

Washington and Lee

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I recently bought a used school book, printed in 1929, that had some information I was interested in. In it there were a couple of letters reproduced that General Robert E. Lee had sent to two of his children; one to one of his daughters and one to his oldest son, George Washington Custis Lee. I put the letter to his son into the October 10th issue of my publication 'More Light or Mehr Licht' you may remember seeing it there, but for those who do not get that publication sent directly to them I will attach it to this publication along with the normal attachments.

I had plans to write something in T.F.S. about George Washington for one of the November issues, because Brother Washington was made a Mason in November, and since most of the articles about him are written for February releases I thought November would be fine month to write something about him.

A while ago, I was asked to give a talk at a Lodge here in Minnesota, for their Washington's Birthday Dinner. It was a fine evening, and I don't say that because I was there to speak. They had it in the town's new civic center building and the School Choir was there to sing for entertainment. The room was full of some of the nicest people in the area; the Masons of the Lodge and their wives. Well anyway when I was preparing my talk for that event, I put together a talk that was more about Brother Washington's personal life than his military life. There has been more written about George Washington than any other American, so while it isn't too difficult to learn something about him it sometimes is hard to put together some information about him that is not so well known, and this is what I was trying to do.

Well, in the talk I mentioned how when George Washington was about 15 in 1747 & 48 he wrote in his diary about a girl he called his 'lowland beauty,' this young lady's name was Lucy Grymes. It shouldn't surprise many men to know that as a young man our Brother Washington was fond of the ladies.

Well, his childhood romances, like many of ours, did not last or bloom into anything of a lasting nature. Brother Washington grew up and eventually Married Martha Dandridge Custis, a widowed lady who had a couple of children. And as almost always happens old girlfriends usually find the love of their lives too and wind up marrying and raising families, and that's what Miss Lucy Grymes did. She married Henry Lee II, (believed to be a Mason, but no proof found,) and this couple had two children named Henry Lee III, (a Mason,) and Richard Bland Lee, (Bland being the maiden name of Henry's mother.) Now Henry Lee III became a trusted officer and friend of General George Washington during the Revolutionary War; he is known in history as Henry 'Light Horse Harry' Lee. So the son of one of the girls Brother Washington was keen on in his youth became a most capable officer and trusted friend of our Brother. In fact, it was Light Horse Harry who, when asked to deliver a tribute to his beloved General and Friend, described him for posterity. The first part of this quote from him is well remembered, but it also has an important second line: ***"First in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen ... second to none in the humble and enduring scenes of private life."*** Brother Henry 'Light Horse Harry' Lee was a member of Hiram Lodge #59 of Westmoreland County, Virginia. You may already know this, but one of Light Horse Harry's sons was Robert Edward Lee; he actually had five children and Robert E. Lee was the youngest.

George and Martha Washington raised her two children, John and Martha Custis. John Custis was called 'Jack' and Marta Custis was called 'Patsy.' From all accounts they had a happy childhood provided by George and Martha. Jack married Nellie Calvert on February 3, 1774. Jack and his wife had a son and they named him George Washington Park Custis, in honor of George Washington. When George Washington Parke Custis' father died he went to live with his Grandparents who raised him as their own son. He and his Grandfather, our Brother Washington, were very close. Young George Washington Parke Custis was and is known as the adopted son

of George Washington, and he certainly considered himself as his adopted son. He was called Washington, or "Wash" for short.

George Washington Parke Custis became a Colonel in the U.S. Army and fought in the war of 1812 later he became a playwright and a historian on Washington. He also was the heir to all of Washington's property and papers, and he housed them in Arlington House which he built in 1804. George Washington Parke Custis married Mary Fitzhugh, and to this marriage was born a daughter named Mary Anna Custis, who grew up to marry Robert Edward Lee, son of Henry 'Light Horse Harry' Lee. So, in this way the family of Robert E. Lee and George Washington became linked. From all evidence George Washington Parke Custis was a fine man and a great father and grandfather, in addition he and his Son-in-law Robert E. Lee got along famously, which is evidenced by the fact that Robert E. Lee named his eldest son after his Father-in-law. After the death of his wife's father Lee said: "[He] has been for me all a father could, and whom I never cease fondly to regard and love as such."

George Washington Custis Lee, the son Robert E. Lee wrote the letter to, was born in 1832 and while growing up was called at times "Boo" or "Bunny." It appears that the Lees and the Washington's were big on nicknames for their kids. George Washing Custis Lee was a cut-up and a trouble maker as a child but he became a serious and capable man; he graduated at the top of his class from the United States Military Academy in 1854, and after graduation he pursued a military career. He was a fine horseman, but not as good as his younger brother "Rooney," (William Fitzhugh Lee.) George Washing Custis Lee never married. In May 1861 he resigned his commission in the U.S. Army and joined the army of the C.S.A. serving as aide-de-camp to President Jefferson Davis. During his service in the Civil War he attained the rank of Brigadier General. In 1863 he volunteered to take his brother "Rooney's" place as a prisoner of war so that Rooney could come home to be with his dying wife.

After the war ended he was a Professor of Military Science and Engineering at the Virginia Military Institute. And in 1871, after the death of his father, he succeeded his father as president of Washington College, which is now Washington and Lee University. He died in 1913.

Arlington House, which was built by George Washington Parke Custis was where the Lee family lived prior to and after the Civil War. It was at Arlington House that George Washington Parke Custis housed the artifacts and papers from his Washington inheritance. Arlington House was completed in 1818, and Custis intended it to not only be a home but also to serve as a memorial to his adopted father. After his daughter Mary Anna married Lieutenant Robert E. Lee the young couple eventually came to live at Arlington House and where George Washington Parke Custis continued to live in his apartments in the north wing of the mansion. Because of this, George Washington Parke Custis was a prominent figure and a positive influence on the seven Lee children. At his death in 1857 Arlington House was inherited by his only living child Mary Anna Lee, and at her death in 1873 ownership passed to George Washington Custis Lee. Robert E. and Mary Lee are buried on the campus of Washington and Lee University in Virginia.

George Washington through his adopted son through his daughter's marriage to Robert E. Lee will always remind me of the connection of our Brother to our more modern times. While it is said there are no descendents of George Washington, through the Lee family there are.

Our Brother George Washington was made a Mason November 4, 1752 in Fredericksburg Lodge, which later became Fredericksburg Lodge #4 in the Grand Lodge of Virginia. On March 3, 1753

he was passed to the degree of Fellow Craft. On August 4, 1753 when Brother Washington was Raised to the Sublime Degree there was also another degree that night when candidate Thomas James was initiated.

“From the minutes of the Lodge at Fredericksburg” the following is quoted:

“ 4th November Charles Lewis & George Washington entered an Apprentice. 3rd March George Washington passed to Fellow Craft

4th August 5753 [1753], which day the Lodge being assembled present, Right Worshipful Daniel Campbell, [Master], I. Neilson, S.W. Robert Halkerson, J.W., George Washington, James Strakan, Alexander Wodrow, Secretary Pro Tem, Thomas Robertson, William McWilliams, Treasurer. Transactions of the evening are – George Washington Raised Master Mason, Thomas James, Entered Apprentice.

It is thanks to the Secretary of his Lodge we have a record of his degree nights. The Secretary is important to a Lodge, and who knows but something a Secretary of your Lodge may have recorded will someday be of historic importance in the future.

I would like to suggest two things that might be something special to do to remember our Brother George Washington; use the prayer that follows in Lodge, and give a special thanks to your Lodge secretary for all he does, reminding him that what he records may be historically important sometime in the future.

Our Brother George Washington repeated his obligation in the degrees on a Bible printed by John Field, of Cambridge England, in 1668. That Bible is still in the Lodge Room of Fredericksburg Lodge # 4 of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. Written on the fly -leaf of that Bible is a Prayer that most likely was given by the Lodge Chaplain in 1752 & 1753 when Washington became a member of that Lodge. Here is the Prayer:

**“O God, Divine Architect of the Universe,
We bow with gratitude to thy Omnipotence.
We acknowledge Thee as the Creator and
Preserver of all things. We thank Thee
For Thy daily blessings conferred on us
In all our undertakings, more particularly,
O God, we crave Thy presence at this meeting.
Do Thou preside over us in the spirit of
Peace, Love and Charity, and to Thy Holy
Name be power and Dominion, forever, Amen.”**