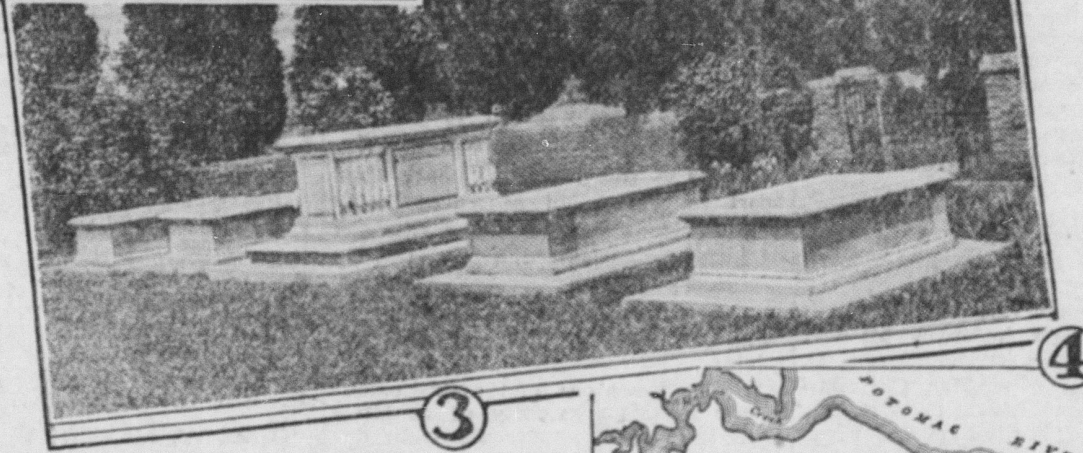
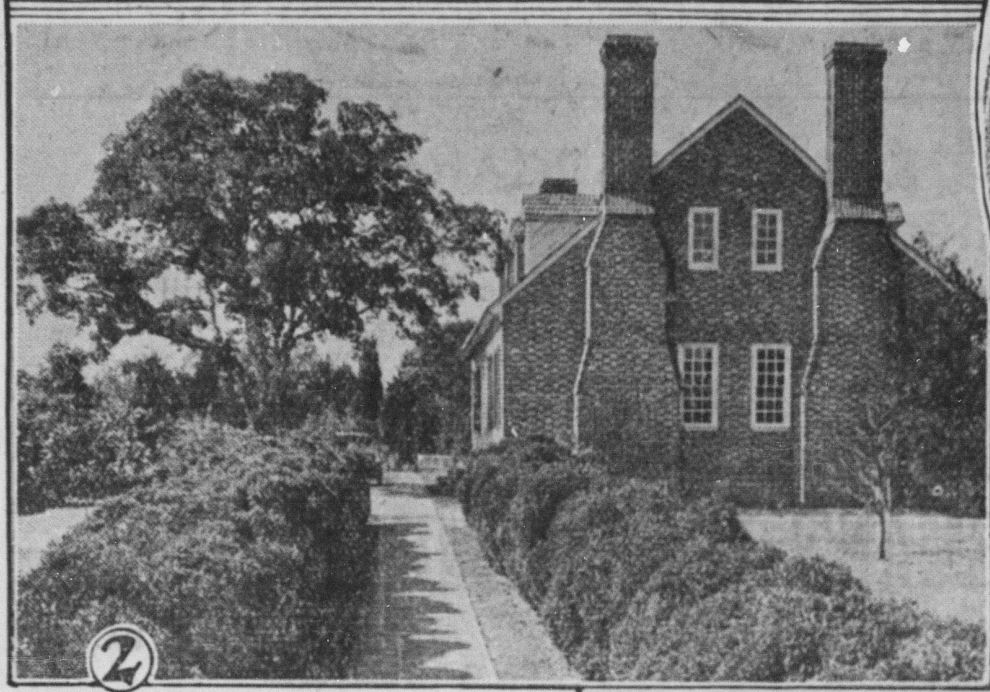


The Birthplace of Washington



By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

WHEN was George Washington born? Most Americans believe that it was on February 22, 1732, and that's why we observe February 22 as Washington's birthday.

As a matter of fact he was born on February 11, 1732. But the reason why we observe February 22 instead of February 11 as his birthday is because of the tinkering that man has done with the calendar down through the ages. Without going into all the technical details of the calendar's early history, suffice it to say that in 1582 the Julian calendar year (established by Julius Caesar and modified somewhat by Augustus Caesar) was ten days ahead of the true solar year. So Pope Gregory XVIII ordered that October 5 be regarded as October 15, thus dropping out 10 days, and also made changes in computing leap years.



But it was not until 1752 that the Gregorian year was adopted by Great Britain and her colonies. Then 11 days were dropped between September 3 and September 14. Twenty years before this a boy, to whom had been given the name of George Washington, was born in England's colony of Virginia in North America. That event had actually taken place on February 11 under the old calendar system but when the Gregorian calendar was applied and the calendar pushed up 11 days it made his birthday February 22. So that is why we celebrate on that date.

Where was George Washington born? Just as he had "two birthdays" so did he have "two birthplaces"—that is, if we listen to the assertions of different "authorities"—and just as a matter of 11 days of time separates his "two birthdays," so does a matter of approximately a mile of distance separate his "two birthplaces."

Back in 1923 there was organized in Washington, D. C., by Mrs. Josephine Wheelwright Rust, a descendant of John Washington, the original Washington emigrant to this country, and by other interested persons an association known as the Wakefield National Memorial association which was incorporated under the laws of Virginia for the purpose of restoring Wakefield, the house in which Washington was supposed to have been born.

Through the generosity of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and other donors a large part of the plantation of Capt. Augustine Washington was purchased and improvements made on it. In 1930 the federal government appropriated \$50,000 for the removal of the granite shaft, erected in 1836 to mark the site of Washington's birthplace, and for the construction of a replica of Wakefield and the improvement of the grounds. All of this was established as the George Washington Birthplace National Monument and placed under the jurisdiction of the national park service.

But during this time there was advanced the disturbing theory by several specialists in Washington that the association had improved the wrong site as the birthplace of the Father of His Country! He was not born at Wakefield on the northwest bank of Popes creek, so they said, but more than a mile away near the southeast bank of Bridges creek, where the Washington family graveyard is located. The association was positive enough that it was right to go ahead with its work and the federal government seemed satisfied. But at the same time that disturbing theory would not die.

It has remained for Dr. Charles O. Paulin of the division of historical research in the Carnegie Institution of Washington to make a search in contemporaneous documents and to uncover evidence which seems to settle the question conclusively and to prove that the Wakefield site actually was the birthplace of Washington.

The story of the investigation which Doctor Paulin made, the evidence which he found and the conclusions which he reached from them are contained in a recent press release from the Carnegie Institution, upon which the remainder of this article is based. He says, in part:

The first land owned by the Washingtons on the Popes Creek-Bridges Creek peninsula was purchased of David Anderson in 1664 by John Washington (I), the emigrant and great-grandfather of George. On this tract, which contained 150 acres and which lay on the southeast side of Bridges creek, John established his home and graveyard. When he died in 1677, John (II), one of his sons, inherited the Anderson tract or home plantation. Twenty years later it passed to the wife of John (II) at his death, and at her death to their son John (III).

On the death of John (I) another son, Lawrence, grandfather of George, inherited lands near the Potomac some miles northwest of Bridges creek. In 1695 Lawrence purchased of the heirs of David Liston 400 acres on the northwest side of Bridges creek adjoining the lands of his brother John (II). On Lawrence's death in 1698 the Liston tract and other near-by lands fell to Capt. Augustine Washington, father of George.

Augustine was married in 1715 and his first child was born in the following year. In 1717-1718 he

purchased of Joseph Abington 150 acres of the Popes Creek-Bridges Creek peninsula, lying on the northwest side of Popes creek and including the site of the recent improvements at Wakefield. The tract may have had a residence on it, for the purchase included "all houses, edifices, buildings, tobacco houses, fences, orchards, (and) gardens."

I have discovered no document stating what improvements, if any, Augustine made on the Abington tract, or giving the date of his removal to it. That he was living there on February 22, 1732, we know certainly by a "deed of uses" of that date made by himself and his wife, Jane, of the one part, and Lawrence Butler and George Eskridge, of the other part, in which occurs the clause, "whereas the aforesaid Augustine Washington is seized in fee simple of one parcel and tract of land, being the land where he now lives, which land he the said Augustine purchased of one Joseph Abington."

Six years before the birth of his illustrious son he is therefore known to have been living in a house on the Popes creek side of the peninsula. He is also known to have spent the last years of his life first on the Hunting creek (Mount Vernon) plantation in Prince William county and later on the Strother plantation near Fredericksburg. Three of his children were born after he left Westmoreland county. Almost every year between 1733 and 1750 has been given as the probable date of his removal. I have established the date as certainly between March 25 and November 18, 1735. It is therefore conclusive that Augustine was living in a house near Popes creek between 1723 and 1735; his son, George, was born in 1732. The early maps locating George's birthplace near Bridges creek and the numerous writers locating it elsewhere than near Popes creek are certainly erroneous.

After his purchase of the Abington tract Augustine Washington continued to increase his holdings on the peninsula. In 1725 he bought 215 acres on the Potomac river, and in 1734 25 acres of lots, islands, and marshes at the mouth of Popes creek. In 1742 by an exchange of lands with his cousin, John (IV), he obtained a tract on the southeast side of Bridges creek which included the graveyard and the ancestral home-site, and for the first time all of the Popes Creek-Bridges Creek peninsula was in the possession of a single Washington.

The ancestral home-site at Bridges creek, therefore, could not have been the birthplace of George, since his father did not own it until 1742. The date of its abandonment as an ancestral residence is not known.

On the death of Capt. Augustine Washington, April 12, 1743, the Popes Creek-Bridges Creek plantation fell to his son Col. Augustine, who lived and died there.

George Washington, who regarded the genealogy of his family as of "very little moment," wrote of Col. Augustine, his half brother, that he "lived at the ancient mansion seat in Westmoreland county, where he died, and was interred in the family vault."

Col. Augustine represented his county in the House of Burgesses from 1755 (or 1754) to 1758. On his death his widow Anne (Aylett) Washington and her children, including her eldest son, William Augustine (1757-1810), who inherited the plantation, continued to occupy its residence.

The widow is described by her illustrious brother-in-law as an "heiress" and in May, 1771, when he visited her, as of "Popes Creek," thus locating her residence as on or near that creek. William Augustine Washington was living in the house when it burned. When he died in 1810 it fell to his son, George Corbin Washington.

The possessions of George Corbin Washington did not include the whole of the peninsula inherited by his grandfather, Col. Augustine Washington, in 1743. It did include the plantation known at this time as Wakefield, first so called by William Augustine Washington, according to the authority of William Lanier Washington, who died in 1933. The designation is known to have been in current use as early as 1773.

In 1813 George Corbin Washington, then a resident of Georgetown, D. C., sold to John Gray of Stafford county, Virginia, for 6,223 pounds and 10 shillings the Wakefield plantation, containing 981½ acres, together with two other small tracts. Later Wakefield came again into the pos-

1. Washington as a young colonial militia officer. From the miniature by Charles Wilson Peale.
2. The colonial mansion and grounds at Wakefield near Popes creek in Westmoreland county, Virginia. The building, typical of eighteenth century architecture, was erected by the Wakefield National Memorial association in co-operation with the federal government on the site of the house in which Washington was born.
3. The ancestral burying ground of the Washingtons situated near Bridges creek in Westmoreland county, as restored by the Wakefield National Memorial association and the federal government. Here lie the bodies of the father, grandfather, great-grandfather and other relatives of Washington.
4. Map showing the area (shaded) designated by the government as the George Washington Birthplace National Monument.

(All pictures, except portrait of Washington, courtesy National Park Service.)

session of the Washingtons through its purchase in 1846 by John F. Wilson of Anne Arundel county, Maryland, and by its gift to his son, John E. Wilson, who married Betty, a granddaughter of William Augustine Washington.

Of great interest is the following provision in the form of a memorandum found at the end of a deed made by George Corbin Washington to Gray: "The said Washington further more makes over to the said Gray all his right and title as derived from his father, William Augustine Washington, to the marshes in Popes creek, but reserves the family Burying Ground at the Great Quarter (slave quarters), also sixty feet square of ground on which the house stood in which General Washington was born."

The title to the reservations passed from George Corbin Washington to his son, Lewis William, and thence in 1858 to the state of Virginia, which in 1882 transferred it to the federal government. In 1883 the government increased its holdings by the purchase of eleven acres adjacent to the site upon which Custis had placed the slab. In 1896 it erected a granite monument, 51 feet high, on this site, after exploring and mapping the foundations.

There is no known contemporary description of the original house on the Custis site near Popes creek. The nearest to one that I have found is that given about 1835 by an ancient resident of the neighborhood, who remembered that it was a "low-pitched, single-storied, frame building, with four rooms on the first floor and an enormous chimney at each end on the outside." An anonymous visitor of 1851 found the site in the "midst of a two-hundred-acre corn field, marked only by an old brick chimney, a mammoth fig tree, and a freestone slab" (Custis' memorial).

On October 31, 1878, anticipating the acquisition of the site by the federal government, Secretary of State William M. Evarts with a party, which included Gen. W. T. Sherman and Charles C. Perkins of Boston, made a trip to Popes creek from Washington on board the U. S. S. Tallapoosa. Sherman made a rough and not altogether accurate map of the region and Perkins a sketch of the remains of a brick chimney, identifying it as belonging to a kitchen that stood behind the house, the site of which was then bare.

In 1896 the army engineer corps explored and mapped the foundations of the original house. Additional explorations at Wakefield have not revealed any other foundations of importance or the Abington tract. That this house is the birthplace rests upon the evidence of these explorations, and of the chain of facts that confirms the evidence and the tradition. It must be so accepted.

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TOO MANY WAIT FOR A MIRACLE!

Explaining Lack of Effort to Fight Weakness.

In Vienna recently the police had to be called out to cope with the crowds at the funeral of a rabbi who had a reputation for performing miracles.

From across the border in Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia, tens of thousands came, hoping that at his open grave the spirit of the holy man would secure for them their heart's desire.

All who felt that what meant happiness for them could be attained only through a miracle, took their last hope to his funeral. At the end a sack was flung into the grave. In it were thousands of written requests for miracles.

So in this day and age there are people who pin their faith in miracles.

When we stop to think about it, it

comes to us that this is true not only of the simple folk of still medieval regions. Many of us right here, while we do not follow miracle workers or send notes to spirits, still do hope for miracles to bring us happiness. We may not do this consciously. But what other explanation is there for the lack of effort on our own part to make our way of life conducive to the happiness we seek?

We all know, in our own hearts, of qualities within ourselves that militate against our enjoyment of content and happiness. We know things we do that hurt us, or those we love, which is the same thing. And yet, do we fight those weaknesses, uproot those faults? No. For the most part we just go along, living in the same way from day to day, falling short of the realization of inner joy that should be ours, putting off happiness. Surely, we must be waiting for a miracle!

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The Usual Insect

Wife (hearing husband arrive home after hours)—Who is that? Husband—Er-hardly anybody, dear.

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2. Drink full glass of water. Repeat treatment in 2 hours.
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