

# GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT ★ VERNON

## ABOUT THE FRED W. SMITH NATIONAL LIBRARY FOR THE STUDY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

*“I have not houses to build, except one, which I must erect for the accommodation and security of my military, civil and private papers, which are voluminous and may be interesting.”*

*Letter from George Washington to his friend James McHenry, April 3, 1797*

### Introduction

As conveyed in a letter to a friend, President George Washington intended to build a structure on his estate for his papers, but that plan was never realized – until now. The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon is the premier repository for knowledge about our first president’s achievements and legacy. For the first time, Mount Vernon’s vast collection of books, papers and archival materials are organized, conserved and stored in a building reflecting the highest level of security, climate control and architectural design.

The 45,000 square-foot Library, situated on 15 acres adjacent to Washington’s Mount Vernon estate, will serve as both a safe haven for his books and letters, and a center for education about his leadership.

Within the heart of the Library, historians and scholars will have the opportunity to study original letters and papers penned in Washington’s own hand. They will learn more about the father of our freedoms within elegant surroundings close to where many of the historic documents originated.

Government officials, corporate executives and presidents of universities and nonprofit organizations will gain inspiration from Washington’s morality and ethics through leadership

programs held in the Library's conference wing. Teachers and students will benefit from creative educational and outreach programs developed using the latest digital technologies.

Reflecting Mount Vernon's heightened focus on electronic outreach and its expansion of digital platforms, the Library will become a worldwide resource for teaching millions of people – often for the first time – about Washington's remarkable contributions to our country and his commitment to the cause of liberty.

The Library opened on September 27, 2013, following a successful \$100 million capital campaign to support its construction and the establishment of its inaugural slate of programs. Like the Mount Vernon estate, the Library is owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, a private non-profit which accepts no government funding.

## **Key Facts**

### **What is the Library?**

The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington serves these primary purposes: to safeguard original books and manuscripts; to support scholarly research and to foster new scholarship; to provide a platform for educational outreach; and to serve as a center for leadership training, conferences, and gatherings inspired by Washington's example.

### **Location**

Part of Washington's original farm, the Library is located on a 15-acre portion of the Mount Vernon estate near the Mount Vernon Inn Complex and the western visitor parking lot. Archaeological investigations conducted prior to the start of construction suggest that the land was used as farmland during Washington's time.

### **About the Building**

The Library measures 45,000 square feet. It is a three-level building, built into a hillside to take advantage of the natural topography of the site, and to preserve the impressive views leading to and from the building. The adjacent Scholars' Residence measures 7,300 square feet. This space

will provide a living area for up to six scholars, visiting fellows, and lecturers for a day, a week or months at a time. The heart of the Library is devoted to the main reading room, rare books and manuscript rooms, and stacks for modern volumes. The larger education wing on the east side provides spaces for seminars, lectures and training programs on George Washington's life, times and remarkable leadership.

### **Landscape & Grounds**

In designing the landscape, Mount Vernon planted 937 trees and more than 2,500 bushes and shrubs. Together with its construction partners, Mount Vernon took care to ensure that the trees located outside the construction footprint were maintained and protected. All trees, including the new plantings and the existing trees covering the woodland site, are under the care of professional arborists.

### **Capital Campaign**

Construction costs for the Library totaled approximately \$45 million. To fund the Library construction and to facilitate its inaugural slate of programs, Mount Vernon launched a \$100 million capital campaign in February 2010. When the campaign closed in June 2013, Mount Vernon had exceeded its goal, raising \$106.4 million. The Library is funded solely by private donations; Mount Vernon does not accept government funding.

### **Construction Timeline**

A ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony took place on the site in April 2011, and construction commenced that fall. The building was completed in summer 2013. The grand opening ceremonies took place on September 27, 2013.

### **Collections & Scholarship**

Three centuries of George Washington scholarship will be available in the Library's general collection:

- More than 12,000 books, journals, audio-visual items, information files, and electronic resources

- 2,500 rare books, including 62 titles and 103 volumes books owned by George Washington
- 6,000 historical manuscripts
- More than 5,000 special collections items (scrapbooks, photographs, postcards, memorabilia)
- Archives, spanning the 150 year history of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association
- The office and files of *The Papers of George Washington* project, which will be permanently housed in the Library
- Extensive microfilm of the early records (correspondence and business documents) of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, which can be viewed, printed, and scanned using state-of-the art equipment.

### **Conference Facilities**

The conference wing of the Library consists of a series of meeting rooms. The largest meeting room, The David M. Rubenstein Leadership Hall, will seat one hundred people auditorium-style or about sixty people classroom-style. Two smaller meeting rooms will seat fifty people each. There are also two seminar rooms to accommodate smaller functions. All meeting rooms are equipped with high-definition projectors or large flat screens, and most rooms also offer cameras and microphones to allow for distance learning hookups to classrooms, conference centers and media outlets across the country. The largest meeting room boasts a unique video display wall 18 feet wide by 8 feet tall. This video wall presents programs at twenty times the resolution of today's high-def monitors, creating amazing definition and contrast for viewers both far away and up close, in both daylight and darkened environment.

### **Leadership Training Programs**

Senior officials of government, military, corporations and nonprofits, and other select groups will gather at the Library to participate in leadership and training programs. One goal of these seminars is to foster a deep understanding of George Washington's exemplary leadership with the hope that today's executives will follow in his footsteps. Mount Vernon is developing flexible curricula for these programs in collaboration with faculty from the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership Studies.

**Library Studio**

The lower level of the Library will house Mount Vernon's network-quality broadcast studio, from which Mount Vernon staff and visiting scholars can engage in interviews, talk shows and lectures with remote media outlets.

**Accessing the Library**

The Library will be open by appointment to researchers and scholars. Public events and programs will be announced at a later date.