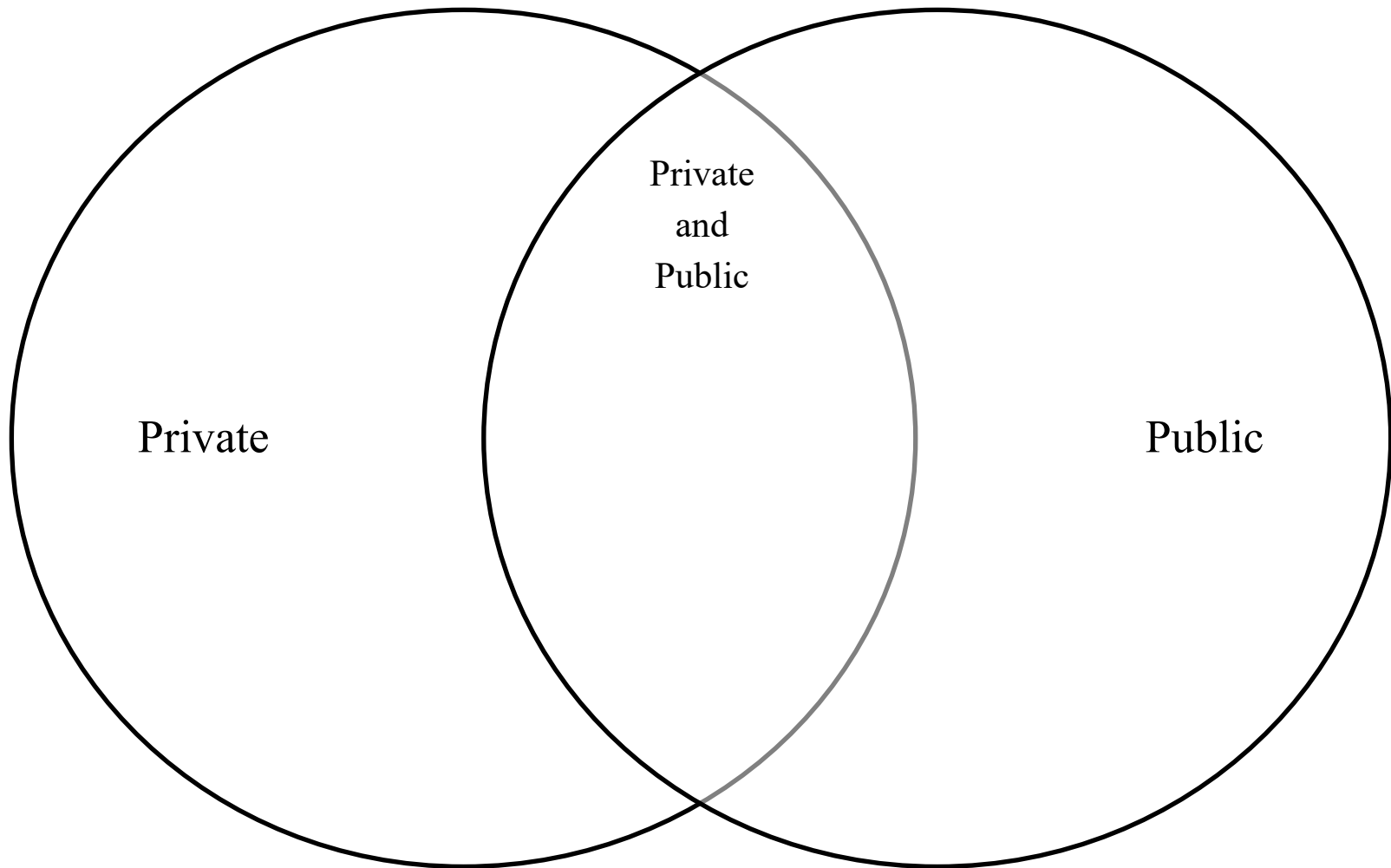
Fill in the following chart using evidence from each primary source document.

| Primary Source | Political and Public Concerns | Family and Private Concerns |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Source A | | |
| Source B | | |

WORKSHEET: PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENT SET GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

| Primary Source | Political and Public Concerns | Family and Private Concerns |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Source C | | |
| Source D | | |

Fill in the following Venn diagram using evidence from each primary source document.



Answer the following questions using evidence from the primary source documents.

1. What political and public concerns did George and Martha raise?

2. How did these political and public concerns impact their family and private concerns?

MARTHA WASHINGTON AND SLAVERY

LEVEL:

High School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine primary sources related to slavery, Martha Washington as an enslaver, and the Critical Period to understand the role of slavery in the early Republic.

STANDARDS:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| · Colonial America | · Analysis of Primary Sources |
| · Civic Values and Social Norms | · Reading for Perspective |
| · Revolution and the New Nation | · Integrating Evidence from Multiple |
| · Explaining How and Why Perspectives | Relevant Historical Sources Into a |
| of People Change Over Time | Reasoned Argument About the Past |
-

PROCEDURE:

1. Distribute the following handouts (included in PDF) for students to read.
 - a. Primary Source - George Washington's List of Enslaved People, 1799
 - b. Primary Source – Excerpt – George Washington's Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799
 - c. Primary Source – Excerpt – Martha Washington's Last Will and Testament, March 4, 1802
2. Ask students to discuss the connections between these three sources in small groups. Provide each group with the *Background Information – Part 1* handout (included in PDF) and instruct them to reevaluate their connections based on any new information.
3. Distribute the following handouts (included in PDF) for students to read.
 - a. Primary Source – Excerpt – An Act for the Gradual Emancipation of Slavery, March 1, 1780
 - b. Primary Source – Martha Washington to Frances (Fanny) Bassett Washington, June 5, 1791
4. Ask students to continue their discussion of the connections between primary sources in their small groups. Provide each group with the *Background Information – Part 2*

handout (included in the PDF) and instruct them to reevaluate their connections based on any new information.

5. Instruct students to answer the writing prompt on the *Short Answer* worksheet (included in PDF).

Negroes
Belonging to George Washington in his own right
and by Marriage

| G.W | | | Dower | | |
|------------------------------|------|---|----------------------------------|------|---|
| Names | Ages | Remarks | Names | Ages | Remarks |
| Tradesmen & CA | | | Tradesmen & CA | | |
| Nat Smith | 40 | His wife Lucy DR. Dowr | Tom Davis B:lay ^r | 15 | Wife at M ^r Lears |
| George D ^o | | Ditto Lydia R.F. D ^o | Simms.....Carp ^r | | D ^o ...Daphne....French's |
| Isaac Carp ^r | |Kitty Dairy D ^o | Cyrus.....Post ⁿ | | D ^o ...Lucy.....R.F.....GW |
| James D ^o | |Darcus M.H. GW | Wilson.....Ditto | | No wife |
| Sambo D ^o | |Agnes R.F. Dow ^r | Godfrey.....Cart ^r | | Wife....Mima...M ⁿ H ^o . Dow ^r |
| Davy D ^o | |Edy U.F. GW | James.....D ^o | | D ^o.....Alla.....D ^o.....D ^o |
| Joe D ^o | |Dolshy Spin ^r Dow ^r | Hanson.....Dist ^r | | No wife |
| Tom Coop ^r | |Nanny M.H. GW | Peter.....D ^o | | Ditto |
| Moses D ^o | | No wife | Nat.....D ^o | | Ditto |
| Jacob D ^o | |Ditto | Daniel.....D ^o | | Ditto |
| George Gard ^r | 31 | His wife Sall....D.R. Dow ^r | Timothy....D ^o | 21 | |
| Harry D ^o | | No wife | Sla Joe.....Ditch ^r | | Wife....Sylla...D.R. GW |
| Boatswain Dite | | His wife Myrtilla Spin ^r GW | Chriss.....H ^o Ser | | D ^o.....Maj ^r Wests |
| Dundee D ^o | | His wife at M ^r Lears | Marcus.....D ^o | | no Wife |
| Charles D ^o | | Ditto Fanny U.F. Dow ^r | Lucy.....Cook | | Husb ^d H ^o Frank.....GW |
| Ben D ^o | | Ditto Penny R.F. GW | Molly | | No Husband |
| Ben Miller | | Ditto Sinah Mn Ho. Dow ^r | Charlotte...Sempst ^s | | No husband |
| Forrester D ^o | | No wife | Sall.....H ^o Md | | D ^o |
| Nathan Cook | | Wife.....Peg M.H. GW | Caroline....D ^o | | Husb ^d Peter Hardman |
| W. Muclus B Lay ^r | | D ^o.....Capt ⁿ Marshalls | Kitty.....Milk Md | | D ^o Isaa Carp ^r GW |
| Juba Carter | 40 | No wife | Alce.....Spin ^r | 17 | Charles Freeman |
| Matilda Spinner | | Boson.....Ditcher | Betty Davis....D ^o | | Mr ^s Washington's - Dick |
| Frank Ho Servt | | Wife.....Lucy - Cook | Dolshy | | Husb ^d Joe Carp ^r GW |
| Will Shoemr | | Lame.....No wife | Anna | | D ^o livg at George Town |
| | | | Judy | | No Husband |
| | | | Delphy | | Ditto.....D ^o |
| | | | Peter...Lame...Kntt ^r | | No wife |
| | | | Alla.....D ^o | | Husb ^d James Cart ^r dower |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| amount | 24 | | amount | 28 | |
| Mansion House | | | Mansion House | | |
| Passed Labour | | | | | |
| Frank... | 80 | No wife | Will | 17 | Wife Aggy D.R. GW |
| Gunner... | 90 | Wife...Judy...RF GW | Joe....Post ⁿ | | D ^o Sall R.F D ^o |
| Sam Cook | 40 | Ditto...Alce...MH D ^o | Mike... | | No wife - Son to Lucy |
| | 3 | | Sinah... | | Husb ^d Miller Ben GW |
| | | | Mima... | | D ^o Godfrey Wag ^r dow ^r |
| | | | Lucy... | | No Husband |
| | | | Grace... | | Husb ^d M ^r Lear's Juba |
| | | | Letty... | | No husband |
| | | | Nancy... | | Ditto - D ^o |
| | | | Viner... | | Ditto - D ^o |
| | | | Eve... | | Ditto - a dwarf |
| | | | Delia... | 14 | Ditto - her sister |
| | | | Children | | |
| | | | Phil... | | son to Lucy |
| amount... | | | Patty... | | daughter to D ^o |

List continued

| G.W | | | Dower | | |
|---|------|---------|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Names | Ages | Remarks | Names | Ages | Remarks |
| Mansion H ^o con ^d | | | Mansion H ^o con ^d | | |
| | | | Children | | |
| | | | Rachel... | 12 | Daugh ^r ...to Caroline |
| | | | Jemima... | 9 | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Leanne... | 8 | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Polly... | 6 | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Peter - B.... | 4 | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Emery... | | Son.....to.....Alce |
| | | | Tom... | | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Charles... | | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Henriette... | | Daugh ^r.....Ditto |
| | | | Barbara... | 10 | Ditto...to...Kitty |
| | | | Levina... | 6 | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Elvey... | | Ditto...to...Charlotte |
| | | | Jenny... | | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Eliza... | | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Nancy... | 9 | Ditto...to...Betty D |
| | | | Oney... | 6 | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Lucinda... | 2 | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Daniel... | 6 | Son.....to.....Anna |
| | | | Anna... | 4 | Daugh.....Ditto |
| | | | Sandy... | ### | Son.....Ditto |
| | | | Sucky... | 5 | Daugh ^r ...to...Dolshy |
| | | | Dennis... | 2 m ^o | Son.....Ditto |
| | | | John... | | Ditto...to...Mima |
| | | | Randolph... | | Ditto.....Ditto |
| | | | Nancy... | | Daugh ^r ...to...Sinah |
| | | | Burwell... | | Son.....to...Lucy |
| | | | Passed Labour | | |
| | | | Doll... | | No husband |
| | | | Jenny... | | Ditto.....D ^o |
| | | | Old... | 2 | |
| | | | Workers | 12 | |
| | | | Children | 28 | |
| | | | Amount | 42 | Mansion House |
| | | | House Ser ^{ts} | 28 | |
| | | | Spinners &ca &ca | | |
| | | | Total | 70 | Not employed in the crops &ca |

George Washington...26

Dower.....70

In all.....96..not employed in the crops

List. Continued

| G.W | | | Dower | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Names | Ages | Remarks | Names | Ages | Remarks |
| Muddy hole F. | | | Muddy hole F. | | |
| Gabriel... | 30 | Wife...Judy. D.R. GW | Davy - Ov ^r | 56 | Wife...Molly...M.H...dow ^r |
| Uriah... | 24 | | Will - Mink | 60 | Ditto...Kate...D ^o ...GW |
| Moses... | 19 | Son...to Darcus...GW | Molly | 76 | Husband....Davy - Ov ^r |
| Kate... | old | Husb ^d ...Will...M.H..dow ^r | Patience | 14 | Daughtr....Dolly...U.Farm |
| Nanny... | d ^o | D ^o.....Tom...Cooper..GW | Mary | 11 | Ditto....Betty...D ^o |
| Sacky... | 40 | No Husband... | | | |
| Darcus ... | 36 | Husb ^d ...James...Carpr...GW | | | |
| Peg... | 34 | Ditto...Nathan C ^k ...GW | | | |
| Alce... | 38 | Ditto...Sam ...D ^o ...GW | | | |
| Amie... | 30 | No Husband | | | |
| Nancy... | 28 | Husb ^d ...Abram...French | | | |
| Molly... | 26 | No Husband | | | |
| Virgin... | 24 | Husb ^d ...Gab ^l ...M ^r Lear | | | |
| Letty... | 19 | No Husband | | | |
| Kate...long | 18 | Daugh ^r of Kate | | | |
| Kate...sht | 18 | Ditto...Alce. M.H. | | | |
| Isbel... | 16 | Ditto...Sarah - dead | | | |
| Townshend... | 14 | Son...to....Darcus | | | |
| Children | | | | | |
| Alce... | 8 | Daugh ^r ...to....Darcus | | | |
| Nancy... | 2 | Ditto.....D ^o | | | |
| Lucy... | 11 | Daugh ^r ...to....Peg | | | |
| Diana... | 8 | Ditto.....D ^o | | | |
| Alexander... | 3 | Son.....D ^o | | | |
| Darcus... | 1 | Daugh ^r.....D ^o | | | |
| Oliver... | 11 | Son...to....Nancy | | | |
| Siss... | 8 | Daugh ^r.....D ^o | | | |
| Martin... | 1 | Son.....D ^o | | | |
| George... | 8 | D ^o....to....Alce | | | |
| Adam... | 7 | D ^o.....D ^o | | | |
| Cecelia... | 2 | Daugh ^r.....D ^o | | | |
| Sylvia... | 10 | Ditto...to...Molly | | | |
| James... | 7 | Son.....D ^o | | | |
| Rainey... | 8 | Daugh ^r ...to....Amie | | | |
| Urinah... | 2 | D ^o.....D ^o | | | |
| Billy... | 2 | Son...to...Letty | | | |
| Henry... | 1 | D ^o.....D ^o | | | |
| Workers...18 | } together.....36 | | Workers.....3 | } ... In all 5 | |
| Children...18 | | | Does nothing...1 | | |
| | | | Young.....1 | | |
| Altogether...at this Farm...41 | | | | | |

List. Continued

| G.W | | | Dower | | |
|-------------------------|------|--|-------------------------------------|------|--|
| Names | Ages | Remarks | Names | Ages | Remarks |
| River Farm | | | River Farm | | |
| Robin... | 80 | Nearly passed lab ^r | Ben... | 70 | Nearly done...Peg for wife |
| Natt... | 55 | Wife...Doll...RF...Dow ^r | Breechy... | 60 | not better...Ruth his wife |
| Ned... | 56 | Ditto...Han ^h ...d ^o ...d ^o | Johny... | 39 | Wife...Esther RF dow ^r |
| Ben...Cart ^r | 22 | | Richmond... | 20 | No_Wife |
| Peg... | 56 | Hub ^d ...Old Ben...RF...Dow ^r | Ned... | 20 | |
| Judy... | 55 | Ditto...Gunna.....GW | Heuky... | 17 | Son...to...Agnes...RF |
| Cloe... | 55 | No husband | Joe... | 22 | |
| Suckey... | 50 | Ditto...d ^o | Esther... | 40 | Husb ^d ...Johny...D ^o |
| Suckey...Bay | 46 | hub ^d ...belongs to Adan ^s | Doll... | 58 | Husb ^d ...Natt...RF...GW |
| Sall... | 30 | Ditto...Post ⁿ Joe...dow ^r | Lydia... | 50 | Ditto....Smith Geo: ...GW |
| Rose... | 28 | No husband | Agnes... | 36 | Ditto...Sambo Car ^r ...GW |
| Penny... | 20 | Husb ^d ...Ben Hub ^d ...GW | Alce... | 26 | Ditto...Lears John |
| Lucy... | 18 | Ditto...Cyrus Post ⁿ ...dow ^r | Fanny... | 30 | Ditto...Alexanders |
| Hannah... | 12 | daugh ^r ...Daphne...dead | Betty... | 20 | Ditto Lears Reuben |
| Daniel... | 15 | Son...to...Suckey. RF | Doll... | 16 | No Husb ^d . Daugh to Doll |
| Henry... | 11 | Son...to...Sall.....d ^o | Cecelia... | 14 | No Husb ^d . Ditto to Agnes |
| Nancy... | 11 | daugh ^r ...to...Bay Suke d ^o | Jack... | 12 | Son...to...Doll |
| Children | | | Anderson... | 11 | Ditto...to...Agnes |
| Elijah... | 7 | Son...to...Sall...RF | Lydia... | 11 | Daugh ^r to Lydia |
| Dennis... | 5 | Ditto.....D ^o ...d ^o | Ralph... <small>Children</small> | 9 | Son to Sall.....RF |
| Gutridge... | 3 | Ditto.....D ^o ...d ^o | Charity... | 2 | Daugh ^r ...D ^o.....D ^o |
| Polly... | 1 | Daugh ^r.....D ^o ...d ^o | Charles... | 1 | Son.....D ^o.....D ^o |
| Hagar... | 6 | D ^o ...to...Rose d ^o | Davy... | 6 | } Cornelia's Child ⁿ dece ^d dow |
| Simon... | 4 | Son.....D ^o.....d ^o | Lewis... | 4 | |
| Tom... | 2 | D ^o.....D ^o ...d ^o | Alce... | 2 | |
| Joe... | 1 | D ^o.....D ^o ...d ^o | Suckey... | 4 | Daught ^r to Alce...RF |
| Nancy... | 4 | daugh ^r ...to...Bay Suke d ^o | Jude... | 1 | Ditto....D ^o.....d ^o |
| Passed Labor | | | Milley... | 1 | Daugh ^r to Betty...do |
| Ruth... | 70 | husb ^d ...Breechy...dow ^r | Peter... | 9 | Son...to Doll....d ^o |
| | | | Hannah... | old | Cooks - Husb ^d Ned d ^o |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Workers.....17 | | Workers.....19 | |
| Children.....9 | together.....27 | Children.....10 | making.....30 |
| Passed lab ^r ...1 | | Passed lab ^r ...1 | |

Altogether...at this Farm...57

List. Continued

| G.W | | | Dower | | |
|------------------|------|---|-----------------|------------------|--|
| Names | Ages | Remarks | Names | Ages | Remarks |
| Dogue Run. Farm | | | Dogue Run. Farm | | |
| Ben... | 57 | Wife...Peg...D.R....Dow ^f | Lucy... | 50 | Husb ^d....Smith Natt. GW |
| Long Jack... | 60 | Wife...Molly...D ^o GW | Sall Twine... | 38 | D ^o ...Gardr George GW |
| Dick... | 46 | Ditto...Charity D ^o ...D ^o | Grace... | 35 | D ^o ...Cartr Jack GW |
| Carter Jack... | 40 | Ditto...Grace..D ^o ...Dow ^f | Peg... | 30 | D ^o ...Ben...DR.....GW |
| Simon... | 20 | No Wife | Kate... | 18 | D ^o a Negro of Moreton's |
| Lawrence... | 14 | Son...to...Matilda GW | Ned... | 14 | Son....to...Lucy DR |
| Judy...blind | 50 | Husb ^d Gabriel. M.H. GW | Children | | |
| Molly...cook | 45 | Ditto...Long Jack DR GW | Teney... | 10 | Daught ^f ...to...Lucy DR |
| Charity... | 42 | Ditto...Dick.....D ^o ...D ^o | Barbary... | 11 | Daught ^f ...to...Sall T DR |
| Priscilla... | 36 | Ditto...Slamin Joe.....Dow ^f | Abbay... | 10 | D ^o.....D ^o....D ^o |
| Linney... | 27 | No Husband | Hannah... | 4 | D ^o.....D ^o....D ^o |
| Agnes... | 25 | Husbd...Will...Man ⁿ H ^o Dow ^f | George... | 1 | Son.....D ^o....D ^o |
| Sarah... | 20 | No...Husband | Roger... | 10 | D ^o.....to.....Grace DR |
| Betty... | 16 | D ^o ...D ^o | Molly... | 6 | Daught ^f.....D ^o....d ^o |
| Sophia... | 14 | D ^o ...D ^o Siller's daught ^f | Jenny... | 3 | D ^o.....D ^o....d ^o |
| Savary... | 13 | daught ^f ...to...Siller DR | Billy... | 6 | Son.....to....Peg...d ^o |
| Penny...Children | 11 | Ditto.....D ^o....d ^o | Fendal... | 2 | D ^o.....D ^o....d ^o |
| Israel... | 10 | Son.....D ^o....d ^o | Peg... | 8 m ^o | Daught ^f.....D ^o....d ^o |
| Isrias... | 3 | D ^o ...d ^o | Passed Labor | | |
| Christopher... | 1 | Son.....D ^o....d ^o | Sue... | 70 | No . Husband |
| Fomison... | 11 | Daught ^f ...to...Charity...d ^o | | | |
| Dick... | 3 | D ^o.....D ^o.....d ^o | | | |
| Bartley... | 6 | Ditto.....to...Linney d ^o | | | |
| Matilda... | 1 | Daught ^f.....D ^o....d ^o | | | |
| Lucy... | 2 | Ditto.....to...Sarah d ^o | | | |
| Guy... | 2 | Son.....to...Agnes d ^o | | | |
| Passed Labor | | | | | |
| Hannah... | 60 | No Husb ^d partly an ideot | | | |

| | | | |
|---|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Workers.....16 | | Workers.....6 | |
| Children.....10 | together.....27 | Children.....11 | making.....18 |
| Passed lab ^f ...1 | | Passed lab ^f ...1 | |
| Whole am ^t at this Farm.....45 | | | |

Union Farm output to have been entered
in this place - but by mistake,
was carr^d to the other side

| Recapitulation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------|----------------|-----|
| Where + how Empl ^d | Belonging to GW | | | | | | | Dower | | | | | | | Grand Total | |
| | Men | Wom ⁿ | Work ^s | | Child ⁿ | | Total | Men | Wom ⁿ | Work ^s | | Child ⁿ | | Total | | |
| | | | boys | girls | boys | girls | | | | boys | girls | boys | girls | | | |
| Tradesmen + others, not employed on the Farms....viz | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Smiths..... | 2 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 2 | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  |  | 2 | |
| Bricklayers..... | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | 2 | |
| Carpenters..... | 5 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 5 | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | 6 | |
| Coopers..... | 3 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 3 | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | 3 | |
| Shoemaker..... | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | 1 | |
| Cooks..... | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | ..... | 1 | ..... |  |  |  | 1 | 2 | |
| Gardners..... | 2 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 2 | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | 2 | |
| Millers..... | 1 | ..... | 1 | | | | 2 | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | 2 | |
| House Servants..... | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | 2 | 4 | ..... |  |  |  | 6 | 7 | |
| Ditchers..... | 4 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 4 | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | 5 | |
| Distillers..... | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | 4 | ..... | 1 | ..... |  |  | 5 | 5 | |
| Postilions..... | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | 1 | ..... | 1 | ..... |  |  | 2 | 2 | |
| Waggoners + Cart ^{rs} | 1 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 1 | 2 | ..... |  |  |  |  | 2 | 3 | |
| Milk Maid..... | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | ..... | 1 | ..... |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | |
| Spinners + Knit ^{rs}..... | ..... | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | 7 | ..... |  |  |  | 8 | 9 | |
| Mansion Ho | ..... | ..... |  |  |  |  | ..... | 3 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 15 | 40 | 40 | |
| Muddy hole | 3 | 14 | 1 | ..... | 8 | 10 | 36 | 2 | ..... | ..... | 2 | ..... | ..... | 4 | 40 | |
| River Farm | 3 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 26 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 28 | 54 | |
| Dogue Run F. | 6 | 7 | ..... | 1 | 7 | 3 | 24 | ..... | 5 | 1 | ..... | 5 | 6 | 17 | 41 | |
| Union Farm | 2 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 3 | ..... | 8 | 6 | 27 | 32 | |
| Passed lab ^r or those that do not work | Muddy hole | 36 | 32 | 4 | 3 | 21 | 19 | 115 | 28 | 42 | 11 | 5 | 26 | 32 | 144 | 259 |
| | River Farm | 1 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... | 2 | 1 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | 2 |4 | |
| | Dogue Run | ..... | 3 | ..... | ..... | ..... | 3 | ..... | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | 1 |4 | |
| | Union Farm | ..... | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... | 1 | ..... | 3 | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | 3 |4 | |
| | Mansion H ^o | 3 | .... | .... | .... | .... | 3 | ..... | 2 | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | 2 |5 | |
| | 40 | 37 | 4 | 3 | 21 | 19 | 124 | 29 | 50 | 11 | 5 | 26 | 32 | 153 | 277 | |
| Hired f ^m Mr ^s French | 9 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 40 | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... | ...40 | |
| Grand Total..... | 49 | 36 | 6 | 7 | 27 | 29 | 164 | 29 | 50 | 11 | 5 | 26 | 32 | 153 | 317 | |

List. Continued

| G.W | | | Dower | | |
|-------------|------|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|---|
| Names | Ages | Remarks | Names | Ages | Remarks |
| Union Farm | | | Union Farm | | |
| London... | 64 | No Wife | Sam Kitt... | 78 | Wife at Dan ^l Stones |
| Joe... | 24 | | Caesar... | 50 | No Wife |
| Edy... | 26 | Husbd...Davy Carp ^r GW | Paul... | 36 | D ^o D ^o |
| Children | | | John... | 16 | Son...to Betty U.F. |
| Sarah... | 6 | Daught ^r ...to...Edy | Betty... | 62 | No husb ^d ...Cooks |
| Nancy... | 1 | D ^o.....d ^o | Lucy... | 50 | Husb ^d at Cap. Marshalls |
| Passed Work | | | Fanny... | 36 | D ^o ...Charles...Ditch ^r |
| Flora... | 64 | No Husband | Jenny... | 34 | D ^o ...M ^{rs} Wash ^{ns} George |
| | | | Rachell... | 34 | No...Husband |
| | | | Milly... | 22 | D ^o ...D ^o |
| | | | Lucretia... | 20 | D ^o ...D ^o |
| | | | Children | | |
| | | | Davy... | 8 | D ^o.....Ditto |
| | | | Guss... | 3 | D ^o.....Ditto |
| | | | Beck... | 4 | Daugh ^r.....Ditto |
| | | | Eneas... | 1 | Son.....Ditto |
| | | | Elizabeth... | 9 | Daugh ^r ...to....Doll |
| | | | Suckey... | 11 | D ^o ..at M ^{rs} W..D ^o |
| | | | Elias... | 2 m ^o | Son.....Ditto |
| | | | Daphne... | 5 | Daugh ^r ...to...Fanny |
| | | | Charles... | 1 | Son.....Ditto |
| | | | Felicia... | 7 | Daugh ^r ...to...Jenny |
| | | | Jonathan... | 3 | Son.....to....Ditto |
| | | | Hellam... | 1 | D ^o.....D ^o |
| | | | Diana... | 1 | Daugh ^r ...to...Milly |
| | | | Jesse... | 6 | Son.....to....Patt. Dead |
| | | | Passed Labor | | |
| | | | Daphne... | 70 | No Husband |
| | | | Doll... | 52 | Lame + pret ^{ds} to be so |

| | | | |
|--|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Workers.....3 | | Workers.....14 | |
| Children.....2 | Making.....6 | Children.....14 | Making.....30 |
| Passed lab ^r....1 | | Passed lab ^r.....2 | |
| Whole amount at this Farm | | | |
| exclusive of French's Neg ^s | | | |
| | | | 36 |

A List of Negros hired from
M^{rs} French

| Names | Ages | Remarks |
|-------------|----------------|---|
| Will... | Old but hearty | Looks after the stock...Wife at M ^{rs} French's |
| Abram... | in his prime | Wife at Muddy hole....Nancy |
| Paschall... | Ditto... | No wife....lately lost...Cornelia...MH |
| Tom... | Ditto 28 | No wife...getting Blind |
| Isaac... | Ditto 29 | Ditto.....lives at Muddy hole Farm |
| Moses... | Ditto 26 | Plowman + Carter |
| James... | 24... | At the Distillery |
| Julius... | 23... | Carter |
| Spencer... | 20... | Ditto and Mower |
| Sabine... | 60... | Husband |
| Lucy... | 55... | Ditto...M ^c Carty's George.....a Knitter |
| Daphne... | 40... | Ditto...Simms Carpenter.....Plougher |
| Delia... | 35... | No Husband.....Spinner |
| Grace... | 28... | Husband...M ^{rs} Wash ^{ns} Davy....Plougher |
| Siss... | 25... | Ditto.....D ^o.....Jack.....Ditto |
| Milly... | 18... | No Husband..... |
| Nancy... | 16... | Ditto |
| Hannah... | 14... | Ditto |
| Daniel... | 16... | Son...of...Delia's |
| Isaac... | 14... | D ^o ...of...Rose...deceased |
| Matilda... | 13... | Daugh ^r ...of...Daphne |
| Betty... | 13... | Ditto.....Delia |
| Briney... | 12... | Ditto.....Lucy |
| Grace... | 12... | Ditto.....Rose...deceased |
| Children | | |
| Stately... | 10... | Son...of...Lucy's |
| Renney... | 6... | Daugh ^r.....Ditto |
| Raison... | 3... | D ^o.....D ^o |
| Morgan... | 2... | Son.....D ^o |
| Phoenix... | 1... | D ^o.....D ^o |
| Polly... | 9... | Daugh ^r ...of...Daphne's |
| Maria... | 2... | D ^o.....D ^o |
| Jack... | 7... | Son...of...Delia |
| Julia... | 4... | Daugh.....D ^o |
| Nelly... | 2... | Ditto.....D ^o |
| Ambrose.. | 1... | Son.....D ^o |
| Bob... | 10... | D ^o ...of...Grace |
| Sall... | 8... | Daugh.....D ^o |
| Judy... | 4... | Ditto.....D ^o |
| Augusta... | 1... | Ditto.....D ^o |
| Nancy... | 10... | Ditto...of...Sabine |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Men.....9 | } In all 40 |
| Women.....9 | |
| Work ^g Boys + Girls.....6 | |
| Children.....16 | |

EXCERPT: GEORGE WASHINGTON'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT, JULY 9, 1799

1

[Mount Vernon, 9 July 1799]

2 In the name of God amen I George Washington of Mount Vernon—a citizen of the United States,
3 and lately Pr(es)ident of the same, do make, ordai(n) and declare this Instrument; w(hic)h is
4 written with my own hand (an)d every page thereof subscribed (wit)h my name, to be my last
5 Will & (Tes)tament, revoking all others.

6 (I)mprimus. All my (deb)ts, of which there are but few, and none of magnitude, are to be
7 punctu(al)ly and speedily paid—and the Legaci(es he)reinafter bequeathed, are to be disc(ha)rged
8 as soon as circumstances will (pe)rmit, and in the manner directe(d).

9 (I)tem. To my dearl(y be)loved wife Martha Washington (I) give and bequeath the use, profit
10 (an)d benefit of my whole Estate, real and p(er)sonal, for the term of her natural li(fe)—except
11 such parts thereof as are sp(e)cifically disposed of hereafter: (My i)mproved lot in the Town of
12 Alex(andria, situated on) Pitt & Cameron (streets, I give to her and) her heirs forev(er; 1 as I also
13 do my) household & Kite(hen) furniture of every sort & kind, with the liquors and groceries
14 which may be on hand at the time of my decease; to be used & disposed of as she may think
15 proper.

16 (Ite)m Upon the decease (of) my wife, it is my Will & desire th(at) all the Slaves which I hold
17 in (my) *own right*, shall receive their free(dom). To emancipate them during (her) life, would,
18 tho' earnestly wish(ed by) me, be attended with such insu(pera)ble difficulties on account of
19 thei(r interm)ixture by Marriages with the (dow)er Negroes, as to excite the most pa(in)ful
20 sensations, if not disagreeabl(e c)onsequences from the latter, while (both) descriptions are in the
21 occupancy (of) the same Proprietor; it not being (in) my power, under the tenure by which (th)e

22 Dower Negroes are held, to man(umi)t them. And whereas among (thos)e who will recieve
23 freedom ac(cor)ding to this devise, there may b(e so)me, who from old age or bodily
24 infi(rm)ities, and others who on account of (the)ir infancy, that will be unable to (su)pport
25 themselves; it is m(y Will and de)sire that all who (come under the first) & second descrip(tion
26 shall be comfor)tably cloathed & (fed by my heirs while) they live; and that such of the latter
27 description as have no parents living, or if living are unable, or unwilling to provide for them,
28 shall be bound by the Court until they shall arrive at the ag(e) of twenty five years; and in cases
29 where no record can be produced, whereby their ages can be ascertained, the judgment of the
30 Court, upon its own view of the subject, shall be adequate and final. The Negros thus bound, are
31 (by their Masters or Mistresses) to be taught to read & write; and to be brought up to some useful
32 occupation, agreeably to the Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support of
33 Orphan and other poor Children. and I do hereby expressly forbid the Sale, or transportation out
34 of the said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence whatsoever.
35 And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors hereafter
36 named, or the Survivors of them, to see that *th(is cla)*use respecting Slaves, and every part thereof
37 be religiously fulfilled at the Epoch at which it is directed to take place; without evasion, neglect
38 or delay, after the Crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects
39 the aged and infirm; seeing that a regular and permanent fund be established for their support so
40 long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the (u)ncertain provision to be made by
41 individuals.2 And to my Mulatto man William (calling himself William Lee) I give immediate
42 freedom; or if he should prefer it (on account of the accidents which ha(v)e befallen him, and
43 which have rendered him incapable of walking or of any active employment) to remain in the
44 situation he now is, it shall be optional in him to do so: In either case however, I allow him an
45 annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, whic(h) shall be independent of the victuals and
46 cloaths he has been accustomed to receive, if he chuses the last alternative; but in full, with his
47 freedom, if he prefers the first; & this I give him as a test(im)ony of my sense of his attachment to
48 me, and for his faithful services during the Revolutionary War.

**EXCERPT: ADDITION TO MARTHA WASHINGTON'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT,
MARCH 4, 1802**

1

March 4th 1.802

2 I give to my grandson George Washington Parke Custis my mulato man Elish—that I

3 Bought of Mr Butler Washington to him and his heir for ever—

4

M. Washington

MARTHA AS AN ENSLAVED – PART 1

In 1750, Martha Dandridge married Daniel Parke Custis. Custis came from a wealthy Virginia planter family that owned 17,500 acres of land cultivated by hundreds of enslaved people. After her husband's death in 1757, Martha Dandridge Custis was entitled to the use of one-third of her husband's estate, including the enslaved men and women, their labor, and the wealth produced from their work for the duration of her life. These enslaved people were known as dower slaves, as they were considered part of her widow's share of Daniel Parke Custis' estate. After marrying George Washington in 1759, control of the dower slaves fell to Martha's new husband. Many of the Custis slaves were brought to Washington's Mount Vernon estate to labor alongside his own enslaved people.

On December 14, 1799, as George Washington lay dying, he asked Martha Washington to bring him the two wills he had previously prepared. One he directed be put in the fire and burned and the other he used as his last will and testament. The will George Washington selected stipulated that Martha Washington could use and benefit from the labor of Mount Vernon's slaves for the duration of her lifetime at which time the enslaved people owned outright by Washington would be emancipated, supported, and educated. Importantly, this directive only included the enslaved people owned by George Washington – it did not include the dower slaves from the Custis estate who made up nearly half of the enslaved people living and working at Mount Vernon.

George Washington was aware that many of the enslaved marriages on his estate were between Washington slaves and dower slaves. Many historians believe that George Washington delayed the emancipation of his enslaved people in order to postpone the separation of families that would inevitably happen under the terms of his will.

As seen in his last will and testament, George Washington's views of slavery as an institution, along with his views of emancipation and abolition, changed during his lifetime. Martha Washington, on the other hand, may not have shared this change in view regarding slavery. Though she freed the Washington slaves before her own death, many historians argue this was done out of a fear for her own life rather than due to any abolitionist tendencies. In her own last will and testament, Martha included an addendum regarding the one enslaved man, Elish, who she owned outright. According to her will, Elish was to be left to her grandson, George Washington (Wash) Parke Custis, "to him and his heir for ever".

EXCERPT: AN ACT FOR THE GRADUAL EMANCIPATION OF SLAVERY, MARCH 1, 1780

1 When we contemplate our Abhorrence of that Condition to which the Arms and Tyranny of Great
2 Britain were exerted to reduce us, when we look back on the Variety of Dangers to which we
3 have been exposed, and how miraculously our Wants in many Instances have been supplied and
4 our Deliverances wrought, when even Hope and human fortitude have become unequal to the
5 Conflict; we are unavoidably led to a serious and grateful Sense of the manifold Blessings which
6 we have undeservedly received from the hand of that Being from whom every good and perfect
7 Gift cometh. Impressed with these Ideas we conceive that it is our duty, and we rejoice that it is in
8 our Power, to extend a Portion of that freedom to others, which hath been extended to us; and a
9 Release from that State of Thralldom, to which we ourselves were tyrannically doomed, and from
10 which we have now every Prospect of being delivered. It is not for us to enquire, why, in the
11 Creation of Mankind, the Inhabitants of the several parts of the Earth, were distinguished by a
12 difference in Feature or Complexion. It is sufficient to know that all are the Work of an Almighty
13 Hand. . .

14

15 Be it enacted and it is hereby enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the
16 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met and by the Authority of the same, That
17 all Persons, as well Negroes, and Mulattos, as others, who shall be born within this State, from
18 and after the Passing of this Act, shall not be deemed and considered as Servants for Life or
19 Slaves; and that all Servitude for Life or Slavery of Children in Consequence of the Slavery of
20 their Mothers, in the Case of all Children born within this State from and after the passing of this
21 Act as aforesaid, shall be, an hereby is, utterly taken away, extinguished and for ever abolished. . .

22

23 And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That no Man or Woman of any Nation or
24 Colour, except the Negroes or Mulattoes who shall be registered as aforesaid shall at any time
25 hereafter be deemed, adjudged or holden, within the Territories of this Commonwealth, as Slaves
26 or Servants for Life, but as freemen and Freewomen; and except the domestic Slaves attending

27 upon Delegates in Congress from the other American States, foreign Ministers and Consuls, and
28 persons passing through or sojourning in this State, and not becoming resident therein; and
29 Seamen employed in Ships, not belonging to any Inhabitant of this State nor employed in any
30 Ship owned by any such Inhabitant, Provided such domestic Slaves be not aliened or sold to any
31 Inhabitant, nor (except in the Case of Members of Congress, foreign Ministers and Consuls)
32 retained in this State longer than six Months.

MARTHA WASHINGTON TO FRANCES (FANNY) BASSETT WASHINGTON, JUNE 5, 1791

1 My Dear Fanny

2 Your letter of the 29th of May, did not reach my hands till yesterday - I was then very sick having
3 got cold by the change of weather; - or I would have got and sent by Hercules the silk and wool. I
4 will as soon as I am well enough to go out make the best collection I can and send it by a safe
5 hand. I believe they are to be had in this city. As to find muslin I have never been able to find a
6 yard of fine Jaconet muslin in this place—nor is the book fine—I will lay the money out in the
7 best way I can.—I send by Hercules ruffles for my little Boys bosom which I beg you will make
8 Charlot hem and whip them ready to sew on and send me his at a time as his old ruffles are worn
9 to rags—Hercules comes home to be ready for his master—I have got several things for kitchen
10 use but the vessil will not sail in time to be there as soon as he will—I also send some East India
11 sugar it seems to be clean and while I was in hopes it should have arrived in time to measure and
12 dry cherries. I have had letter from the President from Savanna and expect will be with you by
13 this day week. I should be very happy to come on to see you and meet him but that is out of my
14 power, I am not well enough to bear the journey- and if I was- I could not come along away
15 without a gentlemen and Mr. Lear could not leave this 2 come with me. If you can get timothy for
16 half a crown in town it is much cheaper than it can be had here. The East India vessels has
17 brought nothing but tea and nankeens and the very coarsest kind of callaco and such muslin as
18 sells for four and five shillings a yard. I was thinking of getting some of the coarse cotton to
19 make her undercoats she must have them of some kind or other. It would be well for the major to
20 mention it to the General. I sent to Betty Custis a pair of stays which Mrs. Stuart says will find
21 her and she had sent them to Mr. Snow to return to me if they wish with Miss Harriot or he may
22 as well keep them—as to have a pair made for her. I have seen no timothy sold here for less than
23 four & six pence—and that that but one piece—I got what was left and sent it to the girls.

24 Bart. Dandridge arrived here yesterday—he is a yellow as a mulatto, he is inoculated this day for

25 the small pox. Mr. Lear's child has got quite well and grows finely—the children are both well
26 and so is all out family, except myself—and god only knows whether I shall ever be in tolerable
27 health again—I am sorry to hear that your little boy is not in good health—worms is the cause of
28 all complaints in children—I have sent three Butter printers send one of the larger ones to Mrs.
29 Stuart and keep the other two till I come—My love to the major—kiss the children—and believe
30 me my dear Fanny

31

Your most affectionate

32

M Washington

MARTHA AS AN ENSLAVED – PART 2

In March 1780, inspired by the American Revolution and the rhetoric of the war against the tyranny of Britain and King George III, Pennsylvania passed *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery*. The law prohibited the importation of slaves into Pennsylvania and changed the legal status of children born to enslaved mothers, after the law went into effect, to indentured servants. At the time, Philadelphia was the acting capital of the United States and Congress was the sole legislative body under the Articles of Confederation. Importantly, members of Congress were exempt from the law.

A 1788 amendment to *An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery* closed many of the loopholes of the original law. Included in the amendment was new language prohibiting the rotation of slaves in and out of the state by non-residents – a practice that had previously voided the original law’s language regarding emancipation for slaves owned by non-residents who stayed in the state for more than six months. When the United States moved from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution, it was unclear if the exemption for members of Congress extended to the newly created Executive and Judicial branches of the government.

Martha and George Washington brought nine enslaved people with them to the Presidential Mansion in Philadelphia, including their favorite cook Hercules. The Washingtons often returned their slaves to Mount Vernon on a six-month schedule to maintain them in bondage and acted as if the exemption to abolition laws extended to the Executive branch.

Martha Washington took advantage of Philadelphia’s location as a seaport city and purchased many items that were difficult to acquire at Mount Vernon including imported cloth. Much of this cloth was sent back to Mount Vernon under the care of her niece Frances (Fanny) Bassett to be sewn by Charlotte, a skilled seamstress and enslaved woman on the plantation.

For more information on Hercules, including details of his escape from slavery, visit:

<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/hercules/>

For more information on Charlotte visit:

<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/charlotte/>

As a group, evaluate and answer the following prompt using evidence from the primary source documents.

Martha Washington embodied the southern plantation enslaver and the expected perspective on slavery.

CLAIM: Explain Martha Washington's views on slavery.

EVIDENCE: What evidence from the primary sources support your claim?

INTERPRETATION: How does the evidence you cite support your claim?
