

Character Chronicles

The Character Traits of George Washington

Vol. I

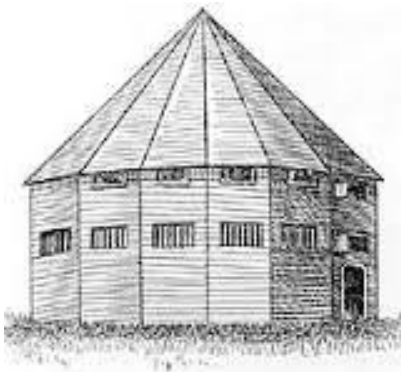
INNOVATIVE

No. V

Sixteen Sides or Bust!

FALL, 1792

George Washington was always looking for ways to improve life and agriculture at his beloved Mount Vernon.



During his first term as President, Washington designed a 16-sided barn to be used for threshing wheat, or removing the grains from the stalk. Up to this point most threshing was done outside on the ground and

the grain got very dirty and was subject to the weather.

The barn was constructed with an upper and lower level. The upper level had a large circular path with a floor made from slats of boards with small spaces in between them. These spaces opened into the lower level.

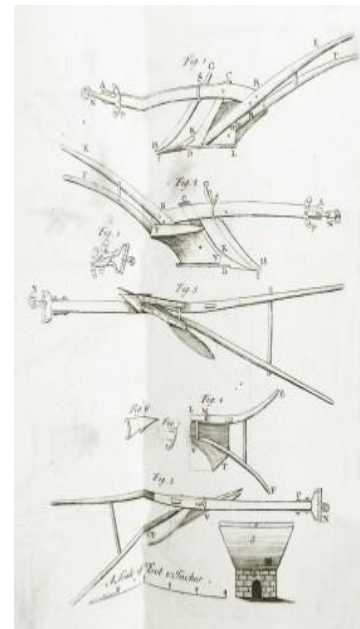


Wheat would be placed on the floor and ponies would trot around the circle knocking the grain out of the stalk. The grain fell through the slats and onto the stone floor below, where it was collected in large baskets. This could be done rain or shine!

A Swing Plow, American Style

1760s

George Washington was interested in the most up-to-date thinking and designs in farming equipment. The Rotherham Plow was an invention that came from England in the 1730s.



Realizing it had great possibilities for plowing in his fields, Washington ordered the plans for it, and modified them to “be made exceeding light as our Lands are not so stiff as yours nor our Horses so strong.” Washington took the best and made it better.

To Dung Or Not To Dung, That Is the Question!

MAY 22, 1760

George Washington was a savvy business man. Losing money and the use of lands to the crop of tobacco had to change!

Tobacco is a very volatile crop. It can ruin land by depleting it of many of the nutrients so it cannot be used for many years.

George Washington, the ever-curious and determined scientist, decided to see if there was a formula he could use to fertilize his poor soil, and so the infamous “12 box” science fair project began.

Over the course of a few winters, Washington very carefully combined his soil

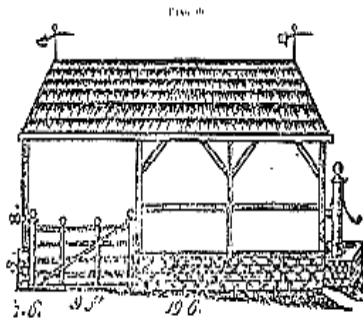
with combinations of readily available, naturally-occurring substances found near Mount Vernon.

For example, he added equal amounts of creek and river mud, fish heads, plaster of Paris, and fresh manure to his soil in a 12-sectioned compost box. Then he planted the same number and type of seeds in each.

Washington carefully recorded the growth of the plants, noting which seemed to produce the best results. In doing so, he discovered that manure which was “seasoned,” or allowed to lay for a period of time and begin to break down, did indeed improve the soil.

Washington built a Dung Repository where manure was collected and allowed to decompose over time before being added into the soil.

George Washington’s innovative mind would surely have won first prize at the Science Fair!



Round and Round We Go

1760s

Today we see farmers rotating the crops they plant in a field and think nothing of it. Did you know that George Washington was one of the first colonial farmers to try this new method AND share the idea with fellow farmers? A strong agriculture would indeed grow a strong America!

in·no·va·tive

adjective \ 'i-nə-, vā-tiv \

: introducing or using new ideas or methods

: having new ideas about how something can be do