George Washington Visits George, Washington

National Portrait Gallery Exhibition Tours Country, Opens in Oklahoma City

The van itself wasn’t that unusual—a two-door, threeseat white Ford van. It was what was inside that caused all the commotion. People don’t expect George Washington, in uniform, to come riding through town. Nor would he stop for gas or eat at the local diner. But that’s what he did in the state of Washington, in the month of March 2003, and the locals took note.

Dubbed “The George Tour,” this journey across Washington State was organized by the Seattle Art Museum in conjunction with its visiting exhibition “George Washington: A National Treasure.” The National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, has mounted this exhibition to tour the famous Lansdowne portrait painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1796. The painting has already visited five of eight venues across the country; the tour is made possible through the generosity of the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation of Las Vegas, NV.

George Washington, played by historical reenactor William Sommerfield, left Seattle on a cold, windy, 50-degree morning with four traveling companions: Carol Wyrick, education program director of the Seattle Art Museum, and Jennifer Vary and Erika Carr and Lansdowne Project Manager Michael Fox, governors, and educators, the National Portrait Gallery presented the state of Washington with a reproduction of the Lansdowne portrait. Governor Gary Locke declared March 26, 2003, Washington State Education Day. And for one last time, there beneath the cherry trees, the legacy of George Washington came to life. Then it was off to the airport and back to reality. But we can’t help wondering, “Does George Washington also fly in costume?”

The three-day tour came to a close at the Governor’s Mansion in Olympia. And reminiscent of Washington, DC, in the spring, the cherry blossoms were in full bloom for the occasion. Joined by National Portrait Gallery Deputy Director Carolyn Stuart’s 1796 Lansdowne portrait of George Washington in 2001 as a gift to the nation through the generosity of the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

were left wondering, “Was he real?”

It wasn’t the Pied Piper of Hamlin leading the way at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) on July 2, 2003. It was a fife and drum corps, but the 50 kids gathered in the lobby followed the leader just the same. The excitement: a four-foot-square portrait of George Washington made entirely of jelly beans. The question: How many beans make up the portrait? The mission, should you decide to accept it: compare the famous Lansdowne portrait of George Washington to the Jelly Belly portrait, without sampling a single bean!

The jelly bean portrait is part of an original series designed by San Francisco artist Peter Rocha. Working from photographs, this self-proclaimed “king of jelly bean art” captures the famous faces through rough pencil drawings. He then paints a tight color composition and finishes his unusual work by applying a mosaic of Jelly Belly beans. Favorites in the growing collection include portraits of Elvis Presley, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., the Statue of Liberty, and the American bald eagle.

Thanks to SAM and the Jelly Belly Candy Co. for sponsoring the event and treating everyone to goody bags of jelly beans and a GW pin. What a sweet deal!

Ah yes, the answer: 10,008 Jelly Belly beans.
Washington Wins Election to House from Fort Cumberland!

FREDERICKSBURG, 1778—George Washington, son of Augustine and Mary Ball Washington, has been elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses while serving with the British regulars at Fort Cumberland. Although urged by friends to return to the colony of Virginia and “show his face,” Washington opted to remain with his men and was successful in winning a seat in the House from Frederick County.

General Washington Rallies Troops at Valley Forge

VALLEY FORGE, 1777–1778—General Washington struggles to keep his troops alive and well in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, this winter. Inadequate shipments of food, clothing, and supplies have left the regiments in shambles; poor hygiene and rampant disease threaten the lives of all the soldiers camped there. General Washington has made repeated appeals for increased supplies, but the mismanagement of the supply trade has yet to be resolved. In the meantime, General Washington struggles alongside his men while political rivals threaten to remove his power. Military and civilian critics, particularly Thomas Conway and Dr. Benjamin Rush, feel that there are several men who are better suited to lead the Continental army.

Washington Graciously Delays Retirement for a Second Term

PHILADELPHIA, 1793 (AP)—President George Washington has won his second election to the presidency of the United States! The inauguration will take place on March 4 in Philadelphia, the new capital of the United States. However, the prospect of returning to the stress of presidential life has left Washington doubtful. Washington wrote to his friend Henry Lee “that it was after a long and painful conflict in my own breast, that I was withheld from it; it being my fixed determination to return to the walks of private life.” The next four years do in fact promise to be difficult; factionalism has already begun to sprout in government over constitutional interpretation. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, who was the driving force behind the creation of the National Bank and National Mint, will remain in the service of the President. Edmund Randolph will replace Thomas Jefferson as secretary of state.

Martha Washington Buries Fourth Child, John P. Custis

YORKTOWN, 1781—After losing two children in infancy and her daughter Patsy to epilepsy, Martha Washington lost her last child to camp fever. John Parke Custis, known as Jacky to family and friends, passed away on November 9 at Yorktown, nearly seventeen days after the surrender of Britain’s General Cornwallis. Jacky leaves behind a wife and four children. General and Mrs. Washington will raise the younger two children, Eleanor “Nelly” Custis and George Washington Parke Custis, at Mount Vernon, their home in Virginia.

Washington Unanimous Pick for President at Convention!

NEW YORK, 1789 (AP)—After many months of debate to establish our new American government, the first official election was held on February 4, 1789. George Washington has received all 69 electoral votes! Washington, who will be inaugurated on April 30 of this year, accepted his new office, despite his overwhelming desire to return to his estate at Mount Vernon: “I was summoned by my country . . . from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and . . . with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years.” Washington and his wife Martha will move to the country’s capital, New York City.

Whiskey Rebellion Shakes Pennsylvania

PHILADELPHIA, 1794—Western Pennsylvanians have turned their resentment over recent taxes on whiskey into a violent opposition. They are launching the first major civil disturbance of President Washington’s term in office. Last week, U.S. Marshal David Lenox met with resistance in Westmoreland County while trying to collect taxes on locally distilled liquor. Military action will be taken, much to the regret of the President: “I have accordingly determined to do so, feeling the deepest regret for the occasion, but withal, the most solemn conviction, that the essential interests of the Union demand it.” The army is being organized from other northern states, and it will advance into Pennsylvania shortly.
Valley Forge: An Eyewitness Account

In the winter of 1777, Commander in Chief George Washington moved his army to a winter camp at Valley Forge, some 20 miles outside of Philadelphia. For the next few months, the soldiers suffered from starvation, the lack of adequate clothing, and poor hygiene. Although morale was low, Washington managed to keep the struggling army together. A new quartermaster general, Nathanael Greene, and a German drillmaster, Baron von Steuben, helped bring supplies and order to the broken army. The following diary entry from Dr. Albigence Waldo describes the physical and emotional suffering endured by the troops at Valley Forge:

“December 14—Prisoners & DeserTERS are continually com-ing in. The Army which has been surprisingly healthy hitherto, now begins to grow sickly from the continued fatigues they have suffered this Campaign. Yet they still show a spirit of Alacrity & Contentment not to be expected from so young Troops. I am Sick—discontented—and out of humour. Poor food—hard lodging—Cold Weather—fatigue—Nasty Cloaths—nasty Cookery—Vomit half my time—Sneak’d out of my senses [by the smoke created by the guns]—the Devil’s in it—I can’t Endure it—Why are we sent here to starve and Freeze—What sweet Felicities have I left at home; Devil’s in it—I can’t Endure it— Why are we sent here to out of my senses [by the smoke created by the guns]—the food—hard lodging—Cold Weather—fatigue—Nasty Cloaths; his whole appearance pictures a person forsaken & despised. And all the reward I shall get will be—‘Poor Will is dead.’ People who live at home in Luxury and Ease, quietly possessing their habitations, Enjoying their Wives & families in peace, have but a very faint idea of the unpleasing sensations, and continual Anxiety that Man endures who is in a Camp, and is the husband and parent of an agreeable family. These same People are willing we should suffer every thing for their Benefit & advantage, and yet are the first to Condemn us for not doing more!”

December 1790

PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE, 190 HIGH STREET, PHILADELPHIA. Senator Robert Morris’s dwelling at 190 High Street has turned out to be the best house available for the President’s use, and Mr. Morris has graciously agreed to move around the corner. Additions will be made to accommodate Mrs. Washington and her two grandchildren, Nelly, who is about twelve, and George Washington, who is about ten, as well as the President’s secretary and numerous servants. The bathing room has been turned into a study to provide for a room in which the President can do business, but unfortunately, it will be necessary for visitors to walk up two flights of stairs and pass by the public rooms and private chambers to get to it. The President has insisted that the house is to be finished in a plain and neat manner and has ruled out tapestry or very rich and costly wallpaper. He has also ruled that the house is to be finished in a plain and neat manner and has ruled out tapestry or very rich and costly wallpaper. He has also ruled that the back yard be kept as clean as the parlor since it is in full view from the best rooms in the house.

Throughout the coming months The Patriot Papers will address the issue of slavery during Washington’s time. In view of Washington’s many attributes and accomplishments, it is difficult to acknowledge his role as slave owner. Guest historians will share their perspectives; we invite you to share yours. Hopefully, through dialogue, we will increase our understanding.

—F.A. Pulles, editor
PatriotPapers@npg.si.edu

November 1796

RUNAWAY SLAVE. Mrs. Washington is greatly distressed by the loss of Olney Judge, her Mount Vernon servant so skilled in needlework. The girl, we hear, was lured away by a Frenchman who tired of her and left her stranded in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. President Washington has sent word that all will be forgiven if she returns to her mistress, but she has refused to come back unless promised her freedom. This puts the President in an awkward situation. Privately he has said that although he is sympathetic to her demand, setting her free would only reward her for running away, and would spread discontent among the rest of his servants (as he calls them), who by being faithful are more deserving of their freedom than the runaway. Above all, the President cautioned that no violent means should be used to bring her back, lest a mob or riot be excited. Rather than risk this happening, he would tell Mrs. Washington she must get along without the services of Olney Judge.

December 1790

FREEDOM TOO GREAT A TEMPTATION. President Washington has brought a handful of servants from Mount Vernon, but he will be faced with the difficulty of complying with the Pennsylvania law freeing adult slaves who have lived in Pennsylvania for six months in a row. It is believed that the President, therefore, will have to shuttle these servants back and forth and suffer the inconvenience of sometimes being without his cook Hercules. Asked if he feared his slaves might take advantage of being in the north to run away, the President has privately conceded that "the idea of freedom might be too great a temptation for them to resist.”

RUN AWAY SLAVE. Strawsbury, about thirty, a very likely Negro fellow named Strawsbury, about thirty Years of Age, has lost one of his fore Teeth, and had on a Cotton Waistcoat and Breeches, Plaid Stockings, and Negro Shoes. The Negroes upon the Plantation saw him go away with two Sailors; he can read, and I imagine he will attempt to go out of the Country on Board a Vessel. I do hereby forewarn all Masters of Vessels from carrying him away, as they shall answer it at their Peril. Whoever brings the said Negro to me, in York County, shall have TEN POUNDS Reward if he is taken in this Colony, and TWENTY POUNDS if out thereof.

WILLIAM DIGGES, Junior
April 23, 1789
HE COMES! HE COMES! George Washington, President-elect of the United States, has just set foot on the New York shore after an eight-day triumphal journey from Mount Vernon. The excitement here is unbelievable. Thousands line the streets—all you can see are heads standing as thick as ears of corn before the harvest. Ladies are crowded in every window, anxious for a glimpse of the illustrious man. "I have seen him!" we heard one young lady call out, "and though I had been entirely ignorant that he was arrived in the city, I should have known at a glance that it was General Washington: I never saw a human being that looked so great and noble as he does. I could fall down on my knees before him." Washington, it can well be believed, is more popular than the new government he is to head.

WHERE IS THE CAPITAL TO BE? Ever since the old government of France might take offense. He has instructed his household, even though he worries that the revolutionary ambitions of the Marquis de Lafayette arrived in Philadelphia on the 11th of this month. His father, who had tried to save the King and Queen of France from losing their heads, remains in prison, and the lad has been sent to America to be under the protection of President Washington. "I will be his friend," the President declared and has taken him into his household, even though he worries that the revolutionary government of France might take offense. He has instructed young Lafayette to study hard to be worthy of his father. Washington has a special place in his heart for the Marquis de Lafayette, who came from France to fight in the American Revolution when he was nineteen years old.
Washington’s Final Hours
PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS FROM TOBIAS LEAR

George Washington, beloved general and first President of the United States, has died at his home at Mount Vernon at the age of 67. His illness was short: after riding out in bad weather on Thursday, December 12, General Washington was taken with a fever and respiratory problems. Although doctors made numerous attempts to save his life, Washington passed on with the dignity and courage he had displayed throughout his many years of military and civic service.

Washington’s close friend and personal secretary, Tobias Lear, was with the general throughout his illness. Recounted here are Lear’s recollections of these final hours:

“I found the General breathing with difficulty, and hardly able to utter a word. . . . A mixture of Molasses, Vinegar, and butter was prepared to try its effects in the throat, but he could not swallow a drop. Whenever he attempted it, he appeared distressed . . . and almost suffocated. Rawlins came in soon after sunrise, and prepared to bleed him. When the arm was ready the General, observing that Rawlins appeared to be agitated, said, as well as he could speak, ‘Don’t be afraid.’

Dr. Craik came in soon after and, upon examining the General, he put a blister of Cantharides* on the throat, took some more blood from him, and had a gargle of Vinegar and sage tea, and ordered some Vinegar and hot water for him to inhale the steam, which he did; but in attempting to use the gargle, he was almost suffocated.

Upon Dr. Dick’s seeing the General . . . he was bled again; the blood came very slow, was thick, and did not produce any symptoms of fainting. About half past four o’clock, he desired me to call Mrs. Washington to his bed side, when he requested her to go down into his room, and take from his desk two Wills . . . and bring them to him, which she did. Upon looking at them, he gave her one, which he observed was useless . . . and desired her to burn it.

He said to me, ‘I find I am going, my breath cannot last long. I believed from the first that the disorder would prove fatal. . . .’

About ten minutes before he expired, . . . his breathing became easier; he lay quietly; he withdrew his hand from mine and felt his own pulse. I saw his countenance change . . . The General’s hand fell from his wrist—I took it in mine and put it into my bosom. Dr. Craik put his hand over his eyes and withdrew his from mine and put it into his bosom. Dr. Craik put his hand over his eyes and . . . and almost suffocated.

During his whole illness he spoke but seldom, and with great difficulty; and in so low and broken a voice as at times hardly to be understood. His patience, fortitude, and resignation never forsook him for a moment. In all his distress, he uttered not a sigh, nor a complaint; always endeavoring to take what was offered him, and to do as he was desired by the Physicians.”

*blister of Cantharides: cantharides (kan thar’ ı dez’) n. pl. [ME cantaridesFL cantharides, pl. of cantharis, kind of beetle, Spanish fly, Gr kantharis, blister beetle] dangerous, sometimes fatal, preparation of powdered, dried Spanish flies, formerly used internally as a diuretic and aphrodisiac and externally as a skin irritant.

Did George Washington Stand a Chance?
Colony of Bloodletting Helped Cause Washington’s Death

—by Vicki Fama, assistant editor

Today, it is easy to criticize the medical methods performed in colonial times. When we read that George Washington died of a simple bacterial infection, we wonder why measures we now consider primitive, such as bloodletting, were even employed in the fight to save the first President’s life. Medical training was primitive as well: although some American doctors were fortunate enough to study in England or Scotland, others were less fortunate. American medical schools did not yet exist; thus, many doctors were self-trained. In view of our present medical understanding, did George Washington even stand a chance of being saved?

Colonial medicine was based on European medical methods and theories; no one then understood how diseases or infection spread. One of the main theories focused on the need for a total balance of tension and fluids in the body; this delicate balance was essential to both physical and mental health. This concept played an important role in Washington’s death.

On the morning of December 14, 1799, George Washington, who had felt ill for several days, sent for a plantation worker who could bleed him. Bloodletting was a common practice: by releasing blood from the body of a sick person, doctors believed they could alleviate excessive pressure and tension and return the body to a healthy balance. Washington’s doctors may have thought that bloodletting would thus extract the constricting fluids around his throat.

However, within two hours, Washington was bled several times, losing an estimated five pints of blood—approximately one-third of the blood in his body! This was certainly a factor in his death.

The doctors also tried other methods of withdrawing fluids. Washington was given an efant tartar emetic, which induced vomiting. Again, this practice would have dehydrated him and lessened his chance of recovery.

Washington was also subjected to the intake of fluids. Doctors tried to administer mixtures of molasses, vinegar, and butter, hoping to heal his throat from the inside. They also used a gargle of vinegar and sage tea for the same purpose. But because of the severe swelling of Washington’s throat, both attempts were unsuccessful and even threatened to choke the sick General.

The most dramatic medical treatment, proposed by Dr. Elisha Dick, was a tracheotomy (the creation of an air hole in the throat to allow for easier breathing). While the other physicians treating Washington rejected the idea, some scientists today believe that a tracheotomy could have been beneficial. Nonetheless, the lack of sterile equipment and anesthetics might have easily caused a deadly infection or put Washington’s body in shock, an equally threatening possibility.

The doctors who cared for the dying George Washington did all that they thought medically possible. While it is tempting to judge their methods with the benefit of hindsight, we should appreciate the context and limitations of the colonial era. George Washington died the way he lived, with courage and a belief in a greater force beyond mankind.

A modern analysis by White McKenzie Wallenborn, M.D., concludes that Washington died from acute epiglottitis, which is a bacterial inflammation of the epiglottis, a flap at the root of the tongue that prevents food from entering the windpipe. However, some doctors today believe that the excessive loss of blood alone would have weakened Washington enough to kill him.
We have assigned seats in my second period geometry class. I am alphabetically challenged in being seated.

Several weeks ago my cousin Melody asked me if I would like to go to the mall. Now being thoroughly familiar with the mall and all of its wonderful shops, I agreed to the trip. Melody explained to me that her mother was not able to drive us in the automobile so we would have to travel by another means of transportation. Leaving the house, we walked down the street and after several blocks came upon a mysterious staircase descending down into the earth. “What is this?” I asked. “It’s the subway,” Melody answered. “A subway?” I questioned skeptically. “Is that your word for a root cellar? I don’t like root cellars—they’re damp and musty and filled with spiders.” “No,” laughed Melody, “a subway is an underground train system. . . . for people.” “A train that runs under the ground? That’s just crazy!” “Trust me, Faith. Let’s go and you can see for yourself.”

Slowly, I descended the stairs with Melody, certain that at any moment I would come face to face with a large, hairy, city-sized modern spider—modern spiders who probably carried weapons and lay in wait for silly girls who thought they were going to the “subway.” How could Melody do this to me?

“Melody,” I began pleading, “please don’t feed me to the giant spiders!” “What are you talking about?” Melody laughed. “There are no giant spiders. Please trust me, we are almost there and then you’ll see.”

Descending the last few stairs, I braced myself for the worst, and gasped. “A whole new world!” I exclaimed. People were everywhere! There were small stations where a person could buy fruits and vegetables, clothing, flowers, beverages, and even jewelry. I began running around, looking at all the amazing things. Wonderful paintings hung on the wall, obviously done by important artists of the underground world. Some artwork on the wall—artwork that our parents would never approve of—also contained bad words, but obviously in this world the artists were well respected.

Catching up with me, Melody grabbed my hand and said, “Let’s go, Faith. We don’t want to miss the next train.” We approached a small, clear enclosure. An inhabitant of the underground world sat inside. “Do they speak our language?” I asked. Melody laughed. “Yes, they speak English like we do. They are just like we are.” “Amazing!” I mused, “that they have learned our language and our ways of living down under the ground.” Melody looked at me strangely but said nothing. She pulled several dollars out of her pocket, then slid the money through a small window in the enclosure as she said, “Four, please.” The person in the box grabbed the money and gave us four shiny, round, metal coins in return. “They have their own system of money? That’s incredible.” Smiling, Melody said, “Well, we exchange our money for their ‘tokens’ which we use to ride on the train.”

Next I followed Melody to a cement platform with benches where other people waited for the train. We sat on a bench to wait, and it was then that I heard the voice of their god. A booming voice came from nowhere and proclaimed loudly, “The 2:07 southbound, destination Lollyland Park and Shopping Plaza, arriving now on track six.” “The voice of God!” I shouted. Sprunging off the bench, I threw my hands up and began shouting, “Please God, what do you want from us? We are peaceful visitors to your underground world. Do not harm us!” Grabbing at my sweater, Melody dragged me down to the bench. People around us were staring and laughing. “Please, Faith be quiet!” Melody scolded. “That is not the voice of God. It is simply an announcement for the next train.” “Are you sure we should not make a sacrifice of some sort just to be sure? I could leave the new lip gloss you gave me.”

Suddenly, I heard a giant roar coming from a tunnel at the end of the platform. Seconds later, a large silver train whooshed forward out of the tunnel and with screeching brakes stopped directly in front of us. Doors in the center of each car split apart. Melody grabbed my arm, and we pressed into the car with the rest of the crowd. One unfortunate woman’s purse caught in the door. “Please stand clear of the doors, please stand clear of the doors,” boomed their god, and the doors slammed shut. “Move to the center of the train.” The doors slammed shut. “There is another train directly behind us. Please stand clear of the doors.” The doors slammed open. Obviously their god was angry now. I stood clear of the door. I shoved to the center of the car. I grabbed the metal pole above my head, hung on, and prayed to my own god. The voice spoke again. “This is the 2:07 southbound to Lollyland Park and Shopping Plaza. Next stop, Washington Street Station.” And then, just as quickly as it had arrived, the train whooshed off again, with one very nervous but excited new passenger onboard.

In Other Words...

Mistress Goody’s Column of Advice on subjects other than politics and war.

In 1745, in the colonial frontier town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, thirteen-year-old George Washington recorded The Rules of Civility in his workbook, probably as a dictation exercise. These “guidelines for the respectable gentleman” would influence him throughout life, guiding him in both social and professional situations. Translations and variations abound, but all stress etiquette, chivalry, and courtesy, often rather elusive concepts in the 21st century.

Fortunately, there is one who understands the rules well; in fact, she still recommends their use today. Let us recall a character from the past to assist with our everyday problems. We give you the “Toast of George Town” our own Mistress Goody, always informed, always respectable, and very, very good.

Mistress Goody,
We have assigned seats in my second period geometry class. I am alphabetically challenged in being seated.
Philadelphia, January 1791

MRS. WASHINGTON’S DRAWING ROOM. On Friday evening at eight, your humble correspondent was among the ladies and gentlemen in attendance at Mrs. Washington’s weekly reception. Mrs. Washington, plainly dressed, but in a gown of rich silk, sat on a sofa by the fireplace and arose to greet her guests with a curtsy which each lady returned. Each gentleman bowed low. Coffee, tea, and cake were served, and had I come in the summer, I would have been offered lemonade and ice cream. The ladies swished about, and as candlelight is a great improver of beauty, they appear to great advantage. President Washington circulated among the crowd, chatting agreeably with all the ladies. It is said that he keeps count of the numbers who come to pay their respects to Mrs. Washington and was pleased to find the room so crowded.

Philadelphia, April 1791

OUT AND ABOUT. The President of the United States, it is well known, is very fond of the theater and has gone outside the city to Southwark, where plays are performed. During an affecting moment leading to a happy ending, Washington was observed to shed a tear. As the humorous scenes unfolded, those playing the parts of Priscilla Tomboy and Young Cockney received the approving smiles of the old hero. General Washington goes often to concerts but has been heard to say, “I can neither play Musick nor sing Songs.”

Philadelphia, July 13, 1793

RICKETT’S AMPHITHEATRE. Word that the President and his family were to attend a performance of Mr. John Bill Rickett’s dangerous feats on horseback brought a large crowd this evening to what is called the Circus. The acrobatic performance was held to raise money to buy firewood for the poor during the coming winter. Mr. Ricketts, demonstrating his agility by drinking a glass of wine while on horseback, raised his glass to the health of “The Man of the People.” This produced an immediate clap of applause and a loud hurrah from every part of the Circus. Mr. Ricketts has expressed his agreement with those who call General Washington the finest horseman of the age, saying “I delight to see the general ride, and make it a point to fall in with him when I hear that he is abroad on horseback; his seat is so firm, his management so easy and graceful, that I who am a professor of horsemanship, would go to him and learn to ride.”

Philadelphia, September 1796

PEALE’S MUSEUM. A visit to Mr. Peale’s museum, Prudence Pudding tells us, is well worth the admission fee of one fourth of a dollar, if only to see the huge American buffalo. Peale’s rooms are filled with monsters of the earth and sea, a rich array of birds, and a great collection of the bones, jaws, and teeth of tigers, sharks, and many other fearful animals. In one room are rattle, black, and spotted snakes, confined in cases enclosed with wire and glass. She was astonished to see Mr. Peale take out a black snake about four or five feet long, which he permitted to touch his cheek and twist itself around his neck. In the yard and stable were eagles, owls, baboons, monkeys, and a six-footed cow. Mr. Peale is also a painter, and there can be seen in his museum more than a hundred portraits of the more noteworthy personages of our country, including our illustrious Washington.

Philadelphia, February 1797

NEW THEATER ON CHESTNUT STREET. We are informed that the President of the United States intends visiting the theater this evening and has sent his carriage to bring the Vice President and his family to join him. The play to be performed is Columbus or, A World Divided, and it will display scenery, machinery, and decorations, the likes of which have never been seen before. A representation of a storm, an earthquake, a volcano eruption, as well as a procession of Indians, await all who enter. Columbus will be followed by a farce called A Wife at Her Wife’s End.

Social Notes from All Over...

POET’S CORNER... SOME VERY BAD POETRY

REVOLUTIONARY MOMENTS

Colonists took action and dumped the tea
They stood strong and would not flee
Some fought at Lexington, some at Concord*
This threat to the British could not be ignored.

*Bostonians pronounce Concord — [kahn • kæd].

You’re right, that’s hard to rhyme!

Will the Real George W. Please Stand Up?

Actor William Sommerfield brings George Washington to your community for a three-day trip back in time.

Hailed by historians and politicians as the definitive dramatic portrayer of George Washington, William Arthur Sommerfield fascinates audiences with the insights, warmth, and humor of our first President. Sommerfield strips away the marble image of the ideal man and replaces it with a portrayal of George Washington, the intensely human being—a man of humor, anger, sorrow, failure, sacrifice, and love.

Check local venues for details.
Students Raise $6,500 in One Week for Billy Spong

Too often the work of a teacher goes unrecognized. The hours are long, the pay is low, the food is lousy, and students are stingy with compliments. If they like you, they don’t cause trouble. If they don’t, they do. But one dedicated Pennsylvania teacher did receive a substantial “payback” that will long be remembered.

William Benjamin (Bill) Spong III teaches English, journalism, and speech at Red Land High School, located in a rural area called Etters on the outskirts of Harrisburg, PA. An alumnus himself, he has taught there since the fall of 1994. In 1999 his wife Denise gave birth to a very special little boy, William Benjamin (Billy) Spong IV. Just 15 hours after birth, Billy suffered a massive heart attack that caused irreparable damage to his nervous system. Just six months later, at the Kennedy-Kreeger Children’s Center in Baltimore, he was diagnosed with a very rare form of cerebral palsy known as chorea, the youngest child ever to be diagnosed, and the doctoring begun. With little ability to control his muscles, Billy’s development was severely delayed. At the age of three, he was just starting to sit up; he does not talk. It was then the Spong’s heard of a new European therapy being offered in Detroit. Developed for children with movement disabilities, it involves wearing a special suit that forces the muscles to work. Billy has made two trips to Detroit for this special therapy, and already he has started to crawl, can push buttons, and is even trying to stand. Unfortunately, the cost of travel and treatment is high; a trip to Detroit with therapy runs about $10,000.

To help with the considerable cost of this long-distance therapy, the teachers and most of the school’s 1,200 students at Red Land High thought of a way to “Pledge It Forward” and help out. Under the direction of teacher Allison Gonze, the students mounted a talent show like no other. When the call went out for auditions, everyone answered. Seventy-two students in 42 acts auditioned, 25 acts were chosen, and the tickets went on sale. In just one week, they sold out 1,000 seats. Local businesses also got involved, donating money and prizes for an auction.

The show included everything from dance to a violin concerto to a black-belt karate act that included the breaking of cinder blocks! The winners—sisters Krista and Karyl Kern—performed a mime to “I Believe I Can Fly” and received a check for $500. But the real winner that night was probably Billy. In just one week, the students had raised $6,500 and they presented a check to Billy, his parents, and his baby sister, while actors and audience sang “That’s What Friends Are For.” Some of the money will buy Billy a special walker; the remainder will go toward the purchase of an electric wheelchair. For Bill and Denise Spong, it was a show of support they will never forget. And as for Billy, he’s just wondering how fast he’ll be able to race in an electric wheelchair.

Gardening and English: Side by Side

When English as a Second Language (ESL) students planted flowers in front of College Place Middle School in Lynnwood, Washington, few expected that the volunteer project would become part of the curriculum. The kids had paid for the flowers themselves. But when they asked to plant a second garden, teacher Merilee Bengtsson asked the Parent Club for funds and extended the project into a lesson plan. Soon students and parents planted side by side. Now the effort has expanded to include Master Gardeners and a unit of lessons for science, mapmaking, and math, as well as English. Bengtsson and the Master Gardeners volunteers hope the lessons teach the kids to make gardens both beautiful and environmentally sound.

One young African boy, who began the year speaking only a few words of English, has improved his English along with his gardening skills. “When I plant the flower, I feel great [but] I was so surprised to put the gloves on my hands,” he said. He had planted flowers before, but never with gloves.

“The project has become a focus of community spirit and school pride,” said Bengtsson, “especially for students who sometimes have difficulty fitting into mainstream school activities.”

FREEDOM—Captured on Film

12-Year-Old Thy Vu Wins Contest

Challenged to illustrate how “Independent Courts Protect Our Liberties,” contestants in the 2003 Images of Freedom Student Photography Contest ranged from middle school through high school. Yet it was a 12-year-old who captured first prize. Thy Vu’s portrayal, A Pure Court Thinking about Freedom, made her the youngest student to ever win the contest. Jim Landman, associate director of the American Bar Association’s Division of Public Education and organizer of the contest, remarked that the theme for this year was particularly difficult, making Vu’s accomplishment even more impressive.

In April, Vu traveled to Washington, DC, to receive her award and tour the Capitol. Thy Vu began drawing cartoons at a young age to distract herself from the bullying that took place at her school in Vietnam. Now a seventh-grader at College Place Middle School in Lynnwood, Washington, Vu draws from real life to express her observations, hopes, and dreams. Although she still enjoys drawing, she no longer uses it as an escape. Vu credits her mother, also an artist, for encouraging her interest and teaching her about the use of light and nature in her work.

It was this exceptional use of light and nature that the panel of judges noted in Vu’s winning entry. The photograph captures her classmate Mary Ylima set against a background of flag and foliage in blazing white, holding a gavel and a replica of the torch from the Statue of Liberty. “The girl in white represents purity,” explained Vu, “because judges should make pure decisions [and] follow only the law, so we will have freedom. No one has the right to influence them.” This picture illustrates the need for judges to make decisions based on the law, not on personal convictions or politics.

Pledge It Forward—Self to Service

A Challenge from The Patriot Papers

—F. A. Pulles, Editor-in-chief

The Portrait Gallery’s Office of Education would like to recognize those who continue to care about community. We challenge you to Pledge It Forward—pledge time to your schools, youth organizations, senior centers. We’ll feature your stories and photos on our website at www.georgewashington.si.edu. Projects of particular merit will be published in The Patriot Papers. Get creative; get busy. And together, we can build a community of caring. Write to us at PatriotPapers@npg.si.edu.