

# GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT ★ VERNON

## GALLERIES IN THE DONALD W. REYNOLDS MUSEUM

### **Houdon Bust Gallery**

*Gallery supported by The Founders,  
Washington Committee for Historic Mount Vernon*

The Houdon Bust Gallery features Mount Vernon's most prized artifact, Jean-Antoine Houdon's terracotta bust of George Washington, created with a life mask in 1785. This remarkable sculpture – the most accurate likeness of Washington – is exhibited with dramatic lighting in a circular, domed gallery designed exclusively to showcase the piece. The bust was installed at Washington's height to give visitors an indication of how he towered over most of his contemporaries. Adjacent to the gallery is a video nook where visitors can see a History Channel video showing how the life mask was prepared and the terracotta bust created.

### **Introducing Washington's World Gallery**

*Gallery supported by A. Alfred Taubman*

The first gallery visitors encounter after the Houdon Bust features highlights from the collection – extraordinary Washington objects from England, Europe, China, and America that reflect the man and his love of beauty, his refined taste, his status within his world, and his purchasing power. Mount Vernon's holdings include a wealth of fine and decorative arts produced by some of the finest artists and craftsmen of the Colonial period, and they are on display in this gallery where they can be studied closely outside of the historic house.

The highlight of the gallery is an elegant presidential dining scenario, depicting one of the dinners that Washington held every Thursday at 4:00 p.m., when congressmen and other government officials were invited to dine with the president. Showing how the First Couple entertained guests, the scenario features such pieces as their French porcelain dinner service, decorative French table ornaments, their silver candlesticks, finger bowls, and a menu based on

the account of a Massachusetts congressman who attended one of these dinners in 1795. Visitors will feel as if they are present in the dining room of the presidential residence in Philadelphia. A mirror at the far end of the scenario gives the appearance of a much larger gathering and reflects the visitors' images as well.

Several cases are devoted to superb examples of silver, ceramics, and glass, all owned and used by the Washingtons, and feature such topics as the Washingtons' legendary hospitality and the taking of tea and coffee in the 18th century. This gallery brings together – for the first time in more than 100 years – a set of five pieces of mantle garniture owned by the Washingtons. Pieces of furniture that reflect Washington's appreciation of fine craftsmanship and his preference for understated elegance are also displayed. Washington himself is present through an iconic portrait painted by Gilbert Stuart.

### **From Soldier to Statesman Gallery**

*Gallery supported by John and Adrienne Mars*

This elegant gallery focuses on the more public persona of George Washington and features beautiful and historic artifacts relating to his military career and presidency. Current visitors to the estate have little opportunity to learn more about these two important chapters of Washington's life. Through this new gallery, they gain a better sense of Washington during the time the country was in revolt and in the fledgling years of our nation.

Objects pertaining to his renowned military career include the monumental portrait of *Washington at the Battle of Princeton* by Charles Willson Peale. Washington's sword, silver camp cups, and a pair of silver spurs he gave to a soldier at Valley Forge so that he could ride to Boston for much-needed supplies are displayed in addition to a variety of pieces from the famous Society of the Cincinnati service. Washington served as first President General of this hereditary order, comprised of French and American officers who served during the Revolutionary War, and this rare and elegant service of Chinese export porcelain is decorated with the arms of the Society.

Another Charles Willson Peale painting gives visitors a close look at our first president. It is complemented by a stylish French side chair that Washington purchased from a departing French ambassador for use in the presidential residence as well as a chair from the first Congress over which he presided. Also featured are smaller-scale pieces such as a pair of silver and paste shoe buckles worn to Washington's inauguration, buttons made to commemorate the inauguration, and a cabinet-size portrait of President Washington.

### **At Home with the Washingtons Gallery**

*Gallery supported by Elizabeth and Stanley Deforest Scott*

This largest of all the permanent collection galleries in the new Museum gives a glimpse of the Washingtons' daily lives, whether at Mount Vernon or on the road. Visitors will leave this gallery with a far better idea of how the Washingtons lived "behind the scenes" and out of the public eye.

Guests first encounter a magnificent twelve-foot-wide painting of Washington and his family and the Marquis de Lafayette on the piazza, on loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It is complemented by a piazza scenario, comprised of the Washingtons' Pembroke table, Chinese export porcelain tea service, silver hot water urn, and Windsor chairs, reflecting the use of the piazza as an outdoor room for entertaining and relaxing. The look of George Washington's Mount Vernon is also revealed through early paintings attributed to Edward Savage, the original weathervane in the form of a dove of peace, and original sundial.

A domestic vignette explores women's activities at Mount Vernon and includes a beautifully embroidered shell cushion fashioned by Martha Washington, along with her sewing basket and work table, while another area of the gallery reveals the outdoor activities enjoyed at Mount Vernon through the display of Washington's ducking gun, hunting horn, riding crop, and fishing tackle box.

Finally, an inset wall case gives visitors a feeling of "life on the road" and holds Washington's folding camp bed along with his trunk, razor, telescope, and saddlebag.

## **The Washington Style Gallery**

*Gallery supported by the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation*

The cases in this gallery present the personal objects used and worn by George and Martha Washington, their children and grandchildren. From objects that were used on a daily basis, to those reserved for more special occasions, the style of the Washingtons emerges. Personal objects highlight the emphasis placed on physical appearance and the importance of particular imports in Colonial America.

Objects in the gallery range from George Washington's shoe and knee buckles to Martha Washington's earrings and necklaces. One case is devoted to the costly textiles worn by the Washington family, and these light-sensitive objects will rotate on a regular basis. Another focuses on jewel-like miniatures of members of the Washington family.

This small and intimate gallery has the rich feel of a "treasury", with elegant built-in wooden casework anchored by two "porthole" portraits of George and Martha Washington by Rembrandt Peale.

## **Book and Manuscript Gallery**

*Gallery supported by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*

The Book and Manuscript Gallery focuses on Washington's insatiable hunger for knowledge, his keen curiosity, and his life-long desire to better understand the world around him, as shown through manuscripts, maps, prints, and books. These rare and important objects from two premier collections – that of Mount Vernon and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History – address broader topics such as our country's founding documents, slavery, and Washington's Last Will and Testament. It is also enriched by loans from the Boston Athenaeum, the keeper of the largest collection of original books owned by Washington.

This gallery has the tranquil feel of an elegant library and includes Washington's recently conserved globe, spectacles, inkstand, and one of his Argand lamps. These objects and a selection of original books will convey the rich diversity of his interests.

### **Changing Exhibition Gallery**

*Gallery supported by the F.M. Kirby Foundation*

A 1,100-square foot Changing Exhibitions Gallery provides space for one or two temporary exhibitions a year organized by Mount Vernon and sister institutions. Exhibit galleries in the Donald W. Reynolds Museum were designed by Quenroe Associates ([www.quenroe.com](http://www.quenroe.com)). Fabrication for the exhibits in the Museum and Education Center was conducted by Art Guild, Inc. ([www.artguildinc.com](http://www.artguildinc.com)).

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