NHL - 2000

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **WASHINGTON, GEORGE, BOYHOOD HOME SITE**

Other Name/Site Number: Ferry Farm
44ST174 [Washington domestic complex archeological site number]

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 237 King's Highway (Virginia Route 3) *Not* for publication: N/A

City/Town: Fredericksburg Vicinity: Fredericksburg

State: **Virginia** **County:** Stafford *Code:* 179

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-Local: ___
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): ___
District: ___
Site: X
Structure: ___
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	4	buildings
4	1	sites
1	1	structures
0	0	objects
5	**6**	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the **National** Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: None

Designated a NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK on FEB 16 2000 by the Secretary of the Interior

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): ____________________

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic Transportation	Sub:	Single Dwelling Water Related
Current:	Recreation and Culture Landscape	Sub:	Museum Outdoor Recreation Park

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:

Materials:

Foundation:
Walls:
Roof:
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

PROPERTY LOCATION AND HISTORY

George Washington's Childhood Home Site, generally known as Ferry Farm (hereafter referred to as "Ferry Farm" or "the site"), is within the boundaries of George Washington's Ferry Farm, a private historical and archaeological park owned by the Kenmore Association, Inc., in Stafford County, Virginia, on the left (east) bank of the Rappahannock River directly across the river from the City of Fredericksburg. The site consists of 68.8 acres bounded by Virginia Route 3 on the east, the Route 3 Highway Connector on the south, a privately owned farm (the Bass-Embrey Farm) on the north and the Rappahannock River on the west (Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2).

The site is located on the Northern Neck of Virginia about one mile below the falls of the Rappahannock River. The general course of the Rappahannock is from west to east, but the river makes a turn to the south at the falls, and flows southward past the site. Most of the site is located on a river terrace about 60 feet above Mean Sea Level (AMSL). A slope on the west side of the site falls away to a narrow river terrace that is about 15 feet AMSL. The river is at about 10 feet AMSL. A small, spring-fed stream flows westward across the northern part of the site, forming a ravine that divides the northern fifth of the site from the remainder to the south. The river passes through a short but ecologically rich area of tidal fresh water at the site. Native Americans occupied the site at various times during the pre-historic period. A very broad lithic scatter along the edge of the upper terrace characterizes evidence of Native American cultural activity.

European and African settlement of the region below the falls began in the second half of the 17th century. The property that became Ferry Farm was located within a 2,000-acre patent issued to Col. John Catlett on June 2, 1666. The Catlett Patent lay on the left bank of the Rappahannock between the lower falls and a point about three miles downstream, and extended inland about a mile and a half.[1] The Catlett Patent was divided and subdivided over the succeeding forty years, but no evidence has been found that any of the land was occupied during that period. In September 1710, Thomas Harwood purchased 150 acres of the Catlett Patent, including the area of the later Washington domestic complex, from Maurice Clark of Richmond County. Although no physical evidence of a domestic complex associated with Harwood's ownership has been found, he apparently cultivated the land. In 1726 legislation provided for the establishment of a ferry from the right bank of the Rappahannock to Harwood's plantation.

In 1727 Harwood sold this land to William Strother. Strother acquired two tracts adjacent to the Harwood plantation: a 200-acre tract away from the river owned by Alice Cale, which Strother bought in 1729, and a 150-acre tract owned by John Hartshorn, which Strother bought in 1732. The earliest domestic site at Ferry Farm, designated the Strother-Washington House, is associated with the Strother occupancy. Interpretation of the physical evidence recovered from

[1] King George County Deed Book 3: 276-77, Virginia Land Office Patent Book 5: 623. The Catlett patent was located in old Rappahannock County, established in 1656. When Rappahannock County was divided between Richmond and Essex counties in 1692, the Catlett Patent fell within Hanover Parish, Richmond County. In 1720 the western portion of Richmond County, including Hanover Parish, was designated King George County. The site was located in King George County during the Washington occupancy. A revision in county boundaries in 1776 placed Ferry Farm in Stafford County. Documents relating to the history of the site are thus located in the county records of several counties. Many of the most important documents related to the Washington occupancy are in the possession of King George County government, although the site is in Stafford County. The title history of Ferry Farm has been ably reconstructed by Thena Jones in "Reconstructing the Washington Farm and the Catlett Patent," Ferry Farm Project: Stafford, Va., 1992.

the site does not preclude the house dating to the Harwood period. Further investigation will be needed to determine whether the structure was built during the Harwood or the Strother period.

William Strother made his will, naming his wife, Margaret, as his executrix, on November 20, 1732. He died within three and a half months. His will was entered into probate on March 2, 1732.[2] A detailed inventory of Strother's estate was not presented to the King George County Court until April 7, 1738. The inventory contains a room by room description of the contents of the Strother house, indicating that it consisted of four rooms and a central hall downstairs and two rooms above. In his will, William Strother recommended that his wife sell the property for her own benefit and that of their six unmarried daughters. The property was advertised for sale in 1738 and shortly thereafter was sold to the highest bidder.

THE WASHINGTON PERIOD, 1738-1774

The successful bidder for the Strother property was Augustine Washington (1694-1743), a resident of Prince William County. Augustine Washington was already the owner of two plantations in addition to other real estate. He owned a plantation in Westmoreland County, on Popes Creek, a portion of which is preserved by the National Park Service as George Washington Birthplace National Monument, and another plantation in Prince William (later Fairfax) County on Little Hunting Creek, which his eldest son, Lawrence, would inherit and name Mount Vernon. The Strother plantation became Augustine Washington's third plantation. On November 2, 1738, Augustine Washington received a deed to "all that messuage, tenement and mansion house where the said William Strother lately Dwelt and all the several pieces and parcels of land adjoining that whereon the mansion house stands—together about 280 acres. Consisting of the 3 parcels purchased by Wm Strother from Thomas Harwood, John Hartshorn, and Alice Cale, widow."[3]

The Strother property probably appealed to Augustine Washington for several reasons. First, it was within two miles of a 400-acre tract of land on Little Falls Run inherited by his wife, Mary Ball Washington (1708-1789), from her father. Augustine probably intended to develop this property into a productive plantation. Second, the Strother property was directly across from the port of Fredericksburg, a newly established town that offered Augustine Washington investment opportunities and access to the amenities of what passed for urban life in mid-18th-century Virginia. Third, the plantation was within convenient riding distance of Augustine's iron mining and furnace operation on Accokeek Creek, located several miles away in what is now central Stafford County.[4]

Augustine was also faced with the problem of providing an estate adequate to the support of several prospective heirs. By 1738 Augustine Washington was the father of six sons and a daughter — the two surviving sons from his marriage to Jane Butler (d. 1729), Lawrence and Augustine (Austin) — and five children by his second wife, Mary Ball — George, Samuel,

[2] King George Will Book A-1: 95.

[3] King George County Deed Book 2: 220-224.

[4] Of these various reasons, most Washington biographers have treated the last as determinative; see Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington*, (7 vols., Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1948-1957), 1: 58, and James T. Flexner, *George Washington: The Forge of Experience* (Little, Brown: Boston, 1965), 13-14. More recently, John Ferling has placed equal emphasis on the better prospects for educating GW and his younger brothers in the Fredericksburg area; see Ferling, *The First of Men: A Life of George Washington* (University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1988), 4-5.

Elizabeth, John Augustine, and Charles. By 1738 he had decided to leave the Little Hunting Creek plantation to Lawrence and the Popes Creek plantation to Austin. His acquisition of the Strother plantation, followed by purchases of land in Stafford and Westmoreland counties was almost certainly intended to provide for the sons of his second marriage. Augustine Washington probably acquired the Strother plantation with the intention of leaving it to his son George, as he did at his death in 1743.

George Washington (1732-1799) was six years old when his father acquired the Strother plantation. He was born at his father's Westmoreland County plantation on Popes Creek. In 1735 Augustine Washington moved his family, including three year-old George, to the Little Hunting Creek plantation, where Augustine apparently built a new house, which recent research suggests consisted of two rooms downstairs and two small rooms in a half story above.[5] Augustine Washington moved his family to the more spacious house on the Strother plantation in November, 1738. The move can be dated to this degree of specificity because on the November 2, 1738 deed Augustine was described as a gentleman "of Prince William County," but on December 1, 1738 he signed a different legal agreement as Augustine Washington "of King George County." The latter agreement was a lease of 300 acres adjoining the Strother property on the south, concluded with the owner, Rosewell Neale of Maryland.[6] Although the record of the transaction seems to be lost, Augustine Washington subsequently purchased the Neale tract — he owned it in fee simple at his death in 1743. Joining the Strother and Neale properties, Augustine Washington formed a plantation of about 580 acres.

This plantation — known since at least the 19th century as Ferry Farm — was the home of George Washington until he reached young manhood.[7] He lived there from 1738 to 1754, when he moved permanently to Mount Vernon. In addition to George the family included his three younger brothers and sister Elizabeth (Betty). A second sister, Mildred, was born at Ferry Farm in early 1739 but died in the fall of 1740. She was apparently buried on the property.[8]

Evidence regarding the children's education is fragmentary and inconclusive. For George, formal schooling probably began when he was about seven. He may have attended a nearby school kept by John Hobby, who was described by Mason Locke Weems as a former convict servant and tenant of Augustine Washington. Weems' account of Washington's life is generally suspect, and there is no evidence to verify his assertion. But in Washington's youth Hobby owned property less than a mile south of Ferry Farm and kept a school. It is entirely plausible that Washington attended it. As to Washington's later education, the known evidence will not support any conclusion. Washington may have attended a school in Fredericksburg maintained

[5] Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., and Lee B. Dalzell, *George Washington's Mount Vernon: Constructing Independence in Revolutionary America* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1998), 25-26.

[6] King George County Deed Book 2: 272.

[7] The name "Ferry Farm" has been the object of considerable confusion. It was used by Union soldiers who occupied the property in 1862, suggesting that the name was current in the neighborhood before the Civil War. It may have dated as far back as the Washington period, but it seems more likely that the name was applied to the property by Hugh Tennant Mercer, the son of Gen. Hugh Mercer, who owned the property in the first quarter of the 19th century and who actually operated the ferry that landed there. The Washingtons never operated the ferry and seem to have regarded it as a nuisance, so it is not likely they would have called the place "Ferry Farm." Like "Wakefield," the name applied to Popes Creek Plantation since the late eighteenth century, the name "Ferry Farm" is now unavoidably, if anachronistically, linked to Washington's childhood home.

[8] George Washington used a tombstone near the house as a key point in a survey that he made of the property in 1771. Mildred is the only white person known to have died at Ferry Farm before that date whose body is not believed to be interred elsewhere.

by the Rev. James Marye or a school kept on one of the nearby plantations. Washington's aide David Humphreys wrote in his sketch for a biography of Washington that a private tutor" conducted his later education. Washington reviewed Humphreys' draft and made comments and corrections, but passed over this assertion, which may mean much or little.[9] Although Washington's surviving school papers, which he preserved, offer few clues to the identity of his schoolmaster or the location of the school, they suggest that his education continued until he was about fourteen, by which time he had demonstrated an aptitude for mathematics and mastered the basic principles of geometry, which are the basis for a career as a surveyor, and nearly as essential for a successful general.[10]

New archaeological and documentary research has demonstrated that on Christmas Eve, 1740, the Strother-Washington House was destroyed by fire (Figure 7.3). The family took refuge in the kitchen dependency. Shortly thereafter they apparently returned to Little Hunting Creek, where they lived for most of 1741. At Augustine's command a new house was constructed at Ferry Farm, which the family seems to have occupied late in 1741. The new Washington House was apparently similar to the destroyed Strother-Washington dwelling, and consisted of four rooms downstairs around a central hall with two chambers above.[11]

Augustine Washington died in this new house in April, 1743; his body was interred at his ancestral burying ground near the Popes Creek Plantation. By the terms of his will, the bulk of his estate, including his plantations at Popes Creek and Little Hunting Creek, were left to the sons of his first marriage. George Washington — eleven at his father's death — was to inherit Ferry Farm when he reached his majority. In the interim the plantation was left in the hands of Mary Ball Washington. Though only thirty-four at the time of her husband's death, she never remarried.

Augustine Washington's death dealt a major blow to his son George's prospects. His older half-brothers had enjoyed the benefit of education in England, at the Appleby School, which Augustine had earlier attended. Augustine probably intended to send George to the school, but his death dashed any hope that George would receive a polished gentleman's education abroad. In 1746 Lawrence Washington proposed that George be sent to sea as a midshipman in the British Navy, but Mary Ball Washington rejected the idea. Implicit in Lawrence's solicitude for George's future was the assumption that the income to be derived from Ferry Farm would not be adequate to maintain George's position in the Virginia gentry at the level at which the family was accustomed.[12]

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[9] Rosemarie Zagarri, ed., *David Humphreys' "Life of General Washington" with George Washington's "Remarks"* (University of Georgia Press: Athens, Ga., 1991), 6.

[10] Washington's school exercises are preserved in the Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

[11] This episode is treated below in the Narrative Statement of Significance.

[12] There is no reliable documentary basis for the tradition, embraced by an earlier generation of biographers, that George Washington was sent to live with Lawrence Washington at Mount Vernon after their father's death. The tradition stems from the early 19th-century biographical efforts of John Marshall and Jared Sparks, who cast Lawrence in the role of a surrogate father and revered role model. But nowhere in his surviving papers does George Washington suggest that Lawrence assumed such a role. In fact, Washington's few comments about Lawrence are mostly mildly disparaging [see, e.g., Washington's comments on David Humphreys' sketch for a biography of Washington, written in the 1780s, recently edited by Rosemarie Zagarri and published as *David Humphreys' "Life of General Washington" with George Washington's "Remarks"* (University of Georgia Press: Athens, Ga., 1991), esp. pp. 8-9]. George Washington was unquestionably living at Ferry Farm in 1746 when William Fairfax met with him in Fredericksburg to discuss the proposal that he go to sea. Washington's early correspondence, practice surveys, professional surveys, and earliest account book, which document the ensuing years, demonstrate that he made

This certainly occurred to George as well. Having demonstrated an early aptitude for mathematics, George turned to surveying to provide him with a cash income that would allow him to acquire more and better land. He may have first practiced with the surveying instruments listed in his father's estate inventory as being kept in Ferry Farm storehouse.[13] In 1748 he was invited to accompany a surveying party sent out by Lawrence's neighbors, the Fairfax family of Belvoir. The next year, owing to the patronage of the Fairfaxes, Washington was appointed official surveyor of Culpeper County. His surveying work took young Washington away from home for several weeks each spring and fall. At other times he enjoyed visiting with his brothers at Mount Vernon and Popes Creek, with the Fairfaxes at Belvoir, and with his cousins in the Chotank region of Stafford (now King George) County, about twenty miles east of Ferry Farm. But despite the attraction of these places, Ferry Farm remained his home. The surviving documentation is not sufficient to work out the chronology of Washington's movements between 1748 and 1752 with precision, but it seems that he spent more time at Ferry Farm during those years than anywhere else. In 1753 and 1754 his military duties — including the expedition to Fort Le Boeuf in 1753 and the Fort Necessity campaign in 1754, events of major national significance — kept him away from home for a considerable amount of time.

George Washington formally inherited the plantation in 1753, but he left his mother in possession of the property. Mary Ball Washington continued to occupy the site and cultivate the land — with the help of an overseer — until 1772. George Washington made occasional visits to the plantation during this time and assisted his mother in the management of the property. On a visit to the plantation in 1771 he made a survey of the fence lines and other features of the "Home House" farm, apparently in anticipation of leasing the property. This survey constitutes the most valuable known record of the layout of the plantation.[14] In 1772 Mary Ball Washington moved into a house in Fredericksburg George Washington bought for her. Shortly thereafter Washington leased the property to nearby landowners William Fitzhugh and James Hunter while he sought a buyer.

The Washington family occupied the site continuously for more than thirty-three years. During the Washington occupancy the plantation consisted of a "Home House" farm along the river, where the domestic complex was located, and a quarter at "Cale's" located to the east, away from the river. The present site includes the area where the Washington domestic complex was located and about half of the land under cultivation at the "Home House" farm. At Augustine Washington's death in 1743 the domestic complex included the Washington House, a kitchen dependency, dairy, and at least 2 storehouses, in addition to barns, other outbuildings, and slave quarters sufficient to house twenty slaves at the "Home House." There were slave quarters for seven at the quarter and apparently also a modest overseer's house there. Corn and tobacco were

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visits (perhaps extending for several weeks in some cases) to the homes of various relatives, including Lawrence, but that Ferry Farm remained his home. For the correspondence and professional surveys, see W.W. Abbot, *et al.*, eds., *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series (10 vols., University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, Va., 1983-95), 1: 1-55. Washington's practice surveys and earliest account book, which are mostly unpublished, are in the George Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

[13] This probably the basis for the long-standing tradition that identifies a small frame building on the site as "George Washington's Surveying Office"; see the description of archaeological resources below.

[14] Washington's account of preparing this survey is found in his diary for September 13, 1771 [Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington*, (University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, Va., 1976-79), 3: 53]. Washington's survey notes are preserved in the Rosenbach Library in Philadelphia. No plat based on these notes has been found. The notes were used as the basis for a plat prepared by Lawrence Martin, Chief of the Map Division of the Library of Congress, for *The George Washington Atlas* (George Washington Bicentennial Commission: Washington, D.C., 1932).

apparently the primary crops; wheat was grown during the latter years of the Washington occupancy. Livestock — enumerated in the inventory of Augustine Washington's estate — included horses, cattle, swine, and sheep. There were hog pens and other livestock enclosures. Poultry was not listed, but George Washington's 1771 survey of the "Home House" farm locates the family hen yard, adjacent to the kitchen garden to the north of the house.[15]

The ferry, which then or later gave the plantation its name, crossed the Rappahannock from the town and landed on the Washington's property near the southwest corner of the plantation. It was at this site, according to Mason Locke Weems, that young Washington was able to throw a stone across the river. The Washington family never owned the ferry or profited from its operation, which was carried out by the property owners on the Fredericksburg side, although they probably enjoyed the convenient access to the town that the ferry provided. This probably changed in 1745, when the ferry became a free, or subscription, ferry. Traffic probably increased and the Washington family seems to have come to regard the ferry as a nuisance. George Washington's earliest known letter, written to his half-brother Lawrence on May 5, 1749, complained that "we suffer enough with the Free Ferry." Later in the Washington occupancy the ferry landing was shifted to the northwest corner of the plantation — much closer to the Washington House — where it remained through the early 19th century. When George Washington moved his mother into Fredericksburg in 1774, he paid to have her personal and household effects carried across the river on this ferry.[16]

THE MERCER OWNERSHIP, 1774-1829

In 1774 George Washington sold the plantation for £2,000 Virginia currency to Dr. Hugh Mercer of Fredericksburg, who intended to make the plantation his home after making improvements and repairs. The Revolutionary War upset these plans. Mercer joined the Continental Army, was appointed a brigadier general, and died of wounds received at the Battle of Princeton. Mercer made provision in his will for the repair and improvement of the property, but no evidence has been found that his widow occupied it.[17] It was probably leased to a series of tenants during the Mercer period. No evidence of new building construction during this period has been found.

During the Mercer ownership the site first became the object of veneration. George Washington was appointed commander-in-chief of the Continental Army in 1775 and in 1777 the first recorded tourist made a pilgrimage to Ferry Farm. Ebenezer Hazard, later a pioneering American historian, went out of his way while passing through the region to visit the site, where he erroneously believed Washington had been born.[18] During the decades that followed, many more pilgrims followed Hazard's example of traveling to Ferry Farm. Among these was Mason

[15] Inventory of Capt. Augustine Washington, July 1, 1743, King George County Inventories, Book 1: 285; The hog pens are mentioned in George Washington's Account with Mary Washington, April 27, 1775, in *Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, 10: 347-49; Further details about the property are found in the appraisal of goods belonging to Mary Ball Washington, October 15, 1771, prepared by Fielding Lewis and Charles Washington (MS collection, Mount Vernon Ladies Association, Mount Vernon, Virginia).

[16] George Washington to Lawrence Washington, May 5, 1749, in *Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series (10 vols., University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, Va., 1983-1996), 1: 6-8.

[17] Hugh Mercer to George Washington, March 21, 1774, in *Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, 10: 2-3.

[18] Fred Shelley, ed., "The Journal of Ebenezer Hazard in Virginia, 1777," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 62 (1954), 419.

Locke Weems, an itinerant Episcopal minister and bookseller from Dumfries, Va., who visited the area on numerous occasions. In his *Life of Washington*, first published in 1800 and expanded in later editions, Weems tried to correct the popular misconception that the site was Washington's birthplace and offered the first description of the Washington house in print. Weems is best remembered, however, for popularizing stories about Washington's childhood, the most well-known of which is the story of Washington and the cherry tree, which Weems set at Ferry Farm. Weems' *Life of Washington* passed through twenty-nine editions by 1825, making it one of the most popular books of the period. The cherry tree story achieved even greater popularity when it appeared in McGuffey's *Readers* and was borrowed by other biographers, with or without attribution.[19]

THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD, 1829-1860

Even as the story of the child Washington and the cherry tree at Ferry Farm was being immortalized in American popular memory, the site itself was falling into decay. Hugh Mercer's son John Tennant Mercer offered the property for sale in 1826, describing the property and adding that "The Land was purchased by my father from General Washington, who resided some years of his early life on the estate — and altho' not the native spot of this illustrious man, yet he was in part reared upon it — an interesting fact which gives some degree of interest to the estate and somewhat consecrates its soil." Mercer offered the farm for what he described as an "unusually low" price "allowing to the depreciated state of property of every kind"[20] The property was sold in 1829 to Judge John Coalter, who lived at nearby Chatham.

By that time or shortly thereafter, the Washington House that had stood since 1741 was demolished. In 1833, artist John Gadsby Chapman visited the site to paint "Fredericksburg from the Old Mansion of the Washington Family," which depicts the ridge on which Washington House had stood, with a pile of rubble in the middle distance apparently intended to represent the remains of the house (Fig. 7.4). On the back of the canvas is a note, seemingly in the artist's hand, that the house had been "pulled down." Washington Irving, in the first volume of his *Life of George Washington,* published in 1855, commented that there was nothing visible to indicate where the Washington House had stood but "fragments of brick, china, and earthenware."[21] In 1846 the son-in-law of the late John Coalter sold the property to Winter Bray. In 1857 Bray's heirs built a new house at Ferry Farm — a modest frame house built over a stone walled cellar. The Bray House was standing when the Civil War began.

THE CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865

The Civil War had a significant impact on the site (Figure 7.5). The river crossing that gave Ferry Farm its name also made it a position of strategic importance. Union troops occupied the site in late April, 1862. They constructed a pontoon bridge at the ferry landing and occupied Fredericksburg and Ferry Farm until the end of May, when the bridge was removed and the troops withdrew to the north. The Army of the Potomac returned in November, 1862, and

[19] The many popular biographies that borrowed the cherry tree story and other episodes from Weems' *Life of Washington* are listed in W.S. Baker, *Bibliotheca Washingtoniana: A Descriptive List of the Biographies and Biographical Sketches of George Washington* (Robert M Lindsay: Philadelphia, 1889).

[20] [Fredericksburg]*Virginia Herald*, September 13, 1826.

[21] Washington Irving, *The Life of George Washington* (3 vols., G.P. Putnam: New York, 1855), 1: 19.

established artillery emplacements on the river terraces facing Fredericksburg. Ferry Farm was at the center of the Union lines immediately prior to the First Battle of Fredericksburg (December 14, 1862). A battery commanded by Lt. Francis W. Seeley was posted near the site of the Washington House; a second battery under Capt. Richard Waterman overlooked the ferry landing a short distance to the north, and Huntington's battery was posted on the south side of the old Washington plantation. These two batteries overlooked the City of Fredericksburg and faced directly west, toward the Sunken Road. Earthworks were constructed to protect these batteries, and soldiers of the Army of the Potomac set up camp over much of what had been the Washington plantation.

On December 11, 1862, Union engineers constructing a pontoon bridge at the ferry landing were thwarted by the fire of Confederate soldiers hiding in and around buildings on the Fredericksburg side of the river. That afternoon, after an artillery bombardment had failed to dislodge the snipers, elements of the 89th New York crossed the Rappahannock River in pontoons to attack the Confederates and facilitate the completion of the pontoon bridge. A large part of the Union army crossed the pontoon bridge on the night of December 11. The ferry road down which they marched is a prominent feature of the site, and remains substantially as a soldier of the 5th New Hampshire described it: "The road to the descent was steep and narrow, and was bordered on one side by a chasm ten or fifteen feet deep. As my train went down, one mule driver overturned his wagon, mules and all, into the chasm. The wagon alighted on its top and its wheels loomed up vaguely through the darkness." This ravine is a prominent and readily recognized feature of the site.

Military maps drawn in 1862 indicate that there were two significant structures on the property in addition to the Bray House; all three structures were gone by 1864. Rail fences, if they survived the first Union occupation, were burned for fuel. Pontoon bridges were built across the river at the ferry landing in December 1862, May 1863, and May 1864. The Bray House was apparently demolished by Union troops during the winter encampment of 1862-63. All of the standing structures in the vicinity of the Washington domestic complex were demolished by 1864. Photographs taken from the opposite bank of the river indicate that no structure in the vicinity of the Washington House site survived the war.

THE POST-WAR PERIOD AND THE COLBERT OWNERSHIP, 1865-1926

In 1872, Charles R. Bray conveyed the Ferry Farm property to St. George T. Fitzhugh. Fitzhugh subdivided the property into smaller tracts, and in 1876 sold the riverside parcel, including the site of the Washington domestic complex, to John and Jane Carson. Shortly thereafter the Carsons built a new house over the cellar of the 1857 Bray House. In 1900 the Carsons conveyed the property to James B. Colbert. In 1914 Colbert moved the Carson House about 100 feet to the south and poured a new concrete cellar on its original site, encasing the walls of the 1857 Bray House and unwittingly preserving a large part of the cellar walls and floor of the Strother-Washington House beneath the poured-concrete floor. The built a new house — the fourth on the spot — on the new concrete foundations. The Colbert House stood until 1994, when it was destroyed by fire.

PRESERVATION EFFORTS, 1926-1998

Ferry Farm, like Washington's Birthplace and several other nationally significant historic sites, attracted the interest of historic preservationists in the 1920s. Spurred by the colonial revival, the emergence of the automobile as a stimulus to historical tourism, and the impending 1932 bicentennial of Washington's birth, a national group — the Citizens Guild of George Washington's Boyhood Home — was founded in 1926 to acquire the site for the benefit of the public. The group, incorporated as the George Washington Foundation, Inc., aimed to reconstruct the Washington house and open the site to the public in time for the 1932 bicentennial. The foundation acquired the property in 1928, but fund-raising efforts foundered after the stock market crash of 1929. When the organization defaulted on its mortgage, the Colbert heirs reclaimed the property. The preservation group was subsequently re-formed as George Washington Farm, Inc., and in 1945 this organization purchased 455.8 acres, including the site of the Washington domestic complex, from the Colbert family. For several years in the 1950s and 1960s the site was opened to the public.

In the early 1960s a portion of the property on the eastern edge of the site was acquired by Youth for Christ, Inc., which constructed a two-story brick school building (now renovated and in use as a visitor's center and administrative offices for the site). Youth for Christ and the preservation group made plans to develop the entire site as a monument to George Washington, complete with a chapel dubbed the "Temple of Truth," dedicated to the inspiration of America's youth. These plans were never carried out. Like its predecessor, George Washington Farm, Inc., was unable to raise sufficient money to acquire clear title to the property, and the site reverted to private ownership in 1969.

After the property reverted to private ownership official steps were taken to ensure its preservation. With the support of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (now the Virginia Division of Historic Resources) the site was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. The same year, mainly at the urging of Rep. William Scott of Virginia, legislation was introduced in Congress to authorize "the Secretary of the Interior to establish the George Washington Boyhood Home National Historic Site." In response to this legislation, a committee consisting of Charles Marshall, Director of the Virginia State Office of the NPS, the superintendents of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park and George Washington Birthplace National Monument, along with other NPS officials, was directed to prepare a study of the suitability and feasibility of acquiring the site for the nation and administering it as a unit of the National Park Service. Their report was submitted to the NPS Director in June 1972.

Although the new owners denied access to the site, the committee members were able to prepare a report outlining the historical significance of Ferry Farm and suggesting two alternatives for federal involvement. The first was that the site be fashioned into a living-history farm, although the committee cautioned that this "would be a duplication — on a smaller scale — of the operation at the Birthplace." The other was that the federal government would acquire the property for use as a recreation area and turn its management over to the county government. The report concluded that if the necessary property rights could be acquired, "Ferry Farm may be adaptable as a unit of the Park System." The owners were hostile to preservation, however, and the necessary property rights could not readily be obtained. Without a compelling threat to the site, the NPS took no further action. The report did not address the possibility of designating the site a National Historic Landmark.[22]

The site remained substantially undisturbed from 1969 to 1990. In that year the owners deeded 34 acres of the site to Stafford County in exchange for commercial zoning on the remainder of the property. Under this agreement Stafford County took possession of that part of the site that included the archaeological remains of the Washington domestic complex, but the agreement opened most of the remaining fields and pastures associated with the Washington occupancy to commercial development. In 1990 the county commissioned Espey, Huston & Associates to conduct the first intensive archaeological investigation of the site. In 1990-92 a team of under the direction of the firm's principal archaeologist, Alain Outlaw, identified and partially excavated the cellar of the Strother-Washington House and identified other features associated with the Washington occupancy.

In 1996 a proposal to build a shopping center on the still privately-owned southern portion of the site, which had been zoned for commercial use, resulted in a highly-publicized preservation campaign that concluded when the Kenmore Association, Inc., purchased the commercially-zoned land and acquired title to the county-owned portion of the site, reuniting the undeveloped 71 acres of Ferry Farm in order to preserve its historical and archaeological resources for the benefit of the public (Figure 7.8). Beginning in 1997 the site has been the object of archaeological investigations conducted by the archaeology department of the Kenmore Association under the direction of Kenmore staff archaeologists Gary Norman (1997) and Paul Schuster (1998). Together with the excavations directed by Outlaw, these investigations have identified and begun to explore an impressive range of archaeological resources associated with the Washington occupancy and the later history of the site.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

COMPONENTS OF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE 44ST174

Strother-Washington House Cellar
([Outlaw] Units 1, 24, 28)

Archaeological deposits interpreted as the remains of the cellar of the Strother-Washington House were identified by Outlaw partially beneath the superimposed remains of houses built on the site in 1857 (the Bray House), ca. 1876 (the Carson House) and 1914 (the Colbert House). The Colbert House, a two-story frame farmhouse built over a poured-concrete cellar and a poured-concrete foundation, was standing when Outlaw conducted his excavation in 1990-92. The frame structure of the Colbert House was destroyed by fire in 1994, leaving the concrete cellar intact. Outlaw found that the concrete encased the stone cellar walls of the 1857 Bray

[22] Charles R. Marshall, *et al.*, "Proposed George Washington Boyhood Home, Ferry Farm: Suitability-Feasibility Report," NPS, Virginia State Office, June 1972. The historical section of the report relied largely on secondary literature, and though generally sound perpetuates several common errors regarding George Washington's involvement with the site. The family moved to the site when George was six (not seven), and George Washington's residence at Ferry Farm did not end in 1748. Nor is there any evidence that the Washington House was demolished between 1772 and 1774, as the report suggests. Several writers have fallen into this error, assuming that because Washington did not describe the house in his 1774 advertisement, it must have been gone. In fact, the Washington House seems to have stood into the 19th century. Washington probably left the house out of the advertisement because by 1774 the house was more than thirty years old and was unlikely to have been attractive to the kind of buyer Washington was seeking.

House, and that beneath the concrete floor of the house was the southeast corner of a 16' x 16' cellar wall that was part of an earlier dwelling (Unit 28). The southwest corner of the cellar was found beyond the west wall of the Colbert House (Units 1 and 24).

Depositional evidence demonstrates that this dwelling was occupied during the second quarter of the 18th century, and that it was destroyed by a fire. Ashes, charcoal, and burned and melted artifacts were found throughout the fill, and the base of the cellar was marked by areas of scorched subsoil. Architectural artifacts found in the cellar deposits, including lath nails, plaster fragments, and clay in-filling fragments demonstrate that the Strother-Washington House was a frame building heated by at least one chimney.[23]

Ceramic remains found in the cellar units are consistent with a fire that occurred in the second quarter of the 18th century. Of considerable diagnostic value are the relatively large number of fragments of Buckley black-glazed earthenware, manufactured ca. 1720-75, 5/64" pipe stem fragments manufactured ca. 1710-50, a glass bottle fragment inscribed "Joseph" and "174_" (possibly "1740" see fig. 7.9), a fragment of Astbury-type stoneware manufactured ca. 1725-50, and an absence of creamware, which became ubiquitous in domestic artifact assemblages in the Chesapeake region during the third quarter of the 18th century. The assemblage also includes a considerable number of fragments of slip-dipped white salt-glazed stoneware, the popularity of which did not extend far past the first quarter of the 18th century[24] (for photographs of representative artifacts from the cellar excavation, see Figures 7.10 and 7.11). Archival research conducted since Outlaw completed his work strongly indicates that these artifacts were deposited when the frame structure above the cellar collapsed as the result of a fire that took place on Christmas Eve, 1740, an event in Washington's childhood previously unknown to scholars.

Hypothesizing from the floor plan suggested by the 1738 Strother inventory and comparable standing 18th-century structures (in which the cellars are often located under one of the large rooms — often the hall) the Strother-Washington House was probably about 38' to 40' across the front (providing for a central passageway 6' to 8' wide) and perhaps 24' to 28' in depth (providing for the parlor back room and hall back room described in the Strother inventory, each, by analogy with standing structures, approximately 8' to 12' deep). These hypothetical dimensions provide the basis for future excavations.[25]

Outlaw excavated only a small portion of the potential remains associated with this site. According to Dennis Pogue, Director of Restoration (formerly Chief Archaeologist) for Mount Vernon, since "the portion of the [Strother-Washington] cellar that has been excavated to date has yielded surprisingly abundant domestic and structural remains, the potential exists to gain crucially significant evidence for the uses of the building and for structural details by continued excavations there."[26]

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[23] Alain C. Outlaw, *et al.*, "A Study of the Architecture, The History, and the Archaeology of George Washington's Ferry Farm, Stafford County, Virginia" (Espey, Huston & Associates: Williamsburg, Va., 1993), [hereafter cited as Outlaw 1993], Part 4: 76.

[24] Outlaw 1993, Appendix 4: 56-83; Dennis J. Pogue, "George Washington's Boyhood Home: An Assessment of Archaeological Findings" (Mount Vernon, Va., 1996) [hereafter cited as Pogue 1996], 2.

[25] Pogue 1996, 7.

[26] Pogue 1996: 7-8.

18th-Century Domestic Structure
([Schuster] Units 270, 279, 282-87, 296, 298-300, 310-12)

In 1988 Schuster identified archaeological remains of an 18th-century domestic structure about 50 feet north of the icehouse pit. This deep, rubble-filled feature was the object of a Phase II investigation that occupied the latter part of the 1998 excavation season. A single 5' x 5' unit was centered over the shovel test that revealed the feature and was excavated to subsoil. The unit yielded a straight-sided pit about 5' in depth. The pit is lined, at its base, by a wall composed of sandstone rubble and faced with cut sandstone. This wall appears to have collapsed or been destroyed in the upper half of the feature.

Sixteen additional 5' x 5' units were placed in the area during the 1998 season in an effort to determine the boundaries of the feature. These units have been excavated to the level at which the feature boundaries are revealed, at which point work was suspended pending a Phase III investigation in 1999. The Phase II investigation has revealed a rectangular footprint approximately 10' x 25' with the long axis oriented east-west. The feature is oriented a few degrees more northerly than the Strother-Washington House cellar, but its alignment is closer to that of the Strother-Washington House cellar than any other known feature at the site.

The feature seems to have been filled in two episodes. The first, apparently more gradually-deposited layers of fill contain small amounts of ash, sandstone, and plaster rubble. Above these are a layer comprised of the collapse of the upper portion of the wall lining the pit and layers containing a high percentage of brick, sandstone, and plaster rubble apparently used to fill in the feature following the destruction of the building that once stood over it.

Artifacts found through the feature, including ceramics and pipestems, date into the 19th century. These artifacts, upon completion of analysis, should provide a conclusive date for the filling of the feature, presumably at the time the building above was destroyed. Preliminary analysis dates the destruction of building and the filling of the structure in the second quarter of the 19th century. No builder's trench is present to date the construction of the building, but the presence of an abundance of wrought nails and mortar and plaster containing burned shell rather than lime and sand, are characteristic of 18th-century construction.[27]

It would be premature to conclude that this cellar is the remains of the second Washington house at Ferry Farm, built in 1741 to replace the burned Strother-Washington dwelling. But the presence of large amounts of plaster in the fill indicates that the building was a domestic structure rather than a barn or other farm building, and the handmade (wrought) nails and plaster composition are dependable evidence that the building was constructed in the 18th century. The cellar seems too large to be associated with a kitchen. Its dimensions suggest the cellar beneath a portion of a house. It is possible that the structure was constructed during the early part of the Mercer ownership (1774-1829), but this seems unlikely. Documentary evidence suggests that no substantial buildings were constructed at the site during the last quarter of the 18th century. This feature will be the object of more intensive archaeological and documentary research during 1999.

[27] Paul Schuster, "A Preliminary Report on Archaeological Investigations at George Washington's Ferry Farm: 44ST174 — 1997 and 1998 Seasons," (Kenmore Association: Fredericksburg, Va., 1998) [hereafter cited as Schuster 1998], 7-8.

South Service Yard
([Outlaw] Units 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20)

Excavation of selected units in this area south of the 1738-1740 Strother-Washington House site revealed thin undisturbed layers of 18th-century artifacts, including Kaolin pipe stems with 5/64" diameter (ca. 1710-1750), fragments of Buckley black-glazed earthenware (1720-1775), Delftware (ca. 1600-1800), Fulham-type stoneware (ca. 1690-1775) and other wares dating to the Washington period of occupancy. These artifacts are probably associated with the Washington service yard.[28] Further investigation of this area is warranted.

North Service Yard
([Schuster] Units 62, 280)

A single line of shovel-test pits was excavated in 1997 along a north-south line 40' east of the crest of the ridge running northward from the vicinity of the Strother-Washington House. All shovel-test units yielded artifacts, consistent with an interpretation of this area as the north service yard during the Washington occupancy. The survey also revealed a significant feature, which was tested with two 5' x 5' test units, only one of which has been carried to the bottom of the feature at this time (November 1998). This proved to be a natural ravine about 4.5 feet in depth that was deliberately filled over a short period of time (rather than gradually, as in the case of a trash pit). The presence of sandstone, mortar, and soft brick suggests that the fill was derived from an episode of construction or destruction. Glassware and ceramics, including Kaolin pipe stems, were found in sufficient quantity to date the deposit to the middle decades of the 18th century (1750 plus or minus 15 years). This feature may be associated with the construction of the new Washington House in 1741, since many of the artifacts seem to be construction debris.[29] Further investigation of this feature is warranted.

Icehouse Vicinity
([Outlaw] Units 10-11, 14, [Norman] Units 73-75)

A prominent feature in the vicinity of the Washington-era domestic complex is an icehouse pit, 21' x 20' and 13.5' deep, lined with flat random-rubble stone walls. The age of this structure has not been determined. Outlaw excavated a single 5' x 5' unit in the floor of the pit to a depth of 4.5 feet, and found only artifacts dating to the late 19th and 20th-century use of the site.[30] Units excavated in 1997 on the south and east side of the icehouse pit revealed a builder's trench filled with fine sand. These units were excavated to a depth of 2.5 feet, and were found to contain artifacts uniformly dating to the early 20th century, demonstrating that the structure was extensively rebuilt, if not constructed, at that time. The structure was apparently again rebuilt or renovated in the late 1950s, within the memory of local informants, using mortar containing Portland cement. The structure does not conform to the preferred conical form for an icehouse pit prescribed by 18th-century building manuals — a conical structure being able to bear a load better than one with flat walls. Nor does the structure appear to have a drain of the sort prescribed for carrying away melted water. Simple, flat-walled icehouses of this form survive from the 18th century, but they have generally been rebuilt several times because their deep

[28] Outlaw 1993: Appendix 4, 23-41.

[29] Schuster 1998, 5-7.

[30] Outlaw 1993, 76.

walls do not withstand the hydrostatic pressure of the surrounding earth over extended periods.[31] If the present structure was originally built in the 18th century, it has been reconstructed several times. The structure merits further investigation, but since it is currently regarded as of indeterminate age it has been listed as a non-contributing resource.

The area surrounding the icehouse pit has demonstrated greater potential to yield evidence regarding the Washington occupancy than the structure itself, and has been listed as a contributing resource. An additional unit excavated in 1997, extending to a point 4.5 feet from the east side of the icehouse pit, was found to contain a much higher concentration of artifacts dating to the Washington period in than found in other areas. In addition, the partial collapse of the long-unstable north wall of the icehouse pit during a rainy season in 1997 revealed a considerable amount of 18th-century material in the area outside the north wall (the pit has since been filled with sand to prevent further degradation of the walls). The features revealed on the east and north sides are too fragmentary to support a hypothesis without further investigation. This area has been reserved for future study, but seems to have considerable potential to contain Washington-era features and artifacts.[32]

FERRY ROAD

The 18th-century ferry road, a structure that has been in use since prior to the Washington occupancy to connect the upper terrace with the ferry landing, is a potentially valuable archaeological resource that has yet to be investigated. The road follows a natural ravine formed by a spring-fed stream. In his advertisement of the property in 1826, Hugh Tennant Mercer described this "romantic valley bordering on the ferry landing." He added that the spring-fed stream (the water is still heavily impregnated with iron) was possessed of "great tonic and medicinal qualities" and "has been much resorted to by the inhabitants of Fredericksburg as a fountain of health."[33] The road was used by Union forces during the Civil War, but has been used mainly by the property owners, since permanent bridges rendered the ferry obsolete. Scattered artifacts, including ceramics and military artifacts dating to the Civil War have been recovered from surface of the ravine, suggesting that the area has potential to yield archaeological remains dating to the period of national significance.

FERRY HOUSE SITE

The random-rubble foundations of a small building (approximately 12' x 12') are located on a low rise adjacent to the northwest ferry landing site. This feature has not been investigated archaeologically, but it appears in Civil War photographs as a modest frame building apparently associated with the ferry operation (Fig. 7.29). The feature is tentatively interpreted as a ferryman's house or toll house. It probably dates to the Mercer ownership. Hugh Tennant Mercer was the first owner on the Stafford County side of the river to operate the ferry as a business. Although the feature merits further investigation, it appears to date from the period of national significance and has been listed as a contributing resource.

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[31] John P. Riley, "The Icehouses and their Operation at Mount Vernon" (MVLA Outbuildings Report No. 2: Mount Vernon, Va., 1989).

[32] Schuster 1998, 5.

[33] Fredericksburg *Virginia Herald*, September 13, 1826.

FERRY LANDING SITES

There were two ferry landings on the property during the period of national significance. The "lower ferry landing" was located near the southwest corner of the site, and was in use as early as 1726. The second ferry landing was located at the western terminus of the ferry road at the northwest corner of the property, and was in use during the later years of the Washington occupancy. This site remained the ferry landing through the early 19th century and was the location of the Union pontoon bridges constructed in 1862, 1863, and 1864.

Both sites are believed to be substantially intact. In 1870-71 U.S. Army engineers constructed a 1600-foot wooden dike or retaining wall along the Ferry Farm waterfront to confine material dredged from the river, and to constrict the flow of the river to raise the water over the Fredericksburg and Spotswood bars. They deposited dredge spoil, consisting mainly of sand and light soil, inside the dike. They later constructed a similar dike on the opposite bank for the same purpose. These activities constricted the width of the river by about 100 feet. The pontoon bridge constructed at Ferry Farm on May 10, 1864 was 420 feet long. The river is now about 320 feet wide. The ferry landing sites were thus buried some 50 feet or more from the river a short time after the Civil War. Both sites have the potential to yield archaeological deposits that have been completely undisturbed since that time. In addition, the diking and filling operation covered the site of two steamers, partially burned to their waterlines by Confederates in the spring of 1862 in an effort to block the channel. The wrecks, situated on the Ferry Farm waterfront, are clearly visible in Civil War photographs taken from the west bank. There is a possibility of finding remains of these vessels buried beneath the dredge spoil.[34] Note that the ferry landings and waterfront constitute a continuous site, and have been counted as one resource.

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD AND MILITARY CAMP SITE

A light scatter of Civil War artifacts uncovered from several units and from the surface include fragmentary cannon balls, artillery fuses, small arms ammunition, and buttons consistent with documentary (including photographic) evidence of the repeated transitory military occupation of the site by Union forces during 1862-64, and the use of the site and adjacent areas as a pontoon bridge site and artillery position during the two battles of Fredericksburg. A feature identified as a Union earthen gun emplacement is located on a small terrace midway up the ridge above the 1862-64 pontoon bridge site, in the area occupied by the Rhode Island battery of Capt. Richard Waterman during the First Battle of Fredericksburg. Phase II excavations in 1998 along the crest of the ridgeline in the area of the Washington-era domestic complex revealed subsurface features suggesting a filled Civil War trench line.[35] The stone cellar remains of the 1857 Bray House, partly superimposed over the cellar of the Strother-Washington House, have been identified. The Bray House was apparently demolished during the war. Note that the Civil War remains have been counted as one continuous site.

[34] The width of the 1864 pontoon bridge is documented in *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., GPO: Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), series 1, vol. 46, part 1: 647. The information regarding the dredging operation is taken from a report of the Chief Engineer, U.S. Army (file copy, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park — the original of this report in the National Archives has not been found).

[35] Schuster 1998, 6.

TRADITIONAL SURVEYING OFFICE
([Outlaw] Unit 15, [Norman] 47-49, 70-73)

The one standing structure at the site traditionally associated with the Washington occupation, a small frame building known locally as "George Washington's Surveying Office," was the only resource named when George Washington's Childhood Home was listed on the National Register in 1972 (Fig. 7.12). This building has been the object of detailed archaeological as well as architectural, archival, and photographic research. The traditional association of the building with George Washington dates at least to the latter part of the 19th century. In 1936 a local resident reported that his father, born in 1843, had stated that the building had been pointed out as Washington's surveying office in the 1850s.[36] But recent investigations have concluded that the building was constructed no earlier than the second quarter of the 19th century (within the period of national significance), but that if it was built prior to the Civil War, than it was probably moved to its present location some time in the last third of the 19th century. Photographic evidence suggests that the structure was not standing in its present location in 1864.

The building has been considerably altered in the 20th century and its archaeological context was disturbed by construction activity. When the Colbert House was built in 1914, the Carson House was moved to a location abutting what had become known as "George Washington's Surveying Office" and the two structures were joined. Early photographs of the building show it joined to the Carson House. When the Carson House was demolished, c. 1950, the traditional "Surveying Office" was preserved. In 1960 the structure was renovated, with the addition of concrete footings, all new siding, a new roof, and other alterations that compromised whatever historical integrity the building possessed.[37]

Based on the conclusions of these studies, the traditional "Surveying Office" has been listed as a non-contributing resource, since it may not have existed during the site's period of national significance (1738-1865) and because it does not retain much integrity as an historic building if, indeed, it does date to the period of significance. But given the strength of the local tradition, its long-standing symbolic association with George Washington's youth, and the possibility that the building may pre-date the Civil War, the building has local and regional significance, and will be treated accordingly.

OTHER NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

In addition to the traditional "George Washington's Surveying Office" and the icehouse pit, which have been defined above as a non-contributing building and a non-contributing structure, the site includes three non-contributing buildings: the site visitor's center and administration building, located on the eastern edge of the site (a two-story brick building originally built in 1962 as a school), a storage building about 100 yards south of the Washington domestic complex area (a one-story brick building associated with the early 20th-century Colbert farm complex),

[36] Stuart M. Barnette, "George Washington's Surveying Office, Ferry Farm, Stafford County, Near Fredericksburg, Virginia," [VA-90], (Historic American Buildings Survey: Washington, D.C., 1936).

[37] Outlaw 1993, 12; Gary Norman, "The 'George Washington Survey Office' at Ferry Farm" (Kenmore Association, Inc.: Fredericksburg, Va., 1997).

and a visitor's restroom building a few yards northwest of the storage building (a one-story brick and wood building constructed by Stafford County government in 1990).

SITE INTEGRITY

Although there are no standing buildings at Ferry Farm dating to the Washington occupancy, the site retains a significant degree of integrity. Its location, setting, feeling and association clearly relate to the period of national significance. Although the 71 acres now preserved under the stewardship of the Kenmore Association, Inc., are only a fraction of the roughly 415 acres George Washington sold to Dr. Hugh Mercer in 1774, the preserved property constitutes the most important part of the Washington "Home House" farm surveyed by George Washington in 1771, and includes all of the Rappahannock River waterfront owned by Augustine and George Washington, the sites of the Strother-Washington House and the related domestic complex, what recent archaeological investigation suggests may be the site of the post-1740 Washington House and the remains of the 18th-century ferry road used by travelers in Washington's time.

Whether the site retains integrity of feeling is ultimately a subjective judgment. The 68.8 acres of the site includes the area of the Washington domestic complex with areas identified in George Washington's 1771 survey as fields, garden, and pastures, and undoubtedly conveys the feeling of a rural landscape far more effectively than the site of the domestic complex could by itself. Suburban commercial development on the east side of the site is admittedly a distraction, but one easily diminished in the long term by a planted buffer. But isolating the site entirely from commercial life may not convey the correct feeling. The relationship of the site to the commercial and civic life of a growing town is one of the major distinctions between Ferry Farm on the one hand and Popes Creek and Mount Vernon on the other. This commercial/civic relationship was important to George Washington's development. The plantation was not an isolated rural farm in Washington's time, and expectations that it should convey the feeling of one are misplaced.

Continuous occupation of the site since the Washington period has had a significant impact on archaeological resources at Ferry Farm. About 80 per cent of the site, including most of the upper terrace where the Washington dwellings were located, have been plowed since 1774. Construction of the Bray, Carson, and Colbert houses over a portion of the Strother-Washington House cellar disturbed that portion of the remains. Despite these disturbances, archaeological investigations conducted since 1989 have yielded important evidence about George Washington's early life and have demonstrated the potential of the site to yield much more important evidence about the Washingtons, as well as useful evidence about plantation life in the middle decades of the 18th century, a period of considerable transformation in the lives of gentry planters like Augustine Washington and his heirs.

PRESENT APPEARANCE AND CONDITIONS

The boundaries of George Washington's childhood home site are nearly contiguous with George Washington's Ferry Farm, a privately-owned park devoted to protecting and interpreting the historical and archaeological resources associated with the site. The park is owned by the Kenmore Association, Inc., a private, not-for-profit museum and historic preservation organization founded in 1922 to preserve Kenmore mansion, the 18th-century home of George Washington's sister, Betty Washington Lewis, and her husband, patriot leader Fielding Lewis.

Kenmore was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970. The same professional staff responsible for the stewardship of Kenmore is responsible for George Washington's Ferry Farm. Outdoors interpretive site areas are marked and stabilized. All park land believed to have potential to contain archaeological remains is maintained under sod or in uncultivated wooded areas. Systematic soil management efforts limit erosion damage. On-site staff provides twenty-four hour security, supplemented by patrols conducted by a private security service. Access to the site is limited to daylight hours. Special measures, including seeding large areas with pennies (recommended by NPS officials), have been taken to discourage the use of metal detectors by relic hunters attracted to the Civil War artifacts at the site. All artifacts recovered from the site since 1989 are professionally curated on site in the archaeological laboratory at the Ferry Farm Administration Building. A portion of these artifacts may be on occasional (and eventually permanent) display in a professionally-managed exhibit in the visitor's center and administration building at Ferry Farm or in the Crowninshield Museum at nearby Kenmore Plantation & Gardens.

SECTION 7 FIGURES

Figure 7.1: George Washington's Childhood Home Site.

Figure 7.2: Aerial View of the Central Part of Ferry Farm from the East (1997). The brick building with columns on the left is the 1962 school building, now used as a visitor's center and administrative office for the site. The two structures at the center are the other non-contributing buildings. The Washington-era domestic complex was at the far right. The low building partly obscured by trees there was built to protect the exposed remains of the Strother-Washington cellar. The building was removed in 1998 and the cellar remains filled with sand. The northwest ferry landing and Civil War pontoon bridge site are at the upper right.

Figure 7.3: Location of the Strother-Washington House site. The small frame building at left, known locally as "George Washington's Surveying Office," is traditionally — though erroneously — associated with the Washington occupancy.

Figure 7.4: John Gadsby Chapman, "Fredericksburg from the Old Mansion of the Washington Family," c. 1833, collection of the Homewood Foundation, New York, NY.

Figure 7.5: Ferry Farm from the east in May, 1864, showing the pontoon bridge crossing to the Washington ferry landing. The ferry road descends through the ravine at right. No structures are visible on the upper terrace of the site (RG 11-B-508, National Archives).

Figure 7.6: Plan of Units Excavated by Espy, Huston & Associates, 1990-1992 [detail].

Figure 7.7: Excavation Units in the Area of the Strother-Washington Cellar. Note that the Colbert House (1914) was built over the cellar walls of the Strother-Washington, Bray (1857) and Carson (c. 1876) houses. The dates c.1727-c.1776 were assigned to the conjectural outline of the Strother-Washington dwelling before documentary evidence was found indicating that the house was destroyed by fire on December 24, 1740. The dates c. 1727-1740 are now (1998) assigned to this conjectural outline.

Figure 7.8: Excavation in Progress, North Side, 18th-Century Domestic Structure from the West. On the right side of the photograph, from the bottom, are units 296, 283, 270 (excavated to the full depth of the feature), 282, and 284.

Figure 7.9: Drawing of Bottle Fragment from Strother-Washington Cellar. The date scratched on the glass may be "1740," the year the Strother-Washington House was demolished by fire.

Figure 7.10: Small Artifacts and Smoking Pipe Fragments from the Stother-Washington Cellar.

Figure 7.11: Storage Vessels from the Strother-Washington Cellar.

Figure 7.12: "George Washington's Surveying Office" from the Southwest.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:_ Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A_ BX C_ DX
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G
NHL Criteria:	2, 3, and 6
NHL Theme(s):	III. Expressing Cultural Values IV. Shaping the Political Landscape V. Developing the American Economy
Areas of Significance:	Archaeology/Historic-Non-Aboriginal Exploration/Settlement Other: Folklore and Tradition[38]
Period(s) of Significance:	Early 18th to mid-19th century (1738-1855)
Significant Dates:	1738, 1740, 1741, 1743, 1753, 1754, 1771, 1772, 1774, 1777, 1806, 1855
Significant Person(s):	Washington, George
Cultural Affiliation:	Euro-American
Architect/Builder:	N/A
Historic Contexts:	III. Development of the English Colonies, 1688-1763 D. Social and Economic Affairs 2. Economic Affairs and Ways of Life XXX. American Ways of Life A. Slavery and Plantation Life XIX. Literature XXVII. Education

[38] This category has been introduced to address the nationally significant association of Ferry Farm with folklore and traditions associated with Washington's youth. These traditions are based on a literary work, Mason Locke Weems' *Life of Washington*, but are not easily accommodated by the "Literature" category, which has been typically assigned to NHLs associated with the working life of particular writers (e.g., the Ralph Waldo Emerson Home) or groups of writers (e.g., Brook Farm), rather than the setting of their work. The "Folklore and Tradition" category might be assigned to sites associated with folklore, fables, and traditions of national significance.

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ferry Farm is a nationally-significant historic landmark because of its unique association with George Washington, a figure of transcendent importance in United States history (NHL Criterion 2), and because the site contains archaeological resources that have yielded important new information about the material circumstances of Washington's life, and have demonstrated potential to yield additional data that will affect the scholarly understanding of Washington's early years (NHL Criterion 6). Ferry Farm is also a nationally-significant landmark because of its specific association with stories and traditions related to George Washington's youth that have become a fundamental part of American national culture and that illustrate "a great idea or ideal of the American people" (NHL Criterion 3). The specified period of national significance — 1738-1855) embraces the Washington occupancy (1738-1774) and the period during which the site began to venerated and became associated with stories and traditions about Washington's youth (1774-1855). The period of national significance concludes in 1855 with the publication of Washington Irving's biography of Washington.

A. Significance Under NHL Criterion 2

George Washington's status as a person of transcendent importance in United States history needs neither justification nor amplification. The most celebrated figure in United States history, regarded by contemporaries and modern historians as the indispensable leader of the American Revolutionary generation, Washington exemplifies the idea of transcendent importance expressed by the standards of the NHL program better than any other person. Fresh documentary research on Washington's life, much of it conducted over the last two decades, along with recent research on the broader context of 18th-century Chesapeake social, cultural and economic life have made it increasingly clear how the experiences of George Washington's early years influenced his ideas and attitudes.[39] Ferry Farm was the principal home of George Washington's early years, and illustrates, in an outstanding manner, the setting and material circumstances of his youth, during which he developed the personal characteristics and values that shaped his actions and accomplishments during the Revolutionary era.

Within the Revised Thematic Framework, Ferry Farm's national significance under Criterion 2 is associated with Theme IV: Shaping the Political Landscape — Topic 4: Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories. Considering Washington's central role in the founding of the United States, a place where the extant resources illustrate the circumstances that influenced the development of his political ideas in an outstanding way is of national significance. The landscape of Ferry Farm illustrates, in an outstanding manner, the cultural context in which Washington's ideas about the political, economic and social order began to take shape, and in which his character and ambitions began to develop.

[39] The reinterpretation of Washington's life now underway rests on the documentary foundation established by the editors of *The Papers of George Washington*, the comprehensive modern edition of Washington's papers (including incoming correspondence) being prepared at the University of Virginia and published by the University Press of Virginia. The edition will eventually comprehend more that 135,000 documents spanning Washington's life and will fill some 85 volumes [The preparer of this nomination served as an editor with the Washington Papers Project from 1993 to 1998].

Ferry Farm was one of just three homes George Washington occupied during his life. It was his primary residence from 1738 to 1754, and remained his property for another twenty years thereafter. The NPS long ago recognized the national significance of his other two homes — Popes Creek Plantation and Mount Vernon. Washington was born in 1732 at his father's plantation on Popes Creek in Westmoreland County, Va., which in 1930 became George Washington Birthplace National Monument, the first historical unit of the National Park Service in the East. Washington lived at Popes Creek until he was three years old, when the family moved to their plantation on Little Hunting Creek in Prince William (now Fairfax) County, where they lived for three years. That plantation, later named Mount Vernon, was among the first NHLs designated in 1960. When George Washington was six, the family moved to Ferry Farm, which was Washington's home until he moved permanently to Mount Vernon in 1754. George Washington inherited Ferry Farm from his father's estate in 1753, and it remained his property until 1774, when he sold it to his friend Dr. Hugh Mercer of Fredericksburg. George Washington's mother, Mary Ball Washington, lived at Ferry Farm until 1772, when she moved to a house George Washington bought for her in Fredericksburg. The plantation was continuously occupied by the Washington family for more than thirty-three years.

The site is more intimately associated with George Washington's formative years than any other. The national significance of Popes Creek Plantation lies mainly in its capacity to illustrate the physical and material circumstances of his immediate family at the time of his birth, and that of his progenitors through three previous generations of Washingtons associated with the site. Popes Creek Plantation is also the setting for a nationally-significant memorial landscape, deliberately created in the 1920s and 30s as a tribute to Washington. Though George Washington visited Popes Creek Plantation after his immediate family moved from there in 1735, the resources at the site do not illustrate the physical setting, material circumstances, or historic context of his later youth as well as those at Ferry Farm.

Nor do the resources at Mount Vernon illustrate the physical and material circumstances of Washington's youth in an outstanding manner. The domestic complex at Mount Vernon bears little resemblance to its appearance during the three years Washington lived there as a small child, and scarcely more resemblance to its appearance during his teen years, when he visited his half-brother Lawrence there. The interpretive program of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, which has been the steward of the estate since 1858, has long been to restore the core of the plantation to its appearance during the last years of Washington's life. The magnificent setting of Mount Vernon, high on a bluff overlooking the broad Potomac, does reflect the kind of estate the young George Washington aspired to own, but until after Lawrence Washington's death in 1752 he cannot have had any expectation that Mount Vernon would ever become his property.

Mount Vernon illustrates George Washington's youthful ambitions, but not the reality of his early life. As the eldest son of his father's second marriage, with two older half brothers to inherit the most valuable part of their father's estate, George Washington's prospects were much more modest. When their father died in 1743, Lawrence inherited Mount Vernon and its broad acres, along with his father's interest in the Principio Iron Works, town lots in Fredericksburg, other real estate, and the largest share of his father's slaves; his brother Austin inherited Popes Creek Plantation and related property, as well as a smaller share of their father's slaves. George was to inherit Ferry Farm (about one-fifth the size of Lawrence's Mount Vernon, and less fertile), town lots in Fredericksburg, a half-interest in an undeveloped tract of 2,200 acres on Deep Run in Stafford County (land so poor Washington never made any effort to develop it), and just ten slaves.

As at Popes Creek Plantation, the Washington dwellings and associated plantation buildings at Ferry Farm are no longer standing, but the landscape itself — its setting and physical features — illustrates the cultural context in which Washington passed his formative years. A major factor that distinguishes Ferry Farm from Popes Creek Plantation, and in Washington's childhood from Little Hunting Creek Plantation (Mount Vernon) as well, was its proximity to an urban setting.[40] This difference was crucial in Washington's life. The experience of growing up near a new town distinguished him from most of the other Virginia leaders of the Revolutionary generation — Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Patrick Henry and others who spent their formative years on relatively isolated rural plantations. Many of those men — Jefferson most significantly — came to loathe and fear urban life as a source of social corruption and moral decay. Despite his fascination with architecture and his interest in urban planning, Jefferson's political ideas and programs were calculated to discourage the growth of cities in the new nation. Washington, by contrast, embraced the urban spirit of the 18th century. In later life he identified closely with city-dwellers like Robert Morris and John Jay. He embraced their refined tastes. He enjoyed the theater, museums, and other urban amusements. He found the people of the seaboard cities, particularly in the Middle States, more enterprising, industrious, and efficient than other Americans. The Federalism that Washington espoused in the 1780s and 1790s was characteristic of the urban gentry. Washington's fellow Virginia planters were more likely to be Antifederalists and later, Jeffersonian Republicans.[41]

This appreciation of urban life flowed from Washington's early years, spent on the banks of the Rappahannock and on the developing streets of Fredericksburg. Washington's father was a trustee of Fredericksburg. He purchased town lots there and left them to his sons. George Washington was involved in the development of Alexandria, laid out in 1749, and was engaged in efforts to bring industry and commerce to the region for the rest of his life. His involvement with the Potomac Company (represented in the National Park System by the Potomac Canal Historic District, a part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway) was a reflection of his passion for commercial development that was characteristic of the 18th-century urban ideal. Washington's fascination with urban life culminated during his presidency with the establishment of the Federal City that bears his name — the most ambitious example of urban planning in American history.[42] If Washington had spent most of his formative years on an isolated rural plantation like that at Popes Creek, he might well have shared the distrust of urban life that was characteristic of much of the Virginia gentry of the Revolutionary era. His early acquaintance with town life while living at Ferry Farm was thus of major significance for the future of the United States.

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[40] Alexandria, Virginia — ten miles north of Mount Vernon — was not founded until Washington was seventeen.

[41] The case for Washington as a devotee of urban commercial society is ably made in John Ferling, *The First of Men: A Life of George Washington* (University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, Tenn., 1988), 416-20; see also Jack D. Warren, *The Presidency of George Washington* [Mount Vernon Ladies Association: Mount Vernon, Va., 1999 (forthcoming)], esp. Ch. 2, "A Vision of Prosperity."

[42] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1993), 163-93; Washington's major personal role in the development of the city is amply documented in Kenneth Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C. — The Idea of a Capitol City* (George Mason University Press: Fairfax, Va., 1991); see also Warren, *Presidency of George Washington*, Ch. 4, "Washington's City."

George Washington's years at Ferry Farm laid the foundation for his lifelong commitment to economic diversification. In Washington's childhood the health of the Virginia economy was tied to the rise and fall in the price of tobacco, as it had been since the early 17th century. Tobacco prices collapsed in the 1720s and recovered gradually through the 1730s. Many gentry planters responded to this crisis by increasing the number of acres they cultivated, trying to produce more tobacco to make up for depressed prices. Other, more far-sighted planters, including Augustine Washington, responded by diversifying their use of capital. In the 1720s and 30s Augustine invested large amounts in iron manufacturing, a new industry in Virginia. He acquired a major interest in the Principio Company, a mining and manufacturing partnership, and operated one of the earliest iron furnaces in Virginia on Accokeek Creek, about fourteen air miles northwest of Ferry Farm. Augustine resumed buying land (including Ferry Farm) in the late 1730s, when tobacco prices had recovered. But a major reason he acquired Ferry Farm and moved there was to be able to manage the Accokeek iron furnace in person. One of the most important artifacts of the Washington occupancy at Ferry Farm is a cast-iron fireback that was probably produced at Accokeek, proudly emblazoned with the initials of Augustine and Mary Washington and the date 1734.[43] The Washington's family's move to Ferry Farm thus illustrates, in a unique manner, a development in the American economy — the growth of domestic production — that would later play an important role in the deterioration of relations between the American colonies and Great Britain. George Washington was aware quite early of the restrictions and impediments imposed by the British on American manufacturing.[44]

More importantly, his father's involvement in iron manufacturing and other enterprises provided him with a lesson in the value of diversifying investments. From a remarkably early age, Washington was determined to establish himself in the top-tier of the Virginia gentry in the conventional way, through the acquisition of a large landed estate. But the use to which he put his land and his other resources was often unconventional, and reflected the kind of economic flexibility and concern for rational investment demonstrated by his father when he was a child. Washington abandoned the cultivation of tobacco as his primary cash crop in 1769, turning to wheat. Under his direction, Mount Vernon became a complicated commercial enterprise, combining staple crop agriculture, domestic manufacturing, a commercial fishery, a distillery, and a mill — complete with labor-saving machinery designed by millwright Oliver Evans, whose inventions were vital to the American Industrial Revolution. Washington's crop experiments, mule breeding, his preference for ditching and hedging over impermanent rail fences, his demand that his managers make detailed reports on the disposition of Mount Vernon's labor force, and his fascination with the latest agricultural innovations — like his sixteen-sided treading barn — were all reflections of his passion for economic improvement and rational investment that can be traced to the family experiences of his early years.

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43 The Ferry Farm fireback is on permanent display at the DAR Museum in Washington, D.C. The museum acquired it from the descendants of Lund Washington, George Washington's cousin and lifelong friend (his family lived about 17 miles from Ferry Farm) who was manager of Mount Vernon when Ferry Farm was sold to Hugh Mercer (Provenance Record, Washington Fireback, DAR Museum, Washington, D.C.). It seems reasonable that he removed the fireback from the Washington House around the time of the sale. A chemical test could confirm the tradition that the fireback was cast from iron mined at Accokeek. The fireback is illustrated in Margaret B. Klapthor and Howard A. Morrison, *George Washington: A Figure Upon the Stage* (Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington, D.C., 1982), 105.

44 Among the books young Washington would have seen on his father's shelf was one on trade regulations — Henry Crouch, *A Complete View of British Customs* (London, 1731) — that Augustine brought from England the year before the family moved to Ferry Farm. George Washington kept this book all his life. It is now (1998) in the Boston Athenaeum; see Appleton P.C. Griffin, comp., *A Catalogue of the Washington Collection in the Boston Athenaeum* (privately printed: Boston, 1897).

Washington's interest in economic diversification, like his attachment to urban life, reflected a confidence in the prospects for commercial society that was not shared by many of his fellow revolutionaries. The American Revolution was shaped by a widespread anxiety about the emergence of commercial society. The Revolutionary generation witnessed an extraordinary surge in commercial development, particularly in the retail consumption of imported English manufactures — lace tablecloths and Staffordshire china, fine fabrics and metal buttons, and a broad array of other goods that had once been available only to the wealthy. Many American revolutionaries feared that the development of a consumer-oriented commercial order in the United States would lead to the kind of social degeneration and political corruption that they associated with Britain. Consumer society, they argued, robbed men of personal independence by seducing them to live beyond their means, entangling them in a web of debt, and creating a large class of manufacturing wage-laborers dependent on employers. They also contended that commercialization encouraged people to focus their energy on private gain and to disregard the broader interests of society.[45]

Washington was influenced by this ideological preoccupation with the enervating effects of a consumer-oriented commercial order, but his misgivings about luxury were insignificant compared with his enthusiasm for American commerce. Washington believed that commerce was an agent of refinement rather than corruption. When he reflected "on the probable influence that commerce may here after have on human manners & society in general," Washington concluded that the "fraternal ties" of commerce were making individuals "less barbarous" and nations "more humanized in their policy." In a commercial society, a taste for finer things stimulated industry and inventiveness. "A people" he wrote in 1784, "who are possessed of the spirit of Commerce — who see, & who will pursue their advantages, may achieve almost anything."[46]

Washington's embrace of America's future as a commercial society had a significant impact on American history. It shaped the Federal City on the Potomac, which Washington envisioned as a center of commerce as well as government, and led him, in his first presidential administration, to give his tacit approval to the ambitious economic program devised by Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton. His confidence in the beneficial consequences of trade led him to believe that commercial intercourse between the states would strengthen the Union and would make it possible to bind the trans-Appalachian region to the new nation through ties of economic interest, at a time when many leaders doubted that the West could be integrated successfully into the American republic. Washington's ideas about commercial society and urban life were the result of decades of experience, but his experience at Ferry Farm was the basis upon which they were formed.

The resources at Ferry Farm illustrate the cultural context in which these ideas began to take shape in an outstanding manner. The physical setting of the site — overlooking the historic downtown business district of Fredericksburg from across the Rappahannock River — evokes the relationship between the plantation and the commercial life of the 18th century. So does the

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[45] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (Alfred Knopf: New York, 1993), 34-36.

[46] George Washington to Lafayette, Aug. 15, 1786, George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, March 29, 1784, George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, Oct. 10, 1784, *Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, 4: 214-16, 1: 237-41, 2: 86-98.

18th-century ferry road and the ferry landing sites, over which passed the goods of the interior on their way to the Fredericksburg marketplace. The historic Fredericksburg city dock, a port for ocean-going vessels in Washington's lifetime, lies opposite the Ferry Farm waterfront. Commerce was an intrinsic aspect of the setting. In this regard Ferry Farm stands in distinct contrast to the other Virginia plantations and plantation sites in the National Park System and among the NHLs. Members of the Virginia gentry, historian Rhys Isaac explains, liked to think of their estates — like Stratford Hall, Westover, Carter's Grove, Mount Airy, Shirley (all NHLs) — "as retreats from a world of unworthy striving." Ferry Farm was never an idealized gentleman's rural retreat. Commerce was omnipresent.[47]

Ferry Farm was a working plantation raising tobacco for the marketplace using slave labor, and it illustrates, in an outstanding manner, the cultural context in which George Washington's ideas about slavery first developed. Washington holds a significant place in the history of American slavery. He owned slaves from 1753, when (in accordance with the terms of his father's will) he inherited ten of the slaves residing at Ferry Farm, until his death at Mount Vernon in 1799. He bought slaves for the first time in 1754 (while still residing at Ferry Farm) and continued to buy more until 1772. His workforce continued to grow thereafter by natural increase. When he died Washington owned 124 slaves in his own right. Research on Washington's management of his slaves over the last decade has demonstrated that he was an exacting taskmaster — not a cruel one by the standards of the time, but determined to wrest the maximum labor from his workers. The farm reports Washington demanded from his managers, which calculate the number of man-days devoted to specified tasks, are among the most detailed plantation records known to survive from the 18th century. They suggest a mind obsessed with efficiency, discipline, and order.[48]

Washington benefited from slave labor all of his life, but experience gradually convinced him that slavery was an inefficient and unreliable form of labor. His practical frustration with the institution was compounded after the Revolutionary War by a growing realization that slavery was inconsistent with the ideals of the American Revolution. Although he offered no public support for the abolition of slavery during the 1780s and 1790s, these insights ultimately led to his decision to free all of his slaves after his death. The son of one of Washington's childhood friends called it "the worst decision of his public life."[49] It was undoubtedly one of the most controversial.

The development of Washington's ideas about slavery and its place in the social, economic, and political order is of considerable national significance. Washington's practical experience with slavery began at Ferry Farm. It was there that he learned to give orders and to have them obeyed. As the oldest male in the Washington household after his father's death in 1743, he probably assisted his mother in the management of the plantation he was destined to inherit. The

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[47] Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1982), 38.

[48] The scholarly literature on Washington and slavery will grow dramatically over the next decade, as research conducted over the last several years is published. Most notable among the forthcoming books is a volume collecting the proceedings of a conference on Washington and slavery held at Mount Vernon in 1994, forthcoming in 1999. Already in print is Fritz Hirschfeld, *George Washington and Slavery: A Documentary Portrayal* (University of Missouri Press: Columbia, Missouri, 1997). An outstanding example of the current interest in Washington's management of his slaves is found in Lois Green Carr and Lorena Walsh, "Economic Diversification and Labor Organization in the Chesapeake, 1650-1820," in Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1988), 144-88.

[49] Lund Washington, Genealogical Notes, c. 1846, Box 4, Washington Family Collection, Library of Congress.

lessons were often unpleasant. The need for discipline and order on the plantation was illustrated dramatically in early 1750, when one of the adult male slaves murdered another one. He was subsequently convicted and executed.[50] Underscoring all of Washington's formative experiences in plantation management at Ferry Farm must have been the need to use the resources left to the family after the dispersal of Augustine Washington's estate to maximize the family's income, which must have diminished dramatically after Lawrence and Austin took possession of most of their father's productive estate. The importance of efficiency, and the need to conserve scarce resources and to use them for maximum effect was a lesson George Washington carried with him throughout life, and influenced his conduct in war and statecraft as well as in the management of his private affairs.

The landscape of Ferry Farm illustrates, in an outstanding manner, the cultural context in which Washington's early experiences with slavery took place. Compared with Mount Vernon or Popes Creek Plantation, Ferry Farm was small. The entire plantation was about 580 acres, and was worked, in 1743, by twenty-seven enslaved African-Americans. Twenty of them (12 males, 8 females) lived and worked at the Home House farm.[51] The site consists of about half of the land included in that farm, and illustrates, in a manner readily comprehended, the original dimensions of the farm. The number of acres under cultivation there and the amount of livestock to be tended all suggest patterns in the deployment of labor during the years George Washington lived at the plantation. These historic labor patterns are readily related to the landscape. The area Washington described in his 1771 survey as "the fields below the road," for example, occupying the southern half of the site, is about 30 acres — about the total tobacco acreage fifteen slaves would have been expected to cultivate in the middle of the 18th century. This would have been about the number of hands available to cultivate the area. The NHL program does not now include a property representing tobacco planting on this scale.[52]

The income George Washington might have derived from Ferry Farm would not have been sufficient to maintain the position in the middling ranks of the Virginia gentry to which he was accustomed. The circumstances of life at Ferry Farm, and the modest prospects the plantation offered fueled his aspirations for something better. From an early age he was ambitious — for more land, more slaves, and for the social status that went with being among the leading planters of the colony, but also for the glory, honor, and public acclaim that went with success in arms. The simple landscape of Ferry Farm illustrates the context out of which these ambitions emerged better than any other place.

Ferry Farm remained Washington's home during the years in which he began working to realize his ambitions. In 1748 Lawrence Washington's neighbors, the Fairfaxes of Belvoir, invited George Washington to join a surveying expedition to the western part of the colony. During the succeeding six years he spent an increasing amount of time away from home. Following his

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[50] King George County Order Book, 2: 670.

[51] Their appraised value offers clues to their ages. Eight of the ten men at the Home House farm were in their prime. Two of the other four appears to have been too old to be of much value; the other two seem to have been young children. Although the workforce at the quarter was smaller, four of the five males there were prime hands, and the fifth was probably an older boy. Of the women, four seem to have been in their prime, the other four still girls. At least one of the women, whom Augustine bequeathed to his wife by name, was a valued domestic.

[52] The estimate of tobacco acres per slave is taken from Philip Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems: The Organization of Labor on New World Plantations," in Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1988), 189-220.

appointment as surveyor of Culpeper County in 1749, Washington spent several weeks every spring and fall surveying, mostly west of the Blue Ridge. He also made visits to Lawrence at Mount Vernon, Austin at Popes Creek, and his cousins in the Chotank Creek area of Stafford (now King George) County about 15 miles east of Ferry Farm. In the winter of 1751-52 he accompanied Lawrence (who was dying from tuberculosis) to Barbados. But his personal correspondence, accounts, and other papers demonstrate that he continued to make his home at Ferry Farm, with the expectation that the plantation would be his in 1753.

During 1752-54 Washington's surveying and military duties kept him in almost constant motion, but when his duties, interests, or inclinations led him home, it was to Ferry Farm that he went.[53] During 1752-54 Washington took financial responsibility for the Ferry Farm household, maintaining accounts for supplies with Fredericksburg merchants. On November 4, 1752, he was initiated into the Masonic lodge in Fredericksburg, whose members were drawn from local residents. He passed fellow craft in the same lodge on March 3, 1753 and was raised to Master Mason at their meeting of August 4, 1753. He received his Adjutant's commission at Ferry Farm, and took the prescribed oath before justices in Fredericksburg on February 1, 1753. After traveling to Williamsburg in October 1753 to volunteer to deliver a message warning the French out of the Ohio Country, Washington returned to Ferry Farm and solicited the services of a Dutchman who lived nearby, Jacob van Braam, to act as French interpreter on the mission to Fort Le Boeuf.[54] This mission, and the campaign the next year that ended in humiliation at Fort Necessity, were the first great acts of Washington's life. It was not until 1754, following his surrender at Fort Necessity, that Washington made Mount Vernon his home.[55] The NPS unit at Fort Necessity amply illustrates the first stages of Washington's military career, while Ferry Farm illustrates the cultural context that led Washington to seek advancement through a career in arms.

The life and accomplishments of George Washington have long been regarded as central to our national experience. There are more National Historic Landmarks associated with Washington than with any other American. Since the inception of the NHL program, the Secretary of the Interior has designated at least 23 NHLs associated in some way with Washington's life. In

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[53] That Washington regarded Ferry Farm his home at this time is demonstrated by his June 10, 1752 letter to Gov. Robert Dinwiddie, soliciting the adjutancy of the Northern Neck. In this letter, written from Ferry Farm, Washington explained that he had gone out of his way to call on William Fitzhugh, another candidate for the office, "as I returned Home" from Williamsburg (*Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, 1: 50-51).

[54] For Washington's financial responsibility for the Ferry Farm household, see Robert Jackson to George Washington, [1752], *Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, 1: 54; for his association with the Fredericksburg Lodge, see Freeman, *George Washington*, 1: 267; A record of Washington's oath is in Spotsylvania County Orders, 1749-1755, p. 284, Virginia State Library Microfilm; for the meeting with van Braam, see Freeman, *George Washington*, 1: 277.

[55] The opportunity to make Mount Vernon his home came unexpectedly, as a result of events beginning with Lawrence's untimely death in June 1752. Lawrence did not, as is commonly supposed, leave Mount Vernon directly to George. He left it to his daughter Sarah (1750-54), and in the event of her death without issue, Lawrence vested his wife Ann Fairfax Washington (d. 1761) with a life estate in the plantation. George was merely named as the residuary legatee, to have Mount Vernon after Sarah and Ann's deaths if Sarah died without children of her own. Ann Fairfax Washington was younger than George and there is no evidence that either she or her daughter were unhealthy when Lawrence died, so George Washington's expectation to inherit Mount Vernon cannot have been great. Ann's remarriage to George Lee (who had a plantation of his own) and Sarah's death in 1754 at age four created the circumstances that made it possible for Washington to lease Mount Vernon from Ann in 1754, but there is no evidence that he contemplated this possibility while Sarah was alive. Note that as late as December 17, 1754, when he leased Mount Vernon, Washington identified himself as a gentleman "of the County of King George," indicated that Ferry Farm was still his formal residence (Lease of Mount Vernon, December 17, 1754, *Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, 1: 232-35).

addition, five NPS units established before the inception of the NHL Program preserve important sites relating to Washington's life: George Washington Birthplace, Fort Necessity, Independence, Morristown, and Colonial (embracing Yorktown battlefield).

Most of the NHLs related to Washington are associated with his command of the Continental Army. Monmouth, Princeton, and Brandywine battlefields, where Washington commanded the Continental Army, are NHLs, as are Nassau Hall and Cliveden, focal points of the battles of Princeton and Germantown. Washington's Crossing, the site where Washington crossed the Delaware on his way to victory at Trenton, and Valley Forge, where Washington's army encamped, are also designated NHLs (Valley Forge subsequently became a unit of the NPS). The NHL program also includes three buildings Washington used as military headquarters: the Morris-Jumel Mansion (New York City), Washington's Headquarters (Newburgh, N.Y.), and the Isaac Potts House (Valley Forge, Pa.), as well as the Maryland Statehouse, where Washington resigned his commission.

Washington's political career is not as well represented by the NHL program. His presidential homes in New York City and Philadelphia — obvious candidates for NHL status, if they survived — were demolished in the 19th century. Among NHLs, the Williamsburg Historic District was the setting for Washington's career in the House of Burgesses. The Potomac Canal Historic District was the site of navigational improvements constructed by the Potomac Company, of which Washington was president. The Heyward-Washington House (Charleston, S.C.) was briefly Washington's home during his tour of the southern states in 1791. The U.S. Capitol and the White House are on sites approved by Washington in 1791. The Espy House in Bedford, Pa., was temporarily Washington's headquarters during the Whiskey Rebellion. None of these NHLs, however, achieved national significance primarily because of their association with George Washington.

Washington's early life is not well-illustrated in the NHL program. Greenway Court, the Shenandoah Valley estate of Washington's patron, Lord Fairfax, is an NHL. So is Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria, Va., where Washington recruited during the French and Indian War, and the Forks of the Ohio, the site of Fort Duquesne. Kenmore, the home of Washington's sister, and the Rising Sun Tavern, once the home of Washington's brother Charles, are also NHLs. But none of these NHLs represents the circumstances that shaped Washington's early years as well as Ferry Farm. Ferry Farm illustrates, in an outstanding way, an important but long-neglected phase in Washington's development.

B. Significance Under NHL Criterion 6

The archaeological resources preserved at Ferry Farm constitute the most valuable surviving body of physical evidence for the study of George Washington's early years. Archaeological findings at Ferry Farm and related archival research since 1989 have yielded new evidence about George Washington's early years and have demonstrated that the site possesses unique potential to add significantly more to the available evidence about that period of his life. The identification of archaeological remains of the dwelling house Augustine Washington acquired from the estate of William Strother has resolved a long-standing scholarly controversy about the location of the house, and demonstrated the potential of future investigation to resolve questions about its size and form — matters that have taken on new importance for historians as they look increasing to the work of cultural anthropologists for fresh insights on the past. In one dramatic example, the investigation of Ferry Farm's archaeological resources, in combination with new archival research, has documented a previously-unknown event in George Washington's childhood. Further investigation of these resources also has the potential to contribute to the broader inquiry into the 18th-century transformation in the material lives of people in the Chesapeake currently being undertaken by archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and social historians.

Within the Revised Thematic Framework, the national significance of Ferry Farm's archaeological resources is associated with Theme IV: Shaping the Political Landscape — Topic 4: Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories. The archaeological resources at Ferry Farm illustrate, in an outstanding manner, the material circumstances in which George Washington grew to maturity — circumstances that shaped his view of the economic, social, and political order around him. Ferry Farm's archaeological resources are also associated with Theme V: Developing the American Economy — Topic 2: Distribution and Consumption, which considers changing standards of living. The second quarter of the 18th century, when the Washington family occupied Ferry Farm, was a period of transition in the lives of the Chesapeake plantation gentry, reflected in the archaeological record by groups of artifacts that illustrate changing patterns of consumption. The discovery of intact subsurface deposits dating to the 18th century at Ferry Farm indicates the potential of the site to yield valuable information on the experience of the Washington family during this period of cultural transition.

The location, size, and form of the Washington dwelling at Ferry Farm have been objects of controversy for more than a century. Mason Locke Weems, reporting his own observations, wrote in 1806 that "The house in which he lived is still to be seen. It lifts its low and modest front of faded red, over the turbid waters of Rappahannock.[56] The house described by Weems was gone by 1833. The painting of the property done by John Gadsby Chapman that year depicts the edge of the terrace where the Washington domestic complex was located with a pile of rubble in the middle distance, which was probably intended to represent the remains of the Washington house. An early penciled note on the back of the Chapman canvas, probably in the artist's hand, indicates that the house had been "pulled down." (see Fig. 7.5). In 1859 Benson Lossing published a wood engraving of the house in his *Sketch-Book of the American Revolution* which seems to have been largely if not entirely conjectural, and may have been inspired by Weems' description.

Antiquarian historians and biographers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, unwilling to accept that Washington grew up in a house that was modest by their standards, argued that the house described by Weems and engraved by Lossing post-dated the Washington occupancy, and replaced a mansion acquired by Augustine Washington in 1738 from the estate of William Strother. One badly misinformed writer of the 1920s, Charles Hoppin, even argued that Ferry Farm had been misidentified as the Washington plantation and that the real site of Washington's childhood home, a substantial mansion, was located miles upstream, close to the falls. Hoppin's argument was skillfully refuted in 1937 by G.H.S. King, and definitively demolished in this

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[56] Mason L. Weems, *The Life of Washington*, edited by Marcus Cunliffe (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 9. All subsequent citations are to this scholarly edition of Weems' book. The introduction by Cunliffe offers a balanced appraisal of Weems and his work.

decade by Thena Jones, whose reconstruction of the Catlett Patent traced the title history of the Washington plantation and adjacent land from 1666 to the present.[57]
The peak of this controversy, in the 1920s and 1930s, coincided with the first of several abortive efforts to preserve Ferry Farm as an historical site, all of which failed. The potential of archaeology to resolve the controversy over the Washington dwelling was not suggested until 1960, but by that time the non-profit owners lacked the resources to carry out any archaeological work. In 1969 the site reverted to private owners who refused to consider overtures from private individuals, academics, preservation groups, local officials, and NPS representatives interested in the preservation of the site, some of whom recognized the archaeological potential of Ferry Farm. Not until 1989, when the county government obtained title to a portion of the property believed to be the location of the Washington dwelling did archaeological investigation of Washington's Childhood Home Site begin.

Since 1989 there have been six archaeological investigations at Ferry Farm. The first — a shovel test pit survey of four acres — was conducted by the James River Institute for Archaeology in October 1989. This was followed by two surveys conducted by James G. Harrison & Associates: a survey of a water and sewer corridor along the eastern boundary of the property and a Phase I survey of a 30-acre area on the southern edge of the property, part of which had been disturbed by a sand and gravel operation. As expected, neither of these surveys (both of which were in areas where the soil had been disturbed by 20th-century activities), revealed significant resources from the historic period, although the second survey by Harrison & Associates uncovered potentially rich evidence of prehistoric cultural activity. In the fall of 1990 ground penetrating radar, soil-conductivity, and magnetometer studies were conducted by geophysicist Bruce Bevin of GeoSight, Inc., in the area believed most likely to contain archaeological evidence from the Washington occupancy, which yielded evidence of geophysical anomalies subsequently used as a guide in excavation.[58]

These four studies were preliminaries to the first intensive archaeological investigation at Ferry Farm, conducted by Espey, Huston & Associates of Williamsburg, Va., under the direction of archaeologist Alain Outlaw in the winter of 1990-91. Outlaw and his team returned to the site briefly in 1992. Their investigation located the remains of a 16' x 16' stone cellar of a dwelling house apparently destroyed by fire in the 18th century and associated domestic artifacts showing evidence of fire, interpreted as the remains of the house Augustine Washington acquired from the estate of William Strother in 1738. In addition, Outlaw excavated units in areas near the cellar in an effort to locate other Washington-era structures and determine areas most likely to contain significant archaeological deposits.[59]

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57 Charles A. Hoppin, "The House in which George Washington was Born," *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 8 (October, 1926), 73-103; George H.S. King, "George Washington's Boyhood Home," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2nd Ser., 17 (1937), 265-81; Thena Jones, "Reconstructing the Washington Farm and the Catlett Patent," Ferry Farm Project: Stafford, Va., 1992.

58 [William L. Leigh], "Phase 1 Archaeological Survey of 4 Acres in Parcel B at Ferry Farm, Stafford County, Virginia," James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc.: Jamestown, Va., December, 1989.; James G. Harrison and Robert M. Adams, "Archaeological Survey, Testing, and Monitoring of a Sewer and Water Corridor at Ferry Farm, Stafford County, Virginia," Harrison and Associates: Fredericksburg, Va., May 7, 1990; Harrison, James G. Harrison and Robert M. Adams, "Ferry Farm II: A Phase I Archaeological Survey of a 30 Acre Tract at Ferry Farm, Stafford County, Virginia," Harrison and Associates: Fredericksburg, Va., August 27, 1990; Bruce W. Bevan "A Geophysical Survey at Ferry Farm," GeoSight: Pitman, New Jersey, October 4, 1990.

59 In one of these units, Outlaw uncovered the unmarked grave of an child. The bones were exhumed in 1993 by Douglas Owsley, a forensics specialist at the Smithsonian Institution, who determined that they belonged to a premature or still-born infant. The shroud pins associated with the remains suggested the remains dated to the 18th or early 19th century, but

The discovery of important subsurface deposits dating to the Washington occupancy was a major accomplishment, but the significance of Outlaw's findings went beyond merely identifying the site of the Washingtons' home and recovering some of its artifacts. Archival research conducted by Jack Warren of the Papers of George Washington Project at the University of Virginia in 1995 uncovered evidence that the cellar and associated domestic artifacts found by Outlaw were probably the remains of the Strother-Washington House destroyed by fire on December 24, 1740, slightly more than two years after the Washington family occupied the site. Warren found the crucial evidence for this interpretation in a letter to Washington, previously overlooked by historians, written by Robert Douglas on May 25, 1795. Writing to ask then President Washington for a political favor, Douglas reminded Washington that "I was once a play Mate of your many years ago." Explaining that he had been a store clerk on the plantation of Anthony Strother (which bordered Ferry Farm on the north), Douglas wrote that Augustine Washington "was very kind and indeed a second Father to me and I Remember it well, that it give me a very sore Heart that on a Christmas Eve, his great house was burned down & that he was Obliged with his good family to go and live in the Kitchen."[60]

Douglas did not identify the year of the fire, but his recollection is readily associated with a cryptic reference to a "late calamity . . . by fire" contained in a 1741 letter from Richard Yates (the English tutor of Lawrence and Austin Washington) to Augustine Washington.[61] Generations of Washington biographers have speculated on the location of the fire alluded to by Yates. Some (badly misinformed about the chronology of the family's movements) have assumed that the fire occurred at Popes Creek, and compelled the Washingtons to move to Little Hunting Creek. Others have contended that the fire took place at Little Hunting Creek, and compelled the move to Ferry Farm. But even to a distant English correspondent, a fire at Little Hunting Creek in 1738 would not have been recent enough to be called a "late calamity." Nor have archaeologists found evidence of a disastrous house fire at Little Hunting Creek. The usually cautious Douglas Southall Freeman nonetheless speculated — with no evidence whatever — that the fire probably consumed either the house or a barn there.[62]

Warren's hypothesis that Douglas and Yates were referring to the destruction of the Strother-Washington House in 1740 is consistent with the artifacts recovered from the Strother-Washington cellar, which date to ca. 1740. A large percentage of these artifacts are burnt (see Figs. 7.14, 7.16 and 7.18). In combination with these artifacts, the absence of creamware in the ceramic assemblage recovered from the cellar largely rules out the possibility that the artifacts were deposited in a fire that consumed the house after the end of the Washington occupancy in 1774. The hypothesis is also supported by documentary evidence that the Washingtons were

Owsley could not determine the date the remains were interred with greater specificity. This grave may be part of a more extensive plantation cemetery (Owsley's 1993 report is on file at George Washington's Ferry Farm).

60 Robert Douglas to George Washington, May 25, 1795, George Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

61 Richard Yates to Augustine Washington, October 9, 1741, L.W. Smith Collection, Morristown National Historical Park. The letter was first published in Moncure Conway, *Barons of the Patomack and Rappahannock* (New York, 1892), 68-69. Washington apparently never wrote anything about this traumatic event in his childhood, but the story seems to have been known in the Mount Vernon household in later years. While preparing his biographical sketch of Washington in the 1780s, David Humphreys asked Washington about his early life, including "Any remarkable or characteristic facts of the family, *his father's house burnt,* his father's death, state of their affairs" [italics added], Zagarri, *David Humphreys' "Life of General Washington"*, 59.

62 Freeman, *George Washington*, 1: 67.

again in residence at Little Hunting Creek during 1741. Warren reasoned that the new Washington House at Ferry Farm was being constructed during 1741, possibly over the original cellar, which was filled destruction debris, but more likely nearby, within the surrounding domestic complex. The family was apparently back in residence by early 1742, when Augustine Washington was named a trustee of Fredericksburg.[63]

The first important excavation at the site thus established the location of the Strother-Washington House and led directly to the documentation of a previously unknown episode in George Washington's childhood. These findings demonstrate the national significance of the archaeological resources at Ferry Farm and set the agenda for future research at the site. The public presentation of Warren's findings in early 1996 coincided with a public controversy over plans for commercial development of all but a small portion of the Washington Childhood Home Site. This controversy was resolved late in 1996 when the Kenmore Association, Inc., purchased the threatened property and acquired the remainder of Ferry Farm from the county, ensuring the long-term preservation of the site and its archaeological resources.

Since then, archaeological excavations conducted by the archaeology department of the Kenmore Association under the direction of Gary Norman in 1997 and Paul Schuster in 1998 have aimed mainly at testing Warren's hypothesis by seeking to identify subsurface remains of the second Washington House site and locating other features of the Washington domestic complex. In July 1998 Schuster located an intact subsurface feature, interpreted as a cellar, that seems to date from the Washington occupancy. Phase II investigation of this feature has revealed that it measures approximately 10' x 25' and contains a considerable amount of plaster in the fill — evidence that it was part of a domestic structure. Ceramic remains and other artifacts associated with this feature suggest that the building was deliberately demolished in the second quarter of the 19th century. A Phase III investigation of this feature — which may prove to be the remains of the second Washington House — is scheduled for 1999.

The archaeological resources at Ferry Farm constitute the most significant known body of archaeological resources for the study of George Washington's early life. By comparison, the resources at Popes Creek Plantation and the associated Washington plantation on Bridge's Creek, preserved within the boundaries of George Washington Birthplace National Monument, are most significant for the insights they offer into the lives of George Washington's Virginia progenitors — the families of John Washington the Immigrant, his son Lawrence and his grandson — and George Washington's father — Augustine Washington. The archaeological resources protected at George Washington Birthplace National Monument also offer important information on the socio-economic conditions of the Washington family at the time of George Washington's birth, as well as valuable general insights into plantation life in the 18th century.[64] But because the plantation was George Washington's home for only three years, the resources at the site offer limited insights into his formative years.

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[63] Jack D. Warren, "Your late calamity . . . by Fire": New Documentary and Archaeological Insights on George Washington's Childhood" (unpublished MS; publication of these findings has been deferred pending a complete re-analysis of the artifacts recovered from the cellar by Outlaw and further excavation of the Strother-Washington House site).

[64] See, e.g., Brooke S. Blades, "Archaeological Investigations at George Washington Birthplace National Monument," an appendix to Charles E. Hatch, Jr., *Popes Creek Plantation: Birthplace of George Washington* (Wakefield National Memorial Association: Wakefield, Va., 1979), 147-66, and Dennis Pogue and Esther White, "Reanalysis of Features and Artifacts Excavated at George Washington's Birthplace, Virginia," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia*, 49 (March, 1994), 32-45.

Nor do the known physical remains at Mount Vernon offer much greater insights into Washington's early life. One of the most important NHLs, Mount Vernon possesses unique value for illustrating and interpreting Washington's domestic life during his mature years. But the value of archaeological deposits there for illustrating and interpreting Washington's early life is probably quite limited. Recent research on the early history of the Mount Vernon mansion underscores this point. It was once believed that the mansion house, repeatedly expanded and renovated by George Washington over more than forty years, incorporated elements of the house in which he lived from age three to six. The most recent scholarship discards this view and contends that Lawrence Washington demolished the earlier dwelling during the 1740s and rebuilt the house, reusing some of the cellar walls but little else. "In a single, clean sweep," Robert and Lee Dalzell write in their 1998 study of Mount Vernon, Lawrence "eliminated everything his father had built aboveground" and constructed an entirely new, and considerably larger house using portions of the old cellar walls to support the new structure. The new house — four rooms downstairs around a central hall, and four small rooms on the second floor of a story and a half building — was probably comparable to the Washington House at Ferry Farm. It was considerably larger and more impressive than the house Augustine Washington seems to have built at Little Hunting Creek around 1735 — the house George Washington lived in from 1735 to 1738.[65]

The Strother-Washington House at Ferry Farm provided much more ample quarters, and located the Washingtons accurately in the emerging social landscape of Virginia. Built over a stone-lined cellar with four rooms and a central hall downstairs and four small chambers above, the house was far superior to the typical dwellings of ordinary yeoman farmers of the second quarter of the 18th century. The term "mansion" applied to the house by William Strother's executors seems pretentious, but it accurately reflected the social function of such a dwelling. It occupied a prominent place in the social landscape in a world still dominated by unpainted, one- or two-room earthfast houses. Yet the Strother-Washington House was a frame house, and did not reach for permanence or grandeur of the two-and-a-half-story brick mansions constructed for some of Virginia's leading gentlemen in Washington's childhood. Westover, the James River great house (and NHL) constructed for William Byrd II about 1730 is roughly contemporary with the Strother-Washington House and epitomizes the social aspirations of Virginia's first families. The Strother-Washington House remains reflect the social aspirations of the middle tier of the Virginia gentry.

The Washington occupancy of the site (1738-74) coincided with a significant transformation in the lives of the middling plantation gentry in Virginia, often reflected in the archaeological record by an increasing array of consumer goods through the period. Archaeological investigation of the site has not proceeded far enough to make any assessment of the impact of the 18th-century consumer revolution on the Washington family. But the artifacts uncovered by the first excavations at the site demonstrate the potential of future investigations to recover a sufficient body of evidence to address this issue. The potential value of the site in this regard is enhanced by the prospect of comparing the artifact assemblage associated with the Washington occupancy at Ferry Farm with the artifacts assemblages associated with earlier generations of

[65] Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., and Lee B. Dalzell, *George Washington's Mount Vernon*, 30-31. See also Dennis J. Pogue, "Mount Vernon: Transformation of an Eighteenth-Century Plantation System," in Paul A Shackel and Barbara J. Little, eds., *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake* (Washington, D.C., 1994), 101-14, and the "Historic Structures Report" prepared for the Mount Vernon Ladies Association by Mesick, Cohen, Waite, Architects (1993), MS, library of the MVLA.

Washington family occupancy at Popes Creek Plantation and with artifacts from other plantations from the period.

By locating George Washington and his family more precisely in the social order of Chesapeake society in the second quarter of the 18th century, the archaeological resources at Ferry Farm have the demonstrated potential to provide scholars with information vital to the ongoing reevaluation of his life. Those resources also have demonstrated their potential to document specific events in Washington's life, and have already refined our understanding of the family's movements during George Washington's childhood. They have the demonstrated potential to illustrate, far better than the surviving documentation, the material circumstances in which George Washington grew up — circumstances that undoubtedly influenced the way he perceived the world around him.

C. Significance Under NHL Criterion 3

In addition to its historical association with the early life of George Washington, Ferry Farm is nationally-significant as the setting for some of the most enduring and familiar stories about George Washington's youth. Through its association with these stories — most of all the story of young Washington and the cherry tree — Ferry Farm represents, in an outstanding manner, a "great idea or ideal of the American people."

The story of Washington and the cherry tree is a fundamental part of our national culture. The story is so well known, and so ubiquitous, that the image of a cherry tree and a hatchet brings it immediately to mind for countless Americans, many of who know nothing more about Washington. There can scarcely be a president in the last hundred years whose honesty has not been called into question by a political cartoon casting him as the young George Washington, hatchet in hand, standing amid stumps, and denying his misdeeds. The truth of the story — whether or not the event took place as the traditional version describes it, or even at all — is irrelevant to its national significance. The words "I cannot tell a lie" are an immortal part of our national culture. The story of Washington and the cherry tree is synonymous with the virtue of simple, uncompromising honesty — and the ideal that public officials — and especially presidents — should be honest.

Within the Revised Thematic Framework, Ferry Farm's significance to this great ideal of the American people is associated with Theme III: Expressing Cultural Value — Topic 6: Popular and Traditional Culture. Most of the NHLs associated with this theme are nationally-significant because of their association with education, architecture, intellectual life, literature, or the fine and performing arts. They consist mostly of resources associated with institutions, like Nassau Hall or the Walnut Street Theater, or with particular educators, intellectuals, architects, literary figures, or artists, like the Helen Keller birthplace, Brook Farm, or Louis Armstrong's house. But the topics that define this theme include "Popular and Traditional Culture," under which should be included the small number of places associated with the defining traditions of our national life.

The NHL standards explicitly recognize the potential of tradition or symbolic value to convey national significance. NHL Exclusion G acknowledges that properties "primarily commemorative in intent" may be "invested" with national historical significance by "tradition, or symbolic value." Certainly "tradition, or symbolic value" can invest national significance in properties not primarily commemorative in intent as well.

Scholarly inquiry over the last thirty years into Washington as a figure in popular and traditional culture has underscored the national significance of Washington's popular image. In 1969 Robert Hay wrote that "a full treatment of the many nuances of the popular view of Washington remains one of the significant unwritten stories in the intellectual history of the United States." Since that time the popular image of Washington and its place in American popular culture have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Michael Kammen has argued that from the end of the Revolution Washington became the major symbol in Americans' evolving conception of their revolution. George Forgie argues that Washington was most important as an object of nostalgia during America's "post-heroic age" in the early 19th century. These and other cultural historians have offered a wide range of interpretations, but they are agreed that Washington's popular image — symbolized most commonly by the cherry tree story — has been a central component of American national culture.[66]

The story of Washington and the cherry tree was first published in Mason Locke Weems' *The Life of Washington; with Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honourable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen*. Weems was an Episcopal minister, but he was a parish rector for only a few years. He spent most of his career as an itinerant preacher, moralizing writer and book peddler. The first edition of his *Life of Washington* appeared in 1800 and was revised and expanded through successive editions until the seventh edition of 1808. The cherry tree episode first appeared in the fifth edition of 1806. The biography passed through twenty-nine editions by 1825, and was among the most popular books of first half of the 19th century. It popularity was secured by what historian Marcus Cunliffe has called a "single, immortal, and dubious anecdote."[67]

Like most enduring stories, the tale of Washington and the cherry tree has been kept alive for many reasons, conditioned by the motives of the storyteller and the circumstances of time and place. Weems has been accused of presenting the young Washington as a faultless paragon, but he actually sought to portray him as a credible person — a high-spirited child, capable of mischief, guided along the path to greatness by his father. Weems' intention was to encourage parents to lead their children down the path of virtue by treating them with compassion and gentle forbearance, rather than with the fierce discipline characteristic of child-rearing practices in the 18th century.[68] In Weems' version of the story, Augustine Washington is the hero, for praising his mischievous child for telling the truth rather than punishing him for his misdeed. Republished in McGuffey's readers, the most widely used textbooks of the middle decades of the 19th century, the story was presented to inculcate the virtues of truthfulness. In McGuffey's *New Third Reader*, the moral became a denunciation of lying. Parental fondness and forbearance is lost. George's father warns of "giving him up" if George ever lies. A version of the story published in the North during the Civil War has the young George confess the misdeed in order to save a young slave from being punished by mistake, thus establishing Washington as a

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[66] For a review of this literature, see Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, N.Y., 1987), 226-28.

[67] Weems, ix.

[68] This interpretation of Weems is most fully developed in Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Doubleday: Garden City, N.J., 1984), 27-53. See also the introduction to the new edition of Weems' *Life of Washington* edited by Peter Onuf (M.E. Sharpe: London, 1996).

compassionate and reluctant slave-owner and exonerating him from the evils of his southern brethren.[69]

Historians have been justifiably critical of Weems. His *Life of Washington* will not bear scrutiny as serious work of biography. Weems lifted at least one important story — relating how George's father spelled out his name in cabbage seedlings, to impress upon George the debt owed to the divine hand for the blessings of nature — from a contemporary published work by James Beattie, in which the Scottish poet-philosopher described using this device with his son.[70] Weems seems to have fabricated some of the other stories related in the book, and almost certainly refashioned others to suit his purposes, which critics justly describe as sentimental moralizing.

Weems was not scrupulously concerned with historical truth. Garry Wills, one of Weems' most sympathetic modern critics, writes that Weems' purpose was to present "the meaning of Washington in a set of symbols . . . . He was not recording events, but fashioning an icon." Considering the limited materials with which he had to work, the fact that he was able to fashion an account of Washington's life with any semblance of accuracy at all is remarkable. When Weems began writing there were no published accounts of Washington's life other than short accounts in a few newspapers and almanacs. Nor did Weems have much first-hand knowledge of his subject. He seems to have visited Mount Vernon only once, in 1787. He later sent Washington a note reminding him of the occasion, and in 1799 sent Washington a published sermon, for which he received a note of thanks. This is the sum of the known interaction between the two men.[71] Yet Weems knew many people who did know Washington well. Weems was married to Frances Ewell, a cousin of Washington's intimate friend, Dr. James Craik, who had been with Washington since the French and Indian War. It was in the company of Dr. Craik's son James that Weems made his visit to Mount Vernon.

Weems can be regarded as a primitive oral historian. His family connections and his work as an itinerant preacher and book peddler brought him into contact with people who had known Washington, some of them since early in Washington's life. He clearly collected some of the stories he related from them. Weems' visits to the Fredericksburg area, a short distance south of his home in Dumfries, are amply documented in his correspondence, and it was on one of these trips that he probably heard the story, related by Washington's cousin Lewis Willis, that young George could throw a stone across the Rappahannock River at the lower ferry landing on the Washington property. This feat — though it requires a strong arm — is not implausible. A later writer changed the stone to a silver dollar, turning a perfectly plausible childhood reminiscence into an implausible fable. Willis, to whom Weems attributed the original story, was living in Fredericksburg when Weems published it. Weems is not likely to have fabricated the anecdote and then attributed it to a person capable of contradicting him. The story is far more credible than Washington's own boast, attributed to him by his aide David Humphreys, that he had once thrown a stone up to the top of Virginia's Natural Bridge from the valley below.[72]

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[69] The latter is [Morrison Heady], *The Farmer Boy, and How He Became Commander-in-Chief* (Boston, 1864).

[70] Weems, xxxi-xxxii.

[71] Jackson and Twohig, eds., *Diaries of George Washington*, 5: 112; Weems to Washington, July 6, 1792, in Mastromarino and Warren, eds., *Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, 9 (forthcoming); Washington to Weems, August 27, 1799, in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, 37: 347.

Twentieth-century scholarship has demonstrated the factual basis for several of Weems' stories. Douglas Southall Freeman demonstrated that Weems did not invent the story of the man named Payne who knocked down Washington at a tavern. More recent research has confirmed that John Hobby — whom Weems identified as Washington's first teacher, but whom generations of historians have treated as a fabrication — owned property less than a mile south of Ferry Farm and conducted a school in the area. No evidence has been found linking Washington to the school, but the fact that Hobby was a schoolmaster in the neighborhood lends credibility to the assertion that Washington attended the school. Weems' assertion that Washington was visiting cousins in the nearby Chotank region of Stafford (now King George) County is so plausible that it has been accepted by generations of biographers, including Freeman.[73]

The cherry tree story is of a different sort. Weems attributed it only to an "old lady" of the neighborhood — the same one to whom he attributed the story of the cabbage seeds, which he had lifted directly from Beattie. The essence of the story — a small boy damages a prized tree and when confronted, admits the deed and is praised for his honesty — is entirely plausible. But Weems strains his credibility by providing too many fine details, including the dialogue between father and son, and by using the story for a heavy-handed didactic purpose. As related by Weems, the story cannot be literally true, although it might be based on some event dimly remembered by one of Weems' informants in the Fredericksburg area. But to emphasize the implausible or unlikely aspects of the story is to miss its importance. "The power of the story," historian Marcus Cunliffe writes, "as in the case of King Alfred and the cakes . . . rests on considerations that have very little to do with precise evidence."[74] The enduring power of the story rests on its capacity to express a fundamental truth about Washington — his honesty — and to celebrate the virtue of truthfulness in public life, which is one of the great ideals of the American people.

Weems explicitly associated the story with Washington's childhood home on the Rappahannock. His understanding of the chronology of Washington's early life was very imperfect. He believed that the Washington family had moved to Ferry Farm from Popes Creek when George was five years old. He was unaware of the three years the Washingtons lived at Little Hunting Creek. He thus did not associate the cherry tree story with Mount Vernon, even though he writes that the event took place when George was "about six." All of the famous anecdotes of Washington's childhood recounted by Weems — his attendance at Hobby's school, the cherry tree, the cabbage seeds, his return from Chotank to his father's deathbed — follow Weems' account of the move to Ferry Farm and his description of the Washington's house there: "The house in which he lived is still to be seen. It lifts its low and modest front of faded red, over the turbid waters of Rappahannock; whither, to this day, numbers of people repair, and with emotions unutterable looking at the weatherbeaten mansion, exclaim, *'Here's the house where the Great Washington was born!'* But it is all a mistake, for he was born, as I said, at Popes creek, in Westmoreland county."[75] A steady stream of pilgrims made their way to Ferry Farm in the decades after the site

[72] Humphreys repeated this boast in his unpublished sketch for a biography of Washington, edited by Rosemarie Zagarri, ed. *David Humphreys' "Life of General Washington"*, 7.

[73] Freeman, *George Washington*, 2: 146; Warren, "Rise of George Washington," 12.

[74] Weems, xlix.

[75] Weems, 8.

was immortalized by Weems. Among them was John Gadsby Chapman, whose 1833 painting *Fredericksburg from the Old Mansion of the Washington Family* depicts the site of the Washington domestic complex, the ferry, and the city of Fredericksburg.[76]
By the time of the Civil War the myth of Washington's boyhood was firmly planted in the American consciousness. Union soldiers stationed at Ferry Farm were well aware that the farm had once been the home of George Washington, and that it was associated with famous anecdotes about Washington's childhood. S. Millett Thompson, a young officer in the 13th New Hampshire Regiment, which marched over Ferry Farm on its way to the first battle of Fredericksburg recorded in his diary: "We cross from the old Washington plantation, wherein (it may have been) was the garden wherein grew the cherry-tree, whereat the boy, George, went with his little hatchet, whereabout he could not tell a lie; whereof we have all been told, and whereby we all have been, morally, much benefited, of course."[77] George Brayton of the 7th Wisconsin noted in his diary for May 11, 1862, that the "farm on which we are encamped is said to be the old Washington homestead & the place of which 'little Geo' cut the cherry tree & found his name 'growing in the cabbage bed.'"[78] Soldiers of the 148th Pennsylvania, posted at Ferry Farm after the First Battle of Fredericksburg, attempted to throw stones across the river in imitation of Washington's youthful feat. Captain Horace Currier of the 7th Wisconsin Infantry wrote home to his family in May 18, 1862 that "We are encampt on Ferry Farm where Washington was born."[79] William Draper of the 36th Massachusetts wrote that "the part of the line that it usually fell my lot to hold was on the old Washington Farm, where General Washington passed most of his earlier years, and where he cut the cherry tree with his little hatchet but could not tell a lie."[80]

George Washington had considerable symbolic importance for these soldiers, as he did for northerners generally. Northerners embraced Washington — portrayed in the northern press as a reluctant slaveholder who sacrificed his life to forge the Union — as a symbol of their cause. Lincoln described reading Weems' *Life of Washington* as a boy and being impressed even then "that there must have been something more than common" that Washington had struggled for. In a wartime northern retelling of the cherry tree story George's father first suspected that a young slave was responsible for the damage to the tree, but when he threatened to whip the lad, George manfully stepped forward to confess the deed and save the young slave from punishment.[81]

Many of the Northern soldiers who marched over Ferry Farm were struck by the irony of fighting to preserve the Union over the ground where the principal founder of the Union had

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[76] *Fredericksburg from the Old mansion of the Washington Family* is owned by the Homewood Foundation of New York City.

[77] Diary of S. Millett Thompson, December 12, 1862, file copy, Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., Fredericksburg, Va.

[78] Diary of George Brayton, Company B, 7th Wisconsin, typescript copy, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

[79] Horace Currier to _____ Currier, 18 May 1862, State Historical Society of Wisconsin MSS MS5 1115. This is the earliest use of the name "Ferry Farm" yet found.

[80] William F. Draper, *Recollections of a Varied Career* (Little, Brown: Boston, 1908), 97.

[81] Address to the New Jersey Senate, February 21, 1861, in Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, N.J., 1953), 4: 235; [Morrison Heady], *The Farmer Boy, and How He Became Commander-in-Chief* (Boston, 1864).

grown to manhood. One of the Pennsylvania soldiers who occupied Ferry Farm during the First Battle of Fredericksburg wrote: "Could George Washington have beheld, in his mature years, with prophetic eye, the havoc that was to be wrought by those mighty hosts of his countrymen in fratricidal strife on the very ground, every nook and corner of which must have been familiar to him in his youthful days; could he have looked upon the dreadful scenes that were to be enacted within the radius of fifteen miles from his old home . . . his patriotic soul would have been overwhelmed with grief."

The association of Ferry Farm with the most famous fables about George Washington's childhood invests the site with a special national significance. That significance is was illustrated during the occupation of the site by Union soldiers, whose recollections of Washington symbolize the connection between the aspirations of the generation that fought the American Revolution and created the Union, and the experience and ideals of the generation that fought the Civil War to determine the fate of the Union. This symbolic significance is inescapably intertwined with the site and demonstrates the property's national significance.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
X Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
X Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #VA-90
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
X Other (Specify Repository): Kenmore Plantation & Gardens and George Washington's Ferry Farm

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 68.8 acres

UTM References:

Zone	Easting	Northing
18	285540	4241390
18	285940	4241540
18	285920	4241020
18	285840	4240480
18	286730	4240200

Verbal Boundary Description:

The George Washington Childhood Home Site is located within the boundaries of George Washington's Ferry Farm, a private historical and archaeological park owned by the Kenmore Association, Inc. The site is located in southern Stafford County, and is bounded by the Rappahannock River on the west, the Virginia Route 3 bypass connector on the south, Virginia Route 3 on the east, and a property line on the north separating the site from the property of the Bass-Embrey family.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries, which are substantially contiguous with the boundaries of the park, encompass the undeveloped part of the original Washington plantation, 1738-74, and include much of the land George Washington defined as the "Home House" farm in his 1771 survey of the property. The exception is a small strip on the south side of the park property. This strip, though once a part of the Washington plantation, is divided from the main portion of the park by a highway connector and lacks historical integrity. The north boundary, between the site and the Bass-Embrey family property, is substantially unchanged since the Washington period.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
October 14, 1999