

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

*Inside the Vault:  
Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*

December 17, 2020

*The session will start shortly. Please note:*

- Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
- You can participate through the Q&A function.
- If you have technical difficulties, please email [firstfriday@gilderlehrman.org](mailto:firstfriday@gilderlehrman.org) so we can assist you.

# *Gilder Lehrman Staff*

## Panelists

- Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator
- Victoria Ann Scovens - Eliza in the And Peggy Tour of *Hamilton*
- Rosanne Lichatin - 2005 National History Teacher of the Year

## Support

- Zoya Siddiqui - Curatorial Intern

## *During the Session*



- If you would like to ask a question, you can **use the Q&A feature**, which is at the bottom of your screen.
- **Viewing in full screen** is recommended to see the presenters and the presentation at the same time.

### **For Security and Privacy**

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.

# Today's Documents

- A letter from Martha Washington about the end of the Revolutionary War
- A letter from Martha about her duties as her husband becomes president



Metropolitan Museum of Art

# *Martha Dandridge Custis (1731-1802)*

- Born June 2, 1731
- Married Daniel Parke Custis  
May 15, 1750
  - One of the wealthiest men in Virginia
  - Exported tobacco
- Had four children
  - Daniel (1751-1754)
  - Frances (1753-1757)
  - John “Jacky” (1754-1781)
  - Martha “Patsy” (1756-1773)
- Widowed July 8, 1757



# *Martha Custis, Estate Manager*



White House plantation, Daniel and Martha's home,  
New Kent County, Virginia, 1862, Library of Congress

- Martha became the executor of Daniel's estate.
  - She was not his heir.
  - She managed 17,500 acres of land and 300 enslaved people.
- The land and property were worth more than £40,000.
  - This is over \$2.2 million today.

# Martha Washington



Library of Congress

- Martha married George Washington on January 6, 1759.
- George left Mount Vernon in 1775 to command the Continental Army.
- He returned to Mount Vernon when the war ended in 1783.
  - Martha visited him each winter.
  - She was an influential presence.

Mount Vernon 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 84

My Dear Madam

Your polite and affectionate congratulatory letter on the termination of our troubles, and the return of the General to domestic life, would, under any circumstances, have been highly pleasing to me; but the value of it was particularly enhanced by the friendly terms in which you have conveyed them to us.

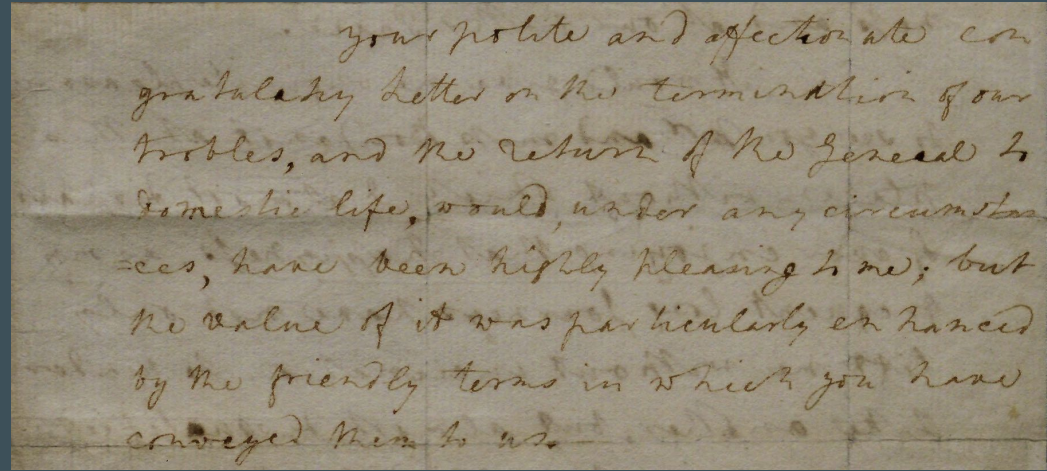
In return, permit me to offer you my sincere compliments on your restoration to your own House, after an exile of seven years — and on Miss Boudinot's better state of health, which, with much pleasure I learnt from the General was considerably

*Martha Washington  
to Hannah Boudinot,  
January 15, 1784*



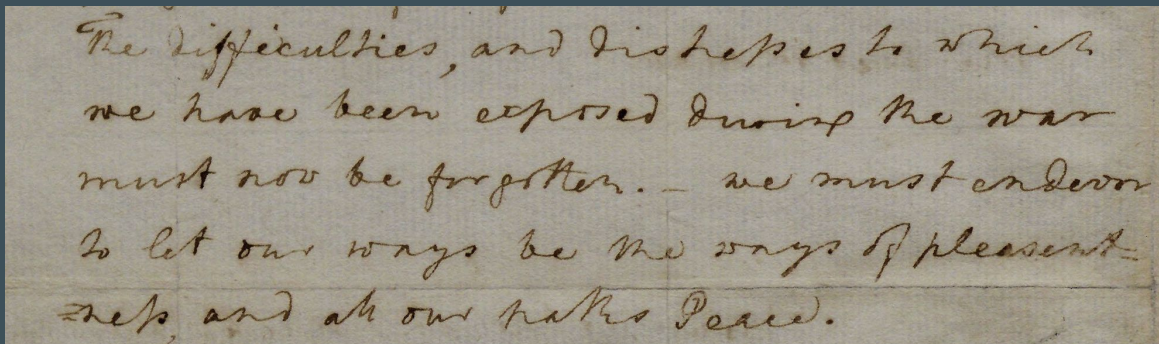
# *Return to domestic life*

“Your polite and affectionate congratulatory Letter on the termination of our troubles, and the return of the General to domestic life, would, under any circumstances, have been highly pleasing to me; but the value of it was particularly enhanced by the friendly terms in which you have conveyed them to us.”

A snippet of a handwritten letter in cursive script on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in dark ink and is slightly faded. It discusses the receipt of a congratulatory letter regarding the end of a war and the return to domestic life, expressing appreciation for the friendly tone of the message.

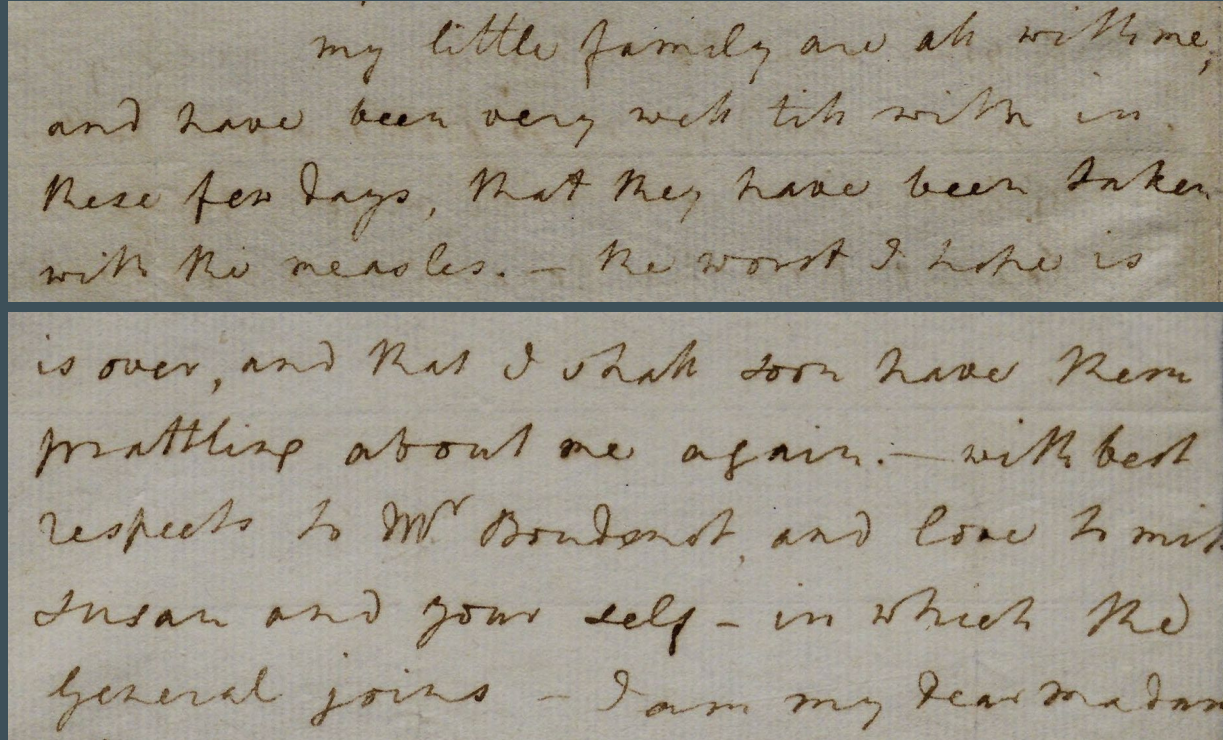
Gilder Lehrman Collection

“The difficulties, and distresses to which we have been exposed during the war must now be forgotten. We must endeavor to let our ways be the ways of pleasantness and all our paths Peace.”

A snippet of a handwritten letter in cursive script on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in dark ink and is slightly faded. It discusses the need to forget the difficulties and distresses of war and to focus on pleasantness and peace in the future.

Gilder Lehrman Collection

# The "little family"



my little family are all with me,  
and have been very well till with in  
these few days, that they have been taken  
with the measles. — The worst I hope is  
is over, and that I shall soon have them  
prattling about me again. — with best  
respects to M<sup>r</sup> Boudenot, and love to miss  
Susan and your self — in which the  
General joins — I am my dear madam

Gilder Lehrman Collection

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New York June the 8<sup>th</sup> 1789

My dear James

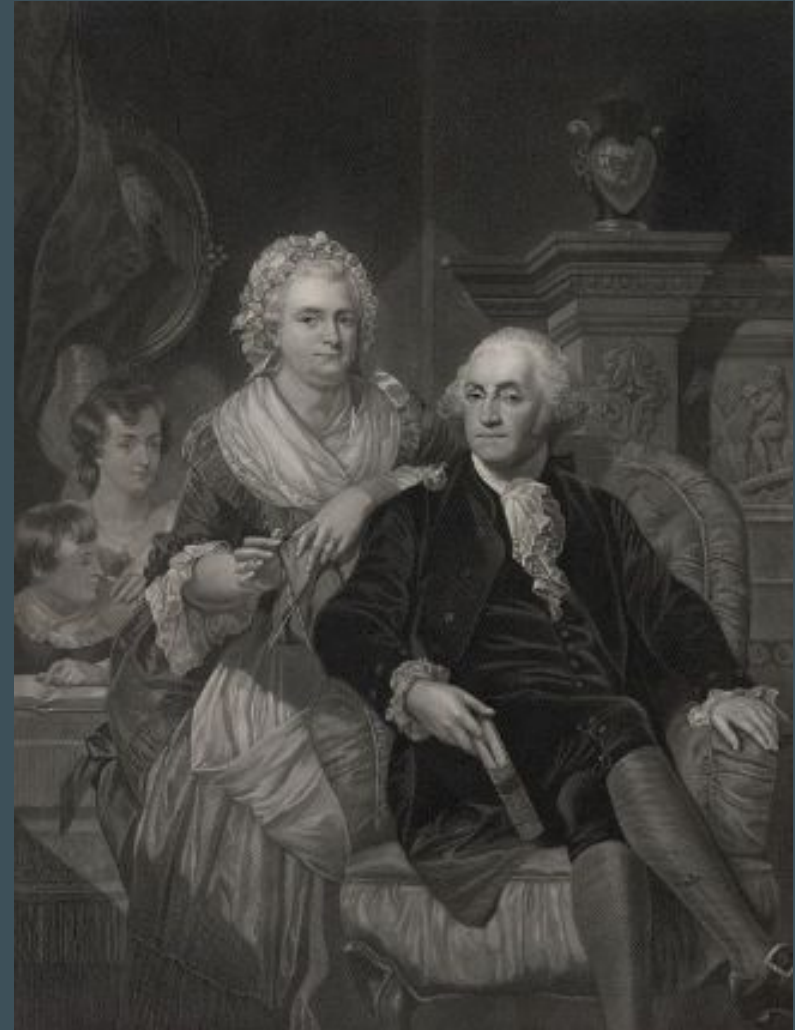
I have the pleasure to tell you, that we had a very agreeable journey, - I arrived in Philadelphia on Friday after I left you without the least accident. In dinner we were met by the President of the State, (Gen Mifflin) with the city Troop of Horse and conducted safe to Grays Ferry, where a number of Ladies and Gentlemen came to meet me, - and after a cold Colation we proceed to Town, - I went to Mr Morris's - the children was very well and cheerful all the way, being complain'd very little of being sick as soon as I could I sent for the Stag maker, and gave him your message and desired him to send the Stags to Col's Kiddle when done to be sent to you, - also two pair of Shoes of a new fashioned kind those with <sup>low</sup> ~~low~~ Heels are for you, those with the high heels is for Mrs Stuart, with <sup>two</sup> ~~two~~ pieces for the two dear girls, - all which I hope has come to your hands before this

I set out on Monday with Mrs Morris and her two daughters, - and was home Wednesday morning

Martha  
Washington to  
Frances B.  
Washington,  
June 8, 1789

# *Themes of the letter*

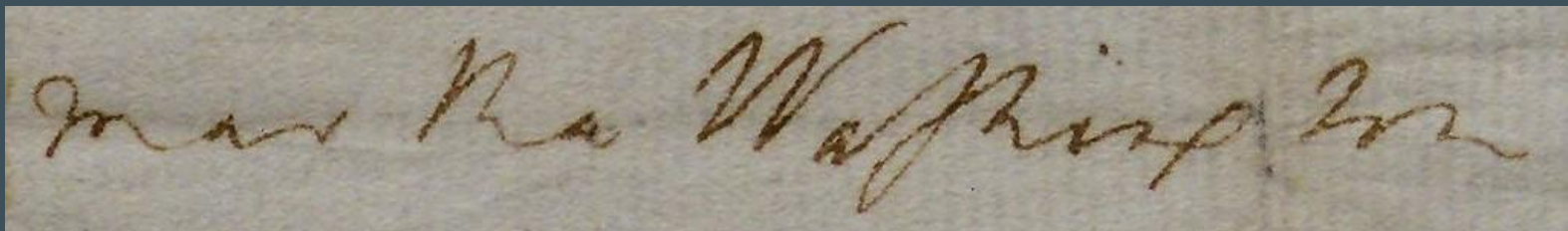
- Martha's journey to Philadelphia and New York
- Her grandchildren
- Health of family members
- George Washington and the presidential mansion
- Mount Vernon
- Procuring clothing



Library of Congress

## *Arrival in New York*

“I set out on munday with Mrs Morris and her two Daughters, – and was met on Wednesday morning by the President Mr Morris and Colo H at Elizabeth town point with the fine Barge you have seen so much said off in the papers with the same oars men that carred the P. to New York dear little Washington seemed to be lost in a mase at the great parad that was made for us all the way we come The Governor of the state meet me as soon as we landed, and led me up to the House, the papers will tell you how I was complimented on my landing, – I thank god the Prdt is very well, and the Gentle men with him – are all very well, – the House he is in is a very good one and is handsomly furnished all new for the General.”

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in brown ink on aged, yellowish paper. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "George Washington".

# Grandchildren

an end - I have not had one half hour to my  
self since the day of my arrival, - my first care  
was to get the children to a good school, which they are  
boath very much pleased at, - nelly shall begin Musick  
next week - she has made two or three attempts to  
write to you; but has never finished a letter - she is  
a little wild creature and spends her time at the windows  
looking at carriages, &c passing by which is new  
to her and very common for children to do.

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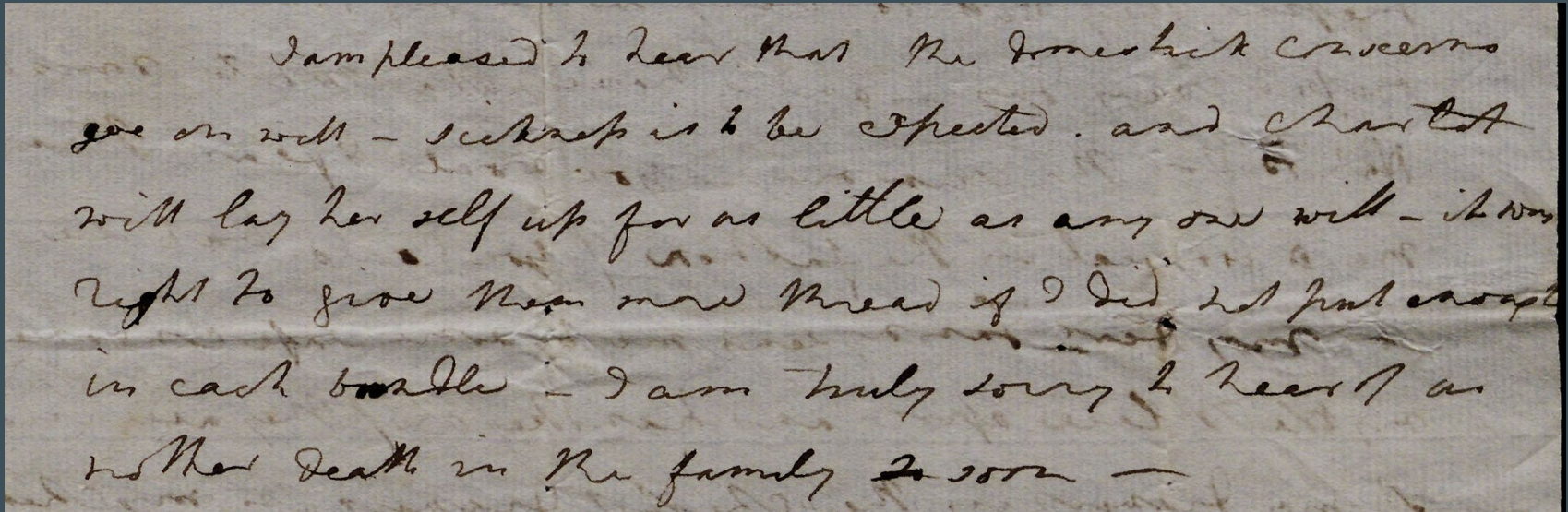
## *Procuring clothing*

“All the genteel people say a crape cushioning is not proper to send to you – but I think in the country where you cannot have a hair dresser they will do very well – my Hair is set and dressed every day – and I have put on white muslin Habits for the summer – you would I fear think me a good deal in the fashion if you could but see me – my dear Fanny send me by some safe convance my Black lace apron and handkerchief they are in one of my drawers in the chest of drawers in my chamber – and some thread lace or joining nett it is in one of the Baskets on the shelf in my closet they were fine net Handkerchiefs which I intended to make cap borders off.”



Photo courtesy of Allison Kraft

# The topic of slavery



I am pleased to hear that the domestick concerns  
goe on well - sickness is to be expected. and Charlot  
will lay her self up for as little as any one will - it was  
right to give them more bread if I did not put enough  
in each bundle - I am truly sorry to hear of an  
other death in the family so soon -

Gilder Lehrman Collection

“I am pleased to hear that the domestick concerns goe on well – sickness is to be expected and Charlot will lay her self up for as little as any one will – it was right to give them more Bread if I did not put enough in each bundle – I am truly sorry to hear of another death in the family so soon.”



# *Deaths of George and Martha Washington*

- George died December 14, 1799.
  - Martha is widowed for a second time.
- Mount Vernon is left to Bushrod Washington, George's nephew.
  - Martha remains in the mansion.
- George's will freed 123 enslaved people he owned upon Martha's death.
- This did not include enslaved people from the Custis estate.
- Martha died May 22, 1802.



Library of Congress

# *Martha Washington's Legacy*

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY




National Portrait Gallery

Q&A


# Collection Digital Volunteers

## SCRIPTO · ROBERT L. STONE'S WORLD WAR II LETTERS

[Project guidelines](#) | [Browse documents](#) | [Transcribe](#) |  [Log out](#)


### GLC09620.101: Robert L. Stone, to Jacob Stone and Beatrice Stone, 11 June 1944.: Page #1

Original title: 09620.101\_00001.jpg

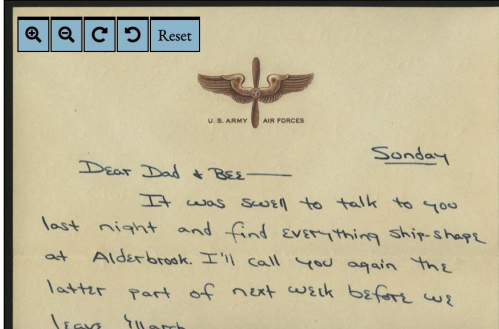
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

Protection: Open to all  
Expiration: Never

Status: New  
Mark this revision as complete



Layout 



**B I U S**    h1  
h2 h3 h4 h5 Horizontal rule

Since August 4:  
75 student volunteers have  
transcribed over 800 pages

Projects include:

- The World War I Diary of Ella Jane Osborn, Army Nurse
- Sylvia Weiner's Letters from the World War II Brooklyn Home Front
- Robert L. Stone's World War II Letters

# *Collection Digital Volunteers*

## Benefits to students:

- Learn to read handwriting
- Have hands-on experience as historians
- Gain experience that can be used on college applications or resumes
- Fulfills volunteer or community service hours

## Benefits to the Institute:

- Transcribed text increases accessibility of the documents
- Handwriting is not a barrier
- Used in text-to-speech programs for the visually impaired
- Easily searched by both our database system and online search engines

# Upcoming Programs

- *Inside the Vault*, Thursday, January 7 at 7:30 pm ET (4:30 pm PT)
  - Featuring documents from the inauguration of George Washington
- *Book Breaks*, December 20 at 12 pm ET (9 am PT)
  - Colin G. Calloway, Professor of History at Dartmouth College, discusses his book *The Indian World of George Washington*
- Visit [gilderlehrman.org](http://gilderlehrman.org) for free resources for students, teachers, families, and history enthusiasts of all ages.