

## **FOREWORD**

As February is the month of George Washington's birthday, Pyramid Text VII is devoted to articles concerning this great General, President and fellow Mason. Most biographies of famous Freemasons, although interesting in their own right, have little to do with Masonry - typically they are stories of great men who were Masons rather than of Masons who were great men. They invariably fail to illustrate how the Craft and its teachings influenced the subject's public - or private - life.

Our first article, *George Washington: A Legend in His Time*, is of that genre. It is included, primarily for those of our non-American Brethren who have not had the opportunity (as well as for any American Brethren who neglected their classes in American history) to learn of this great American and Brother Mason.

As often happens with the passing of the years, myths become inseparable from facts. So it is with George Washington. We have discovered three articles that debunk many of the myths surrounding him:

George Washington - A Grand Master?

George Washington - A General Grand Master?

The second of these will give you some insight as to why American Masonry ended with 50 rather than one national Grand Lodge. The many other myths about George Washington, the Mason in Masonic Myths.

The final article, *The Seven Wonders of the World*, is about Washington: the city - more specifically, about two Masonic monuments, one found in and the other just across the river from Washington, DC.

## **GEORGE WASHINGTON: A LEGEND IN HIS TIME**

**by Dr. Fred Lamar Pearson, Jr., 32°, KCCH, Professor of History,  
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**Scottish Rite Journal - February 1990**

There are many Americans who deserve our respect, but no American is more entitled to enduring honor than our first President, George Washington. Recognized in his own lifetime as a great man, Washington's prestige has increased steadily with the passage of time, and his public life has served effectively as a yardstick of comparison for all those who would enter public service or hold elected office.

Each February we honor this great American by celebrating his birth as a national holiday. Accordingly, it is proper to inquire as to what kind of person he was in the private as well as the public sector. And we can safely say that in both areas his conduct withstands the closest scrutiny. He was not a perfect man, but he was indeed an honorable one.

George Washington was born a Virginian. He acquired the rudiments of an education while he developed a physical body of heroic proportions for the time. He learned in particular how to survey land, a valuable ability then as well as now. Washington inherited from his brother, Lawrence, the beautiful estate Mt. Vernon. Through his marriage to the widowed Martha Custis, he added substantially to his holdings. He managed his properties wisely and, ultimately, acquired substantial wealth. Childless himself, he developed a fond regard for his stepchildren. Our Brother participated in the French and Indian War where he began to learn something about the art of military science. He served ably in the House of Burgesses in Virginia, and, early in life, he became a Mason. Doubtless he soon observed the deterioration in relations between England and her colonies after 1763, and the American Revolution had begun by 1775 when the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia. This Congress chose Brother George Washington to serve as Commander of the Army resisting the British in Massachusetts. And thus Washington embarked on an eight-year ordeal in which he placed life and fortune on the line. Had the colonials lost, the British, no doubt, would have made an example of him.

Washington had few resources with which to wage a war. There was no navy, no professional army, a poor financial base and no industrial system to support the war effort. Further, the Revolution was a decidedly minority effort. Probably no more than one-third of the colonists actively supported revolt. And of this percentage there were precious few General Washington could count on for long-term enlistments. Too many wanted to get crops plowed for the final time, serve only in the summer months, and then hasten home for the harvest and a snug winter by the domestic hearth. Foreigners, notably the French, came to the rescue with loans, officers, a naval force on occasion and troops. Without this assistance independence could easily have been postponed. The names of Lafayette, Von Steuben, DeKalb and Pulaski stand out among those who came to help. DeKalb and Pulaski paid a dear price, their lives, in the cause of freedom. Lafayette, DeKalb and Von Steuben were definitely Masons and Pulaski may well have been. Von Steuben, in particular, during the terrible winter spent at Valley Forge, taught the Continental Army how to use bayonets. The troops who emerged from that ordeal were professionals indeed.

Washington defeated Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781, the last decisive battle of the Revolution, thereby setting in motion a process which resulted in the Treaty of Paris (1783). This treaty ended the war and gave us independence. We were a weak nation governed by the Articles of Confederation, an arrangement which allowed the states large amounts of independence and which made it very difficult for the national government to raise taxes. The result was woefully inadequate services. States began to erect commercial barriers against the products of other states; navigational disputes occurred and a host of other problems. Washington, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and others knew something had to be done. Otherwise the gains of the 1775-1783 experience might be undone. There was confusion in the land; some feared chaos was not far distant. Conferences at Annapolis and Mt. Vernon did not attract the desired attendance, but a mood emerged that a conference of state delegates to amend the Articles of Confederation was needed.

In 1787 some fifty-five delegates from the several states went to Philadelphia. Washington was among them. He had not wanted to go; he wanted to live out his life at Mt. Vernon. However, friends prevailed upon him to attend, and he did. The delegates elected him President of the Convention, and he presided with that determined fairness that characterized his public and private actions. Meeting behind closed doors and windows and in hot weather (May to September), the delegates sometimes saw tempers flare. Through it all Washington steered the assemblage forward. The result was our Constitution. Washington, who wanted very much to quit public life, did not get the chance. He was elected President of the infant republic and had to make arrangements to live in New York City. He was elected a second term, and no doubt he is the most beloved President ever to serve the Nation.

Washington had experienced difficult times prior to 1789, but an incredible series of hardships now confronted him. He was painfully aware of the obstacles before him, and he knew that the survival of the Nation probably depended on the stewardship he and the Congress would provide for the electorate. Future generations would study his every action and these actions would provide standards of measurement and comparison for future administrations. Washington, himself, had nothing against which to compare. It is here that the truly sterling qualities of the man increasingly emerge. He had a reputation for integrity already; men knew he had leadership ability; now these characteristics were displayed quickly and consistently and not for one but two terms of office. So sound was his judgment that the decisions have stood well the test of time. First, President Washington dealt with the awesome question of finances. The foreign and national debts were huge, and there were sizable state debts. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton announced a plan to pay these debts, and thereby he restored the confidence of creditors in our Nation's determination and ability to honor financial commitments.

Thus the Washington administration gained instant credibility and the ability to borrow additional money if needed. Second, regarding foreign affairs, Washington avoided America's becoming embroiled in the war going on between France and Britain. His resolute action established clearly our neutrality and kept us out of the Anglo-French conflict.

Third, in 1794 President Washington dealt with two very difficult problems in our northwest and northeast. Regarding the first, English agents had come down from Canada

to trade with the Indians thereby violating our neutrality, and we did not have sufficient force to expel them. Jay's Treaty, negotiated in 1794, contained a clause whereby the British promised to remove their citizens from our soil on or before June 1, 1796. Britain honored its promise in the treaty. The problem of the northwest territories was matched in seriousness by a situation in the northeast where Pennsylvania farmers, accustomed to convert excess grain into alcohol, reacted strongly against the government's decision to tax beverage alcohol. When apprised of the rebellious tendencies, President Washington called out the troops and prepared to use them if necessary to enforce the law. This did not prove necessary, for the threatened rebellion never got off the ground and America remained a united Nation.

Finally, in 1795 President Washington achieved a spectacular coup. He obtained in the Treaty of San Lorenzo, negotiated with Spain, a very special concession, namely the right of the United States to navigate the Mississippi River and the right of deposit at New Orleans for a three-year period. Thereafter, the deposit location would be re-negotiated, but the navigation rights held firm. This treaty had far-reaching implications in our western expansion, and it assured the rapid settlement of the present states of Tennessee and Kentucky.

Resisting a call to serve a third term, Washington could now retire from public service confident he had done his best. His administration had established a firm financial footing for the Nation; he had kept the peace; he had gained respect for our territorial sovereignty, and he had obtained precious navigation rights. Success in one of these areas alone would have entitled a President to respect, but Brother George Washington had succeeded in all four.

*[Editors note: This is an edited version of the original article that was published in the February 1990 issue of the Scottish Rite Journal.] 288*

## **GEORGE WASHINGTON - A GRAND MASTER?**

**by William A. Brown, Librarian George Washington Masonic National Memorial  
[source unknown - date unknown]**

Visitors to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, from all over the United States continue to say and believe that George Washington was the first Grand Master of Virginia. Strange as it may seem, it is very difficult to convince these Masons without hurting their feelings. Thus through necessity I was determined to find out how that story got started.

Virginia was the first of the Colonial States to form their own Grand Lodge. To begin the search it was necessary to go to the Proceedings of the establishment of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, to see just what happened. The following quotes and material are from the minutes of Williamsburg Lodge, and the letters and proceedings of those early meetings: "Convention assembled in Williamsburg Lodge hall on June 23, 1777, (with officers from Blandford Lodge; Kilwinning Port Royal Cross Lodge; Williamsburg Lodge; Cabin Point Royal Arch Lodge, and Fredericksburg Lodge." James Kemp, read into the minutes the following.

"I have set forth the events leading to and transpiring in our convention to date. As the death of our Grand Master Peyton Randolph created a vacancy, and the reason for this convention, I would read from the minutes of Williamsburg Lodge, so that all may know of the events of his passing.

"Acknowledged and referred to as Grand Master on the Treasurers book of the Lodge held in Crown Tavern in 1762, Peyton was the first Master of Crown Tavern Lodge under the new English Charter of 1773 (Minutes of 1774 - referred to Peyton as Provincial Grand Master of Va.) At the death of our Provincial Grand Master Peyton Randolph Oct. 22, 1775 while attending the Continental Congress held in Philadelphia, the office of Grand Master became vacant. Due to strong feelings of resentment against the crown no Provincial Grand Master was requested ..."

At this point we read from the minutes of Williamsburg Lodge, Dec. 3, 1776:

"...On a motion made; Resolved that the Master of this Lodge be directed to write to all the regular Lodges in the state, requesting their attendance by their deputies at this Lodge in order to choose a Grand Master for the State of Virginia, on the first day of next assembled. "Letters were written to Norfolk (Royal Exchange) Port Royal Blandford Fredericksburg St. Tammany Botetourt Cabin Point Royal Arch Yorktown "requesting they send deputies to a convention to be held in Williamsburg Lodge on Tuesday the 6th day of May 1777 ... for the express purpose of choosing a Grand Master for the State of Virginia."

At this point I skip to the meeting held June 23, 1777, as this was the first mention of George Washington as Grand Master. "The convention was unanimously in favor of dispatching letters to each of the several Lodges in Virginia requesting each Lodge to consider the name of the proper person to be elected to the office of Grand Master, and in order to give dispatch to this business, this convention beg leave to recommend to their constituents and to the members of all other Lodges in this state, His Excellency General George Washington as the proper person to fill the office of Grand Master of the same, and to whom the charter of appointment aforementioned be made. But should the Lodge prefer any other person to this office, it is recommended that the respective Lodge do elect some other person and notify the same to the Williamsburg Lodge.

But in case such an appointment is not made by the first day of June next, then the convention are unanimously of the opinion that the several Lodges of this state should proceed to elect such Grand Master.”

But let us return to the subject of a Grand Master. Once more I quote from the minutes of Oct. 13, 1778 held in Williamsburg Lodge:

“Brothers at the last meeting of the convention it was agreed that letters be written to all the Lodges requesting them to submit names for the office of Grand Master, none were received. Also it was suggested the name of General George Washington be considered.”

“As you may remember, those of you who were at our last meeting, held June 23, 1777, General Washington’s name was submitted for consideration as Grand Master, Following the meeting a committee was appointed to approach the General and offer him the nomination. I have here the Committee Report.”

“Your Committee awaited upon General George Washington as directed, and presented the dispatches prepared by the committee, extending the nomination to the office of Grand Master of Masons in Virginia.

“General Washington was most gracious in receiving us into his busy schedule, and expressed pleasant surprise at being offered so honorable and distinguished a position.

“However on reflection, the General felt unable to accept the honor. His first reason being, he felt unqualified for the office as he had never served as Master of a Lodge, his second reason being the pressures and obligations as General of the Continental Army had to take precedence over all other duties, and he would be unable to fulfill the obligations of Grand Master.

“The General was so sincere and appeared so tired and burdened with the weight of responsibility to the Army and his country. We were ashamed to press the nomination upon him. “We can only add to the report; We have lost a most valuable Candidate for Grand Master, yet our Country has a leadership of a most gallant and courageous General.”

“The chair then requested a name in nomination for the office of Grand Master?”

William Waddill responded “May I place the name of Rt. Worshipful John Blair into nomination? He is a Past Master of Williamsburg Lodge. A most able Brother to serve the Craft.” (Blair was also the Governor of Virginia.)

Everyone stood in agreement, and John Blair was elected First Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. Now my Brothers that is what happened. So why do so many Masons believe and insist that Washington was the first Grand Master? I now believe I have finally discovered the answer. Oddly the Jewel worn by all the Grand Masters of Virginia was designed and partially engraved before they found out that George Washington had declined the appointment, after which additional engraving was added. The following is what is engraved upon the back of the Grand Master’s Jewel. Original Jewel made in 1778 to be worn by George Washington as first Grand Master of Masons in Virginia He declined the offer being in command of the Army It was therefore first worn by Gov. John Blair who was the first Grand Master. During the last 200 years every Grand Master of Virginia has been very proud of the Jewel and have made a habit of showing it off where ever they wore it. Turning it over for everyone to read the inscription on the back of the Jewel. Very few ever read the entire inscription. They at least read the first five lines, and that is what they believe and tell others. Yes, there are those who may read the entire inscription, but George Washington as first Grand Master? They may know it is

not true but they want to believe it. So as long as our Grand Masters continue to display the back of the Jewel, without explanation, we will never eradicate the story that George Washington was a Grand Master.

*[Editors note: I do not know where this material was originally published, or, as is more likely the case, presented.]*

## **GEORGE WASHINGTON: A GENERAL GRAND MASTER?**

**by William A. Brown, Librarian George Washington Masonic National Memorial  
[source unknown - date unknown]**

Masons from every State and every Country visit the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, and they ask questions. We expect this and try to inform them with correct answers. Yet, it is the statements our visitors make which are in error, and which we have a hard time convincing them, that they are in error ...

Washington was a Grand Master.

Washington was a General Grand Master.

Washington received the 33rd when President.

Washington was a member of the Knight Templars

.... etc. on and on, ALL WRONG!

The question which bothered us the most (“Was Washington a General Grand Master?”) and which might be answered yes - or no -, depending on the interpretation, made me research the entire story direct from the proceedings of the Grand Lodges of Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.

As the following quotations from the proceedings of the Grand Lodges, and letters, reveal, I might say:

YES - Washington was elected General Grand Master of Masons in Americas, by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, but, none of the other Grand Lodges concurred with Pennsylvania.

NO - Washington never served as General Grand Master. It is doubtful if he ever knew of the election or suggestion.

I hope you will enjoy knowing exactly what happened, without any interpretations.

Pennsylvania’s action on Gen. Grand Master from Proceedings of January 13, 1780:

“Grand Lodge of Emergency“ This Grand Lodge being called, by order of the Grand Master, upon the request of sundry Brethren, and also in pursuance of a motion made at the last General Communication, to consider the propriety as well as necessity of appointing a Grand Master, over all the Grand Lodges, formed or to be formed in these United States, as the correspondence which the rules of Masonry require, can not now be carried on with the Grand Lodge in London, under whose jurisdiction the Grand Lodges in these States were originally constituted.

“Sundry respectable Brethren being then put in nomination, it was moved that the ballot be put for them separately, and his Excellency, George Washington, Esq.; General and Commander in Chief of the Armies of the United States, being the first in nomination, he was balloted for as Grand Master and elected by the unanimous vote of the whole Lodge.“ Ordered, that the Minutes of this election and appointment be transmitted to the different Grand Lodges in the United States, and their concurrence therein be requested ...”

Letter from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania To the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

“Philadelphia, Aug. 19, 1780

“Sir;

“I do myself the honor to address you, by order of the Grand Lodge of Ancient York Masons, regularly constituted in the City of Philadelphia. This Grand Lodge has under its jurisdiction in Pennsylvania and the States adjacent, thirty-one different regular Lodges, containing in the whole more than one thousand Brethren. Enclosed you have a printed

abstract of some of our late proceedings, and by that of January 13<sup>th</sup> last, you will observe that we have, so far as depends on us, done that honor which we think due to our illustrious Brother, General Washington, viz., elected him Grand Master over all the Grand Lodges formed or to be formed in these United States, not doubting the concurrence of all other Grand Lodges in America to make this election effectual.

“We have been informed by Col. Palfrey that there is a Grand Lodge of Ancient York Masons in the States of Massachusetts, and that you are Grand Master thereof; as such, I am, therefore, to request that you lay our proceedings before your Grand Lodge, and request their concurrent voice in the appointment of General Washington, as set forth in the said minutes of January the 13<sup>th</sup>, (which, as far as we have been able to learn), is a measure highly approved by all the Brethren, as being for the honor and advancement of our Royal Art.

“Your answer, as soon as convenient, is requested, our humble servant, for the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. William Smith, Grand Secy.”

Action of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts on the letter:

“Friday, Sept. 1st, 1780

“The Worshipful Grand Master, laid before the Grand Lodge a letter dated Philadelphia Aug. 19<sup>th</sup> 1780, signed William Smith, Grand Secy., Inclosing a Printed list of the several Lodges in Pennsylvania under that jurisdiction, and Advising that they had in their Grand Lodge thought it Expedient to make choice of a Grand Master General for the Thirteen United American States, that they had nominated his excellency General George Washington, Requesting the Opinion and Approbation of this Grand Lodge whereon, Voted Circular Letters be wrote to the several Lodges under this jurisdiction Requesting Attendance of Masters and Wardens at the next Adjournment, for their opinion, or that they give Instructions to their Proxys, on the Subject.”

Letter from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts

“Boston, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1780

“Sir;. “Your agreeable favor of the 19<sup>th</sup> ult., I duly received the 31<sup>st</sup>, covering a printed abstract of the proceedings of your Grand Lodge. I had received one before, near three months from the Master of a travelling Lodge of the Connecticut Line, but it not coming officially, did not lay it before the Grand Lodge, but the evening after I received yours, it being Grand Lodge; I laid the same before them and had some debate on it, whereupon it was agreed to adjourn the Lodge for three weeks, to give instructions to their proxys here concerning their acquiescence in the proposal.

“I am well assur’d that no one can have any objections to so illustrious a person as General Washington to preside as Grand Master of the United States, but at the same time it will be necessary to know from you his prerogative as such; whether he is to appoint sub-grand or Provincial Grand Masters of each State, if so, I am confident that the Grand Lodge in this State will never give up their right of electing their own Grand Master and other officers annually. This induces me to write to you now, before the results of the Grand Lodge takes place, and beg an answer by the first opportunity.

“I do not remember of more Grand Masters being appointed when we were under the British Government than South Carolina, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts, but now it may be necessary ...

“I have granted a Charter of dispensation to New Hampshire till they shall appoint a Grand Master of their own, which suppose will not be very soon as there is but one

Lodge in their State. Inclosed I send you a list of the Officers of our Grand Lodge, and have the honour to be, with great respect and esteem.

“Your affectionate Brother and servant,

“Joseph Webb, Grand Master.”

Letter objecting to Washington as General Grand Master from Trinity Lodge, Lancaster, Mass dated, September 19, 1780:

“To the Most Worshipful Master, Wardens & Brethren of the ancient Grand Lodge in Boston.

“On the receipt of a letter signed William Hoskins, G. Scry. Directed to the Rt. Worshipful Masters, Wardens & Brethren of Trinity Lodge in Lancaster - requesting their concurrence & opinion on the choice of his excellency Gen. Washington as a Grand Master of the United American States, by the Grand Lodge at Philadelphia.

“On which subject, we would beg leave to offer such objections as appears to us, consistant with the constitution of Ancient Masonry - Not that we would mean to suggest that his excellency Gen Washington is not fit in every manner for the office of G. Master and deserving of every honor - but we do conceive that the Grand Lodge at Philadelphia had no right to make choice of a G. Master without a previous consultation of other Lodges in Americas and on full consideration, it appears to us to be a dangerous Innovation.

“Nathan Gaines Scry.”

Yet; in all this can we really answer the question? The illusion was also perpetrated by a Masonic Medal, which was struck in 1797, having on its obverse side the bust of Washington in military dress, with its legend, “G. Washington, President 1797;” and on its reverse side, the emblems of Masonry, surrounded by the inscription, “Amor, Honor, et Justicia,” and the initials, “G.W.G.G.M.”

Nor was Washington’s fame as a Mason, or the belief that he was General Grand Master, confined to this country; for, in 1786, two letters in French were addressed to him, from Cape Francois, as “Grand Master of America,” soliciting a Lodge-warrant for Brethren on that island; which letters Washington caused to be laid before the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, and they accordingly granted the warrant. As to why Washington sent the letters to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania instead of the Grand Lodge of Virginia - at that time Washington was a member of Alexandria Lodge #39 which held its warrant out of Pennsylvania. However My Brothers this is all argumentative - something to tease the mind; but for us at the Memorial, when asked if Washington was ever General Grand Master, the answer is NO. If you should agree with us. Please help us stop the story.

*[Editors Note: I do not know where this material was originally published, or, as is more likely the case, presented.]*

## **Myth of George Washington and Masonry**

Masonic myths and outright falsehood are continually spread concerning Freemasonry. This is an attempt to set and keep the history of the Craft straight. Throughout the centuries Freemasonry has taught its valuable lessons through allegory and symbols. The man from Galilee used parables extensively and well. Many historians and better speakers constantly employ anecdotes to illustrate the points they want to make. These methods emphasize the search for truth in an interesting and factual manner. Myths on the other hand, can be innocent or dangerous. They can be outright lies or the perpetuation of distortions handed down through the generations. Many of these were invented by Masonic writers and speakers to enhance the image of Freemasonry. Some of these corruptions have caused the Craft problems with creditable historians because they were outrageous lies. Freemasonry, actually, requires no exaggeration to magnify its greatness. The simple truth is all that is required to tell its story. George Washington has been the source of many Masonic myths and exaggerations for more than two centuries. This is unfortunate. Of all the Freemasons we can eulogize he requires no embellishment. From his childhood to his death his extraordinary wisdom, industry and patriotism predominated. Let's try to set the record straight.

**MYTH:** All of George Washington's generals during the War for America Independence were Masons.

**FACT:** Thirty-three of the general serving under Washington were members of the Craft, a long way from "all."

**MYTH:** Washington insisted that the Marquis de Lafayette be made a Mason before he would promote him to general, and the same claim has been made about the Baron von Steuben.

**FACT:** Both Lafayette and von Steuben were Freemasons before they arrived to help fight the British. This was true of Lafayette even though he wasn't 21 years of age when he arrived in America. It's highly likely that Washington never knew they were Masons.

**MYTH:** The governors of the thirteen original colonies when Washington was inaugurated President of the United States were Freemasons.

**FACT:** From Lexington until the inauguration thirty different men served as governors. Of these ten were Freemasons. That's one-third! Wouldn't it be wonderful for the country if we could claim the same percentage today?

**MYTH:** George Washington was Grand Master of Masons in Virginia.

**FACT:** Washington never was a Grand Master. At the instigation of American Union Lodge he was suggested for the office of Grand Master of a National Grand Lodge - a non-existent body. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and some others agreed, but too many others disagreed with the concept of a National Grand Lodge. Washington was appointed Master of Alexandria Lodge #22 in Virginia by Grand Master Edmund Randolph when that Pennsylvania Lodge requested a charter from the Grand Lodge of Virginia. The following year he was elected Master, but there is no record of his installation into this office, nor is there any record of him presiding over this Lodge. To

keep the record straight, there is much evidence of his respect, and perhaps even love for Freemasonry. Proof? He was buried with Masonic rites!

**MYTH:** Washington acted as Grand Master when the cornerstone of the Federal Capitol was laid on September 18, 1793.

**FACT:** It was the Grand Lodge of Maryland that was called on to lay the cornerstone. Alexandria Lodge, of which Washington was a Past Master, held a place of honor. It was Joseph Clark, the Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Maryland, who acted as Grand Master, pro tem. Clark placed the President between himself and the Master of Alexandria Lodge. The newspaper article reporting the event mentioned Clark as the Grand Master, pro tem. on several occasions. So did the Maryland historian in 1885. Washington didn't act as Grand Master, but without question he was the most honored and influential Freemason participating in the event.

**MYTH:** George Washington never was interested in Freemasonry. He rarely, if ever, attended Lodge meetings.

**FACT:** To keep the record straight, there is much evidence of his respect and even love for Freemasonry. True, he seldom attended Masonic meetings. This is understandable when it is realized that from the day he was made a Master Mason until shortly before his death he worked for his country. Did he love and respect the Craft? The ultimate proof - he was buried with Masonic rites!

**MYTH:** There are many aprons owned or worn by George Washington floating around.

**FACT:** The only documented apron owned by Washington was one presented by the firm of Watson and Cassoul. It had been made by nuns at Nantes. It was the only apron listed in Washington's inventory that was released after his death. The "Lafayette" apron, purportedly made by the wife of the Marquis, may be a fact as many authorities claim.

**MYTH:** George Washington renounced Freemasonry.

**FACT:** On the contrary he remained a member of the Craft from the moment he was Initiated into the Lodge at Fredericksburg, Virginia (#4) until the day he died. Even then his wife, Martha, asked the Freemasons of Alexandria, Virginia, to hold and conduct his funeral. In 1837, at state expense, Joseph Ritner, Governor of Pennsylvania, endeavored to "save" the reputation of the first President. He had published a tract "proving" Washington had never participated in Masonic events. Earlier the Blanchards, father and son and heads of a so-called "Christian" anti-Masonic organization, were among the first "Christians" to "prove" Washington wasn't a Freemason. Much of the anti-Masonic diatribe they promulgated has been carried to the present day by crusading "saints" against "secret" societies.

**MYTH:** Washington was uneducated.

**FACT:** Uneducated - no; unschooled - yes. As far as we can determine Washington never attended any school. Through his father's vast library Washington learned the fundamentals of mathematics, surveying and many other subjects. At the age of 17 he earned a substantial wage as a surveyor. In 1749 he was appointed surveyor of Culpeper

County, Virginia, having produced a certificate “from the President and Masters of William and Mary College, appointing him to be surveyor of this county.” From the many military visitors to Mount Vernon he learned the principles of warfare. From the intellectuals he learned how to study and use his common sense. The history of his life proves he became one of the most knowledgeable men of his, or any, day.

**MYTH:** Lafayette presented George Washington with a Masonic apron embroidered by Madame Lafayette.

**FACT:** Highly unlikely. According to John E. Foster, a Past Grand High Priest of Connecticut:

“That Madame Lafayette embroidered the apron with her own hands is possible but rather unlikely considering her status in society and family responsibilities, ... But where did she find the symbols to copy? They are typically ‘English’ rather than pertaining to any French Rite. And that Mark degree emblem dated 1784 is pretty early.”

It appears this apron was first mentioned by Hayden in his *Washington and His Masonic Compeers*. (Remember Weems and the cherry tree that appeared in one of his late editions?)

Remember, also, that Washington only mentioned one apron - the Watson-Cassoul apron.

*[Editors note: Both the author and the original published source of this condensed article are unknown. Its tone and content suggest that it was written by Bro. Allen E. Roberts, Executive Secretary of the Philalethes Society.]*