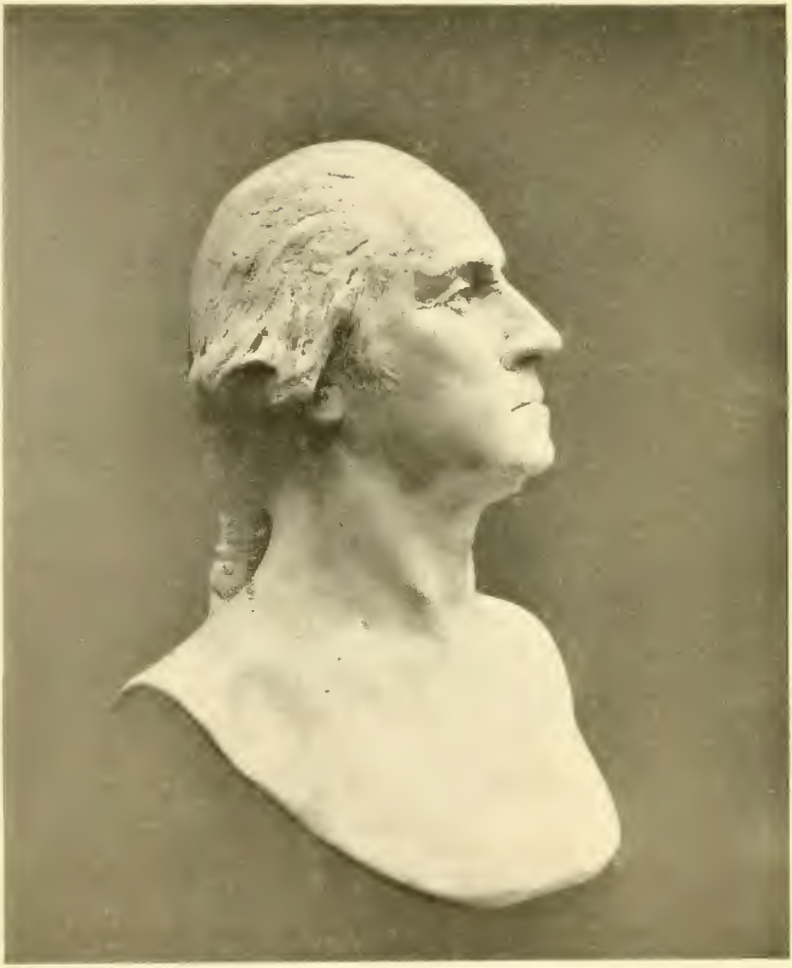
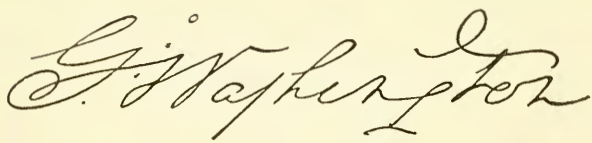
GEORGE WASHINGTON
BICENTENNIAL EDITION

THE WRITINGS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON





From the Houdon Bust, modeled from life at Mount Vernon in 1785. Here reproduced by permission of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union

THE WRITINGS OF

George Washington

from the

Original Manuscript Sources

1745–1799

Prepared under the direction of the United States
George Washington Bicentennial Commission
and published by authority of Congress

John C. Fitzpatrick, *Editor*

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FOREWORD

The people of the United States are justly proud of their literary men and women. They likewise are proud of their outstanding statesmen. Literary power and statesmanship were combined in George Washington, the greatest political leader of his time and also the greatest intellectual and moral force of the Revolutionary period. Everybody knows Washington as a quiet member of the Virginia Assembly, of the two Continental Congresses, and of the Constitutional Convention. Few people realize that he was also the most voluminous American writer of his period, and that his principles of government have had more influence on the development of the American commonwealth than those of any other man.

Unfortunately, Washington for many years was interpreted to his countrymen chiefly through warped biographies written upon a great deal of legendary assumption. Until very recently no readable biography of George Washington in reasonable compass made him stand for what he was—the most potent human and intellectual force in a firmament of American intellect. Nowadays good biographies of Washington are available, written from the sources. Many of them are devoted to a particular phase of his activity—the military side, the political side, the personal side. Hence when the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission began its work it did not attempt to inspire new biographies. It selected as its most important literary duty the making Washington better known, by spreading abroad his own thoughts and plans and hopes and inspirations in the exact form in which he framed them.

Thus one of the first decisions of the Commission was to provide an edition of Washington's writings as complete as

possible, in a form which would make it available for the present generation and forever hereafter. Of the two previous editions of Washington's Writings the first, a hundred years ago, was the twelve-volume edition, edited by Jared Sparks, a pioneer in collecting and publishing historical documents. Proper canons in historical editing were not yet developed, and it hurt the feelings of Sparks if the great man misspelled or seemed to him ungrammatical. Therefore the Sparks edition can not be relied upon to tell us what Washington actually did say. The edition of Worthington C. Ford, forty years ago, was scholarly and carefully edited, but materials were then lacking for a complete edition, the production was limited by commercial considerations, and it is now out of print.

The Commission has set out to publish a definitive edition of all the written and printed words of George Washington in the form in which they left his hands, including several volumes of General Orders, almost the whole of which up to now had remained in manuscript only. Most of his original writings of every kind are fortunately preserved in the Library of Congress. Other libraries and private owners of manuscripts have permitted photostats to be made for inclusion in the great publication. When this series is completed, therefore, almost the whole of his reported thoughts will be within the reach of readers, investigators, and writers.

The George Washington Commission takes great satisfaction in rendering this public service; for as the publication of the new series progresses it will become more and more clear that the reputation of George Washington as a soldier, statesman, and man is enhanced by the record of everything that he is known to have committed to pen and paper.

One deviation has been made from the plan of including all of Washington's writings in this edition. The Diary has been recently published by a skillful editor, enlivened by interesting

notes. It has therefore been left out of the new set. On the other hand, the General Orders, which are of great significance for the history of the Revolution, are now for the first time made available in print, and will be distributed in the order of their dates.

What is the message from Washington revealed by this complete and scholarly edition? First of all it includes Washington's own graphic records of his experiences on the frontier while it was still in the possession of the Indians. Throughout the series will be found letters and documents showing that he was the American of his time who had the liveliest sense of the absolute necessity of occupying the West and making it a part of an American commonwealth.

The materials on his activity as a man of affairs, which are here brought into relief, bring home to the reader the picture of Washington as a landowner, land developer, and land cultivator. A much neglected side of his character is Washington as an engineer. His countrymen have not realized how modern he was in his engineering operations—as reclaimer of the Dismal Swamp; as advisor and engineer of the Potomac and James River Canal; as the first advocate of a combined highway and waterway from the Atlantic Coast to the Ohio River; as a bank director; as an investor; as one of the earliest Americans to recognize the possibilities of power transportation by water; and the first to suggest that air navigation might be very useful to the people of the United States.

What Washington says for himself will also be the foundation of our appreciation of his great abilities and immense services as the leader of the Continental Army. He was a thoroughly modern soldier, intensely interested in drill and tactics and plans of campaign, but equally unwearied in recruiting and supply and officering and in maintaining the morale of his troops. All the efforts to show that Washington had no

military genius will fade away under the searchlight of this publication of his military material, much of it for the first time.

If nothing had been written by others about Washington's leadership in forming a new nation, his papers and correspondence while President would forever establish him as a great constructive statesman. His private virtues are set forth from the earliest boy's letters down to the last entry that he made in his diary. Washington with his wife's children and grandchildren stands out as clearly as Washington at Yorktown.

The United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission is undertaking to throw light upon the character of Washington in many ways. None will be more enduring than this collection of his own words and thoughts. The addresses, the pageants, the public meetings, and the memorials of every kind which the Commission will encourage and support, will call public attention to the most striking of the events in his life. But a hundred years after 1932, Washington will still be appealing to the sense, the interest, the public spirit, and the patriotism of that later age, by the great thoughts of his mind, by his great hopes for his country, and by the simple, straightforward, elevated, manly, and patriotic spirit of which these WRITINGS *will be the imperishable record.*

Herbert Hoover

President of the United States.
Chairman of the George Washington Bicentennial Commission.

WASHINGTON, D. C.,
November 19, 1930.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

For the past century all we have known of the George Washington manuscripts has been the less than fifty per cent of them that have been published since his death. The first extensive publication was by Jared Sparks, president of Harvard College, in 1834–1837, in twelve volumes, and the second by Worthington C. Ford, in 1889–1893, in fourteen volumes. Sparks printed upwards of twenty-five hundred letters and documents; Ford, by eliminating many that Sparks printed, and including new material, added about five hundred to the total, so that both Ford and Sparks together have published from three to four thousand only of Washington's letters. (An actual count of the total number of letters and documents written or signed by Washington has never been made, but a conservative estimate would place the number at from eight to ten thousand.) Neither of these editions is satisfactory, though they have been for years the available basis of our knowledge of George Washington. Ford's work was hampered by the exigencies of commercial restrictions. Sparks suffered from an editorial hypnosis to which it is unnecessary now to call attention, as his peculiar theory of editing aroused controversy at the time and has been thoroughly discredited. It is hopelessly at variance with accepted canons of historical ethics. A comparison of the textual exactness of this Bicentennial Edition with any of the important letters printed in Sparks

will make the matter clear. Fifty-two years after Sparks came Ford's new edition of Washington's Writings, free from Sparks's editorial tampering with the original text. This edition, though but two volumes more than Sparks's, because of a closer adherence to the originals, a judicious selection, and inclusion of additional material, became at once the standard. Practically all of the published biographies of Washington have been based upon this less than fifty per cent of Washington's writings and not upon research in his surviving manuscripts. The lives of Washington by John Marshall, Jared Sparks, Washington Irving, and Worthington C. Ford are about the only biographies that have been prepared from Washington's original papers. A number of valuable studies of special phases of Washington's activities have been published in recent years, based upon painstaking research among the original records; but, in general, the numerous lives of our First American are the product of a complacent examination of the letters printed by Sparks and Ford.

The present publication of WASHINGTON'S WRITINGS by the United States Bicentennial Commission on the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of George Washington is a fulfillment of the fundamental purpose of the Commission to develop a clearer understanding, realization, and knowledge of George Washington by making available *all* of his essential writings, unhampered by the commercial limitations necessarily existent in all private publishing enterprises. Practically all of the letters printed by Sparks and Ford are included herein, and corrected by the original texts.

All of Washington's general orders of the Revolutionary War are included in this Bicentennial Edition. Only a small number of the orders have been heretofore published, in widely separated places, and this complete publication of them

chronologically with the letters presents a clearer picture of the military side of the Revolution.

Extra care has been taken where these originals are in Washington's handwriting, and such documents are starred (*). Where letters are in draft form and in the writing of a secretary, alterations made by Washington therein are duly noted. Strict adherence to the original text has disclosed new and valuable information as to Washington's character upon which it is not the province of the editor to enlarge; but he ventures to call attention to one of many interesting developments: In a number of the Colonial-period letters, dealing with various military difficulties, tobacco shipments and sales, will be found an intensity of feeling which interferes with Washington's clarity of expression, while the letters devoted to less moving subjects are not so drivingly reckless of syntax.

Few established facts of history will be greatly disturbed by this comprehensive publication, but the new information as to Washington's personality, found in these hitherto unpublished letters, and bringing those formerly published into exact textual accord with the originals, discloses how far afield biographers of Washington have wandered. Even in so small a point as spelling, this publication will furnish instructive study to those who wish to follow Washington's progressive improvement, not only in etymology but in syntax as well. Criticism of Washington's spelling, like other criticism of the man, is due to lack of knowledge of the facts. The worst spelling will be found in the Colonial letters, but even a superficial examination of the letters of his contemporaries will show that Washington, while no better a speller, was often no worse than his friends. Governors of Virginia, such as Dinwiddie and Fauquier, British generals like Forbes and Sir John St. Clair, the Speaker of the Virginia House of Burgesses, Jefferson, and

Madison were no whit more perfect, according to twentieth-century standards. Washington "spelled like a gentleman"—and the gentlemen of those early days were not good spellers. It seems proper to mention at this point the much-referred-to action of Washington in improving, in his later years, the phraseology of some of his early letter-book records.

Strangely enough, it has not been noticed that these early letter books, which are entirely in Washington's handwriting and corrected by him, have been recopied by an amanuensis (who incorporated Washington's corrections) into another record made *nearly thirty years later*. Both the correcting and copying were done at Mount Vernon, after the Revolutionary War, and appear to be Washington's temporary surrender to the pressure brought to bear upon him to allow a life of himself to be written. He had steadfastly refused to permit this, and declined to entertain the suggestion of David Humphreys that he write his own life. But the corrections and recopying justify the assumption that Washington did, for a time, attempt to put his papers in shape for a biographical contingency. The correction of his early letters has been made the occasion of criticism and an implied charge of egoism which can not be made to lie against any other period of his life. Instead of being an attempt to disguise his early letter-writing deficiencies, the full facts show it to be nothing but a common-sense editing to make the texts plain for his nephew, Robert Lewis, who recopied them into volumes. Coupled with this was, more than likely, a desire to bring all his letters into mechanical uniformity with the beautiful Varick Transcripts of his Revolutionary War correspondence.

This 1784–85 copying (the date is difficult to fix exactly) was none too carefully made, and does not seem to have been closely compared with the originals. Whether or not these

originals, some of which have survived, were destroyed by Washington himself as valueless, after the 1784–85 copying, or whether they disappeared in one of the many later accidents that have happened to the Washington manuscripts, can not be known, but their nonexistence is regrettable. It thus curiously developed that pressure to obtain a biography of Washington may have been the cause of destruction of valuable biographical material. Although the Washington Papers in the Library of Congress are probably ninety-eight per cent of those that have survived, difficulties exist in gathering and selecting the material for a comprehensive edition of his writings. The missing two per cent has been diligently sought, and much of it recovered and made available through the photostatic process; but any given letter of Washington may exist in several different forms, and, during the Revolutionary War, these forms are sometimes as many as five distinct records. There is (1) the draft by Washington or his secretary; (2) a letter-book copy (in Colonial times, a letter book in Washington's handwriting, and sometimes a second letter-book copy made at a later date); (3) the Varick Transcripts of the Revolutionary War correspondence; (4) the transcript made in the office of the Secretary of the Continental Congress of such letters as were sent to that body; and, finally, (5) the actual letter that was signed and sent. Each one of these forms varies in minor verbal particulars (the human vagaries of the different copyists), and, even if it were possible to show these variations in type, the value of so doing is decidedly questionable. In this dilemma preference has been given, first, to the text of the letter as sent, wherever that text has been available; second, to the draft in Washington's writing, or the draft corrected by him; and, third, to the contemporary letter-book record, as the most exact duplicate of the letter sent.

> "Item To my nephew Bushrod Washington I give and bequeath all the papers in my possession, which relate to my Civil and Military Administration of the Affairs of this Country: I leave to him also, such of my private papers as are worth preserving; and at the decease of my Wife, and before, if she is not inclined to retain them, I give and bequeath my library of Books and Pamphlets of every kind."

This extract from Washington's will marks the beginning of the second important phase in the story of the Washington manuscripts. The first was, naturally, the creative period, when the papers were being brought into existence, and in this first phase there are many minor points of interest in such matters as paper economies, sealing wafers, quills, penmanship and ink, secretarial indorsements, and filing methods. The Washington manuscripts were bequeathed by Bushrod Washington to his nephew, George Corbin Washington, from whom they were acquired by the United States Government in two purchases in the years 1834 and 1849. The first lot, which consisted of the larger part of the manuscripts and many printed books, was obtained for $25,000; the second purchase secured the remaining manuscripts for $20,000. Just why a division of the papers was made and what was the distinction drawn at the time is not entirely clear, but some notion of a separation of the official or public papers from Washington's private and personal ones seems to have been an influence. This peculiarly childish idea operated in the acquirement of other groups of papers of American statesmen and has caused considerable vexation, difficulties, and loss, both financial and historical, to the Government and the Nation. The officially stated purpose in purchasing the Washington Papers was to complete the Government's records; but the official care exercised in the transaction, in the physical transfer of the papers into Government custody, does not bespeak the existence of an active sense

of responsibility in this regard. While it is regrettable that the transaction was not handled more meticulously, it is a matter of rejoicing that no great calamity has overtaken the papers since they were obtained by the Government, for they form to-day the noblest group of American historical personal papers extant.

The total price paid for the Washington Papers, $45,000, is small in comparison with the value of these manuscripts in the autograph market to-day. Any single one of a dozen selected documents would sell for more than $45,000 could it be legally offered for sale at the present time, so that from the crude commercial viewpoint alone the Government's wisdom in purchasing these manuscripts is beyond question; their historical value to the American people is demonstrated by the use made of them. The annual records of the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress show that for years historians and students of the beginnings of America have been consulting the Washington manuscripts oftener than those of the many other prominent characters whose papers are in the custody of that division.

The Washington Papers now fill over four hundred volumes of manuscripts. Curiously, too, this tremendous mass of written records (at a conservative estimate 75,000 folios), which normally would have presented many difficult problems of arrangement and classification, has maintained a simple integrity that typifies in a clean-cut way the career of the man it records.

Physically these records may be visualized as grouped in:

1. Bound notebooks and diaries; many in their original bindings.
2. Bound account books.
3. Bound letter record books.
4. Letterpress copies.
5. The Varick Transcripts, in original bindings.
6. Drafts of letters *from* and original letters *to* Washington.

Numbers 4 and 6 were repaired, mounted, and placed in temporary bindings by the Library of Congress nearly thirty years ago, and fill two hundred and ninety-nine volumes. This is an artificial and arbitrary grouping of the records; a natural grouping that presents Washington's life activities with satisfactory clearness is:

1. Juvenile school exercises.
2. Survey notes and memoranda.
3. Account books.
4. Diaries.
5. Business correspondence:
    (*a*) Mount Vernon management.
    (*b*) Landholdings.
6. Military records:
    (*a*) French and Indian War.
    (*b*) Revolutionary War.
    (*c*) War with France, 1798–99.
7. Presidential records.
8. Personal miscellany:
    (*a*) Family.
    (*b*) Friends.
    (*c*) Political.

The earliest papers, the school exercises and letters, survive by mere chance; the diary habit, early acquired and steadily adhered to throughout life, is an example of characteristic carefulness of record, and Washington's official experience with the royal governor, Robert Dinwiddie, early taught him the need for record care. His difficulties with the English factors and merchants, over tobacco sold and invoices of goods purchased, still further developed Washington's appreciation of record value, and the vast number of long invoices of goods in his writing are a monument to his business exactitude. Another important revelation is that many of the difficulties encountered by Washington during the Revolutionary War,

in supplying the troops, in enlisting recruits, in enforcing discipline, and even in the personal jealousies and conflicting ambitions of his officers, were only reproductions, on a larger scale, of precisely the same problems with which he had struggled in his career as a Colonial colonel on the Virginia frontier, and parallel them with surprising exactness.

The Revolutionary War period and Washington's election as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army marks the beginning of the second important phase, or period of record-creation, in Washington's career, and the evolution of a recording and filing system among the many hectic activities of the Continental Army Headquarters is an interesting study. The letters written at the beginning of the war were drafted by the aides-de-camp and laboriously copied into homemade, rudely manufactured letter books; but by 1776 the correspondence had become so voluminous and involved that the letter-book method broke down, was discarded, and the simple one of filing the drafts of letters written was adopted. These drafts were drawn up by an aide or secretary from a rough memorandum by Washington, a verbal direction, or, in some instances, were written out by Washington himself. This latter, if no changes, erasures, or interlineations had been made, became the letter that was sent, after a secretary had taken a copy for the file. If changes were made the altered draft became the record copy, from which a fair copy was drawn, signed by Washington, and sent. Instances when the letter sent is marred by pen corrections are rare; but most of the drafts have been altered more than once. These alterations were often due to the necessity of presenting the idea in better form; a concession to the supersensitive dignity of Congress, State authorities, or the overdeveloped sense of importance of some of the higher Army officers; difficulties quite as often

of temperamental, official personalities as of refractory words and sentences. The editor, from long experience with the Washington Papers, is personally of opinion that most of the verbal changes found in the aides' and secretaries' drafts are the literary struggles of those young gentlemen to clearly express Washington's thought, and that distinct changes of that thought usually emanated from Washington himself. Some phases of the method of filing and storing Headquarters papers are plain from a study of the papers themselves; but it is also plain that the method was not entirely satisfactory to the Commander in Chief, though, like everything else at the time, it was the best he could get. There are interesting and sometimes amusing side lights noticeable, and it is possible to visualize, to some extent, the atmosphere of Headquarters by an examination of the drafts of Washington's letters, quite apart from the subject matter of the drafts themselves. There were, usually, from four to six aides at a time at Headquarters during the war, but as many as twelve have been present; at other times there have been so few that major and brigadier generals, transient visitors, and even Mrs. Washington did copying work under pressure of circumstances. In the early years of the war (1775–76) certain lines of correspondence seem to have been assigned to certain aides; Stephen Moylan, for instance, wrote most of the letters relating to fitting out the armed vessels ("Washington's fleet," as it was called), and later, when young Alexander Hamilton served as aide, it is noticeable that the letters to Congress, to governors, and State legislatures were usually drafted by him. The commanding officer of the Commander in Chief's Guard did a great deal of secretarial work. During the strenuous periods of the war as many as ten to fifteen letters a day went out from Headquarters, and it is amusing to note how, with the arrival of each new aide, the bulk of the drafts, for some days, are in his writing. The older

and seasoned aides seemed to have put everything possible upon the "new broom," who accepted the situation without demur. In a week or so the new man began to grasp the situation, and his emancipation, or refusal to remain a quill-driving dray horse, is shown by the drafts again becoming fairly apportioned among all the aides present. The drafts of so many of Washington's letters being in the writing of his aides gave rise, in the past, to the idea that he could not write a good letter and that all credit for his compositions belongs to his aides, secretaries, and later to his Cabinet officers. Like other criticisms of Washington, this, when examined, falls to the ground. The young men who acted as aides-de-camp were all exceptional individuals. From the group, in later years, came United States Cabinet officers, diplomats, and State officials of note; they were all positive characters, and, if they are to be given credit for Washington's letters, their drafts would surely show different styles of composition. It can hardly be maintained that such positive characters as Alexander Hamilton, Edmund Randolph, John Laurens, Jonathan Trumbull, Tench Tilghman, and James McHenry, to mention only a few, all had the same literary style; and it is necessary only to read a few dozen of the letters here printed to catch their undeviating swing and mannerisms, regardless of which aide drafted them. It is plain, therefore, that Washington dominated his correspondence and can not be denied complete responsibility for it. Sufficient examples are found among the letters of his ability to condense and improve his aides' drafts with simple, more forceful English.

Washington's plain, easy-flowing penmanship could hardly have been slow, though it seems not to have been a rapid hand. It is too round and smooth to be slow, but there are among his manuscripts few examples of what may be called a swift pen movement. The attempt to explain the even pen stroke of

Washington's writing by attributing it to the use of a gold pen and pointing to the actual pen for proof belongs with many other exalted traditions that have no basis in fact. The history of pen manufacturing forbids its acceptance. Like others of his time, Washington cut his own quill pens, and the even writing stroke is caused by his never-varying pen-cutting method. Nearly always Washington stressed the point of legibility in writing, when considering the qualifications of candidates for aides; but in some cases, like that of Robert Hanson Harrison, he waived this point in favor of more important things. There was much quiet humor in George Washington, and it has been inexcusable to deny him this human touch, which he had in good measure. Humor will be found in the correspondence here printed, not abundantly, it is true, but more than could be rightfully expected in letters largely devoted to serious affairs. A glance at the faint but delightfully quizzical curve at the corners of the lips of the Houdon bust is convincing, and one of the documentary evidences is the indorsement on an undated letter from a person who tried to borrow £500 on the strength of a remarkable vision that came to him in a dream. Washington wrote: "From Mr. Thomas Bruff, without date and without Success."

The Revolutionary War correspondence, which is by far the largest group in all of the Washington Papers, was docketed and filed by a system not entirely clear; but there are indications that it was cumbersome and not satisfactory to Washington. Many of the letters bear his indorsement, and all were folded for filing in the three-section, double cross-fold, with the indorsement docket at the top of the middle section. It was not until 1781 that Headquarters records underwent their first comprehensive arrangement. This was done by Richard Varick, whom Washington had appointed his recording secretary.

The work performed by Varick and the corps of trained writers which he assembled systematized the Headquarters file for the first time during the war, and was a small part of the military reorganization that brought the Continental Army to its highest point of efficiency. The forty-four volumes in which Washington's letters from 1775 to 1783 are recorded are known as the Varick Transcripts. This transcribing, begun in 1781, caught up with the Headquarters correspondence in 1782, and from then on went forward as a part of the daily business. The arrangement of the mass of records that had accumulated at Headquarters in six years was a difficult problem, to the solution of which Washington contributed, though Richard Varick deserves full credit. The letters written by Washington were handled first; the tremendous mass of letters and reports sent to him were left as filed until the major problem could be solved. The solving of it, and the difficulties surmounted, is an appealing story to those interested in business efficiency.

These copies, which furnish an accurate check upon the drafts of the Revolutionary period, were transcribed in specially made blank books, folio size, averaging over five hundred pages to the volume, bound in undressed calf with laced, vellum backs.

The Headquarters records shared in all the risks and vicissitudes of the war, and one of the duties of the Commander in Chief's Guard was to see to their safety, in packing and transporting Headquarters impedimenta, whenever and wherever the Army moved. Washington's appreciation of the value of his papers is to be found in his correspondence. It shows that he was well aware of the fact that, despite the utmost precaution, the records at Headquarters were never entirely safe from prying eyes.

The last duty of the last detail of the Commander in Chief's Guard was to transport all the papers from Rocky Hill, New Jersey, to Mount Vernon, where a special vault was built for their storage.

The records and letters that accumulated during Washington's two terms as President of the United States were brought from Philadelphia with the rest of the household effects and added to the mass already there. The letters-sent record of the Presidential period was officially entered in letter books as the Government business developed day by day and a large part of this record is in the writing of Tobias Lear, the President's private secretary; other portions are in that of Bartholomew Dandridge, while David Humphreys, George Washington Craik (the son of Dr. James Craik), and Albin Rawlins and others are the copyists of the letters after March, 1797.

In his first administration Washington received a letter-press-copying machine, a gift from John de Neufville & Son, the Holland merchants who had fitted out the *Bon Homme Richard* for John Paul Jones. Washington had paper specially made for this machine, and the thin sheets on which a large number of his autograph letters were copied all bear his private watermark. These tissue-paper press copies form a special group, marked out by its physical characteristics.

The last distinct group of the Washington Papers consists of those created by the pseudo war with France in 1798–99, for which Washington was appointed Lieutenant General and Commander in Chief of the troops to be raised. A part of these records, which consist largely of lists of officers and candidates for commissions in the United States Army, with sundry comment and analysis of qualifications, is found in the Alexander Hamilton Papers, in the Library of Congress.

The Washington manuscripts remained at Mount Vernon until after the death of Mrs. Washington, a granddaughter of whom is authority for the statement that, shortly before her demise, Martha Washington destroyed her correspondence with the General. This seems to be the first disaster sustained by the Washington manuscripts. The next came in the destruction of the Lund Washington correspondence, destroyed by his widow in compliance with Lund's deathbed request.

After the Washington manuscripts came into the custody of Bushrod Washington, he gave away various documents in a spirit of friendly compliment, but with what appears historically as reckless and thoughtless indifference. This was the beginning of a series of spoliations which ended only when the United States acquired the collection. The greatest loss came as a result of the first publication of Washington's Writings by Jared Sparks. Sparks attempted this work at Mount Vernon, but, without a select library at his command, it soon became evident that this was impossible. He prevailed upon Bushrod Washington to permit him to take the records from Mount Vernon to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and, after some hesitancy, Bushrod permitted it. The acquiescence was unfortunate. Bushrod Washington died and title to the Washington manuscripts passed to George Corbin Washington, while the manuscripts were still in Sparks's possession and where they remained until after the Government purchased the first lot in 1834. The story of William Sprague's devastating appropriation of hundreds of choice Washington manuscripts, as told in Winsor's Narrative and Critical History of the United States, does not agree with Sparks's account of the matter written in 1836. The discrepancies in dates need explanation, and the only positive point is that Sprague helped himself liberally, if

at times ignorantly, and did not always leave copies of what he took. Bushrod Washington is said to have given Sprague permission, but this responsibility was not attributed to Bushrod until after his death; also the evidence is not conclusive that these papers were taken from and the copies left at Mount Vernon. Sparks's letter to George Corbin Washington in 1835, after the Government's purchase of the papers, regarding some missing diaries, is also difficult to interpret in the light of the inscribed diary leaf in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The larger portion of Sprague's collection passed in a lump to Simon Gratz, of Philadelphia, and finally came to rest in the society just mentioned. From the time the Washington manuscripts came into the custody of the United States the collection has remained intact. Though several unfortunate transfers of groups of the records to various Government departments have been made, no losses have been experienced. One of these transfers came about through the unsupervised enthusiasm of John C. Hamilton, who was commissioned by the Government to prepare and publish the writings of Alexander Hamilton. In the progress of this work he was naturally obliged to use the Washington Papers, and he calmly transferred from those papers many of the important letters, sent by Hamilton to Washington, to the Hamilton manuscripts (then also owned by the Government), thus leaving for the historian unexpected and disconcerting gaps in the Washington manuscripts.

But by far the most damaging shift of material occurred when Colonel Frederick C. Ainsworth obtained the sanction of Congress for removing all of the military muster rolls, returns, orderly books, and similar records to the custody of the Record and Pension Division of the War Department, of which he was then the chief.

The Department of State, which had the custody of the Washington Papers (a national archives or public-records department not existing), acquitted itself well in the rôle of custodian. Jared Sparks had had the manuscripts bound into volumes, and in these bindings they remained for over a half century. There were no losses or damage suffered in the seventy years or so of the Department of State guardianship (1834–1903), though one curious incident did occur. When the craze for signatures of prominent individuals was rampant, an unknown vandal cut the signature of Major André from the brave but pathetic letter to Washington, begging the favor of a soldier's death and not one on a gibbet. The mutilation was discovered and official action taken which frightened the unknown thief into slipping the cut signature back into the volume, but the most expert manuscript repairing has not succeeded in concealing this mutilation.

In 1903, through the efforts of Worthington C. Ford, then Chief of the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress, the Washington manuscripts (along with certain other groups of historical records) were transferred by Executive order from the Department of State to the Library of Congress. As transferred, the manuscripts were still as they had been bound by Jared Sparks. This binding was decidedly crude and, though it was a protection against loss, it was, decidedly, a contributory damaging element. After some years the Library of Congress undertook to repair and mount the manuscripts in the best known manner, and it is expected they will be in their final, permanent form in 1932.

In preparing the WRITINGS for the press, the editor has received cordial assistance from all sides, which is the more gratifying, showing how deep and warm is the interest of the general public in George Washington.

The thanks of the editor are especialy due to Dr. Worthington C. Ford, whose labors in precisely this same field are fully comprehended and well appreciated.

To Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, Chief of the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress, whose indefatigable and conscientious efforts in gathering photostat copies of Washington's letters that have become separated from the collection and to aid in perfecting these WRITINGS, special acknowledgments are due. To the Advisory Committee on the Writings, created and selected by Professor Albert Bushnell Hart, the editor acknowledges his indebtedness for suggestion and helpful discussion. These thanks are due to the committee not only as a whole but to each of the individual members.

Special acknowledgment is made to the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union for unusual favors and, above all, for the privilege of reproducing pictures of the Houdon bust, which is not only our most perfect representation of Washington's features but is in itself an absolutely accurate character presentation of the greatest American.

To Professor Albert Bushnell Hart, who bore the brunt of much of the difficult preliminary arrangements, and whose persistent activity was a large factor in the decision to publish these WRITINGS, my acknowledgments are sincerely tendered.

To the many private individuals who generously contributed copies and facsimiles of Washington letters in their possession, the editor feels peculiarly grateful; the willingness with which these copies were furnished was inspiring. Specific acknowledgment is made in the footnotes to each of these many individuals, who are too numerous to be mentioned with proper courtesy in a long list of names. The dealers in manuscripts throughout the country who cooperated with cheerfulness to the request for texts of Washington letters in their possession,

have proved themselves worthy the honor of handling George Washington letters. Not one who contributed did so in a grudging manner, and the editor takes real pleasure in acknowledging their assistance.

To the various historical societies, libraries, and the officials thereof, whom I am proud to consider as friends, I extend all the thanks I can express. The table of symbols *post* will show to some slight degree the extent to which these collections have been drawn upon to round out the WRITINGS, but it does not show the generous cooperation displayed by all of the organizations there listed.

And, lastly, it is more than proper that mention should be made of the aid and comfort given by those energetic personalities of the George Washington Bicentennial Commission who have been ready at all times to smooth over difficulties and forward the work: The Honorable Simeon D. Fess, Honorable Sol Bloom, Lieutenant Colonel U. S. Grant, 3d, Honorable R. Walton Moore, and Honorable William Tyler Page.

JOHN C. FITZPATRICK.

WASHINGTON, D. C.,
November 25, 1930.