

LINCOLN LORE

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A LINCOLNIAN VISITS WASHINGTON SHRINES

We trust the readers of *Lincoln Lore* will forgive the editor for mentioning some historical sites visited during his recent vacation in Virginia, other than those reviewed in the last copy of the bulletin. Of course the story of Washington is featured in the state of his birth far above that of any other colonial figure. Certainly no name is more often associated with Washington "Father of His Country" than Lincoln "Savior of His Country." It would not be unusual for a Lincolnian approaching a shrine of Washington to be reminded of some episode which occurred in the life of the Emancipator.

Possibly the best method for presenting these reactions at the Washington shrines would be to start with the Washington Monument in the city named for the first President and then move across the Potomac into Virginia following a chronological development in reverse.

Washington Monument

John Marshall on December 23, 1799, five days after the death of Washington, introduced a resolution in Congress recommending that "a marble monument be erected by the United States in the city of Washington," to the memory of the first President. Although no action was taken the resolution was discussed in 1816 and again in 1824. It was not until the thirtieth Congress convened in 1847 that a favorable vote was recorded. Abraham Lincoln was a member of this body which, by a joint resolution and the bill signed by the President on February 2, 1848, authorized the erection of an obelisk. The cornerstone was laid on July 4 that year. Lincoln while attending these ceremonies could not have visualized that one day a colossal statue in his own likeness would be looking across the mall to this very site where the ceremonies honoring Washington were then being held.

Yorktown

On one of the same October days that Washington, back in October 1781 was attacking the British at Yorktown, we visited Surrender Field. We were reminded of a mural painting being created on the wall of a hotel named for Washington in the southland which was to feature Washington receiving the sword of Cornwallis. It was suggested that Benjamin Lincoln actually received the sword and naturally the portrait of a Lincoln would not contribute much of a Washington atmosphere to the hotel lobby. Towns and counties in

the south bearing the name Lincoln are named after General Lincoln who fought at Yorktown and who lived in the same town with Abraham Lincoln's forebears at Hingham, Mass.

Mary Washington Home

George Washington purchased a home for his mother at Fredericksburg on September 18, 1774 which is open to the public and owned by the Association for the Preservation of Antiques. Upon visiting this interesting shrine I was reminded of an entry I discovered in the *Journal of Major William Croghan of Revolutionary War fame*, an interesting account of his bringing his troops to Fredericksburg in 1781. Under the date of February 11, there appears this notation: "The eleventh of the month being the birthday of his excellency General Washington who arrived at his forty-eight years of age, his mother, brother and many other friends of his living here, we were happy in having it in our power to add to the celebration of the day . . ." It will be observed that Capt. Croghan, Washington's mother and relatives were still using the old calendar, making Washington's birthday appear to be one day earlier in the month than Lincoln's February twelfth.

House of Burgesses

No one can forget a visit to Williamsburg and it is a place to which you may return time and time again and still be thrilled by the magnificent restoration project. The story about Major Washington told by the receptionists in the House of Burgesses is always appreciated and this version of the incident which Lincoln read in Weems' book does not vary much from their presentation. After relating Washington's embassy to the French and Indians in 1753 and his report to the governor, Weems' states that Washington visited the House of Burgesses and took a seat in the gallery where he was observed and Mr. Robertson, speaker of the House, addressed the assembly as follows: "Gentlemen, it is proposed that the thanks of this House be given to Major Washington, who now sits in the gallery, for the very gallant manner in which he executed the important trust, lately reposed in him by his excellency Governor Dinwiddie." Weems continues, as do the receptionists, that Washington was so overcome that he could not reply and Mr. Robertson remarked: "Major Washington, Major Washington, sit down;

your modesty alone is equal to your merit." One who has observed the reconstructed log cabin village of New Salem and then visits Williamsburg, both so well executed, must be struck by the striking contrast of the two environments.

Natural Bridge

Possibly the most important vocation which both Washington and Lincoln had in common, as young men, was surveying. Weems states that surveying more than any other employment "helps to tranquillize the mind." Somehow or other on former visits to Natural Bridge, although knowing that Washington had surveyed some of the land there, we had missed the initials "G. W." which he had chiseled in the great mass of rock far above the heads of men. It is not difficult to visualize the young Washington at this natural wonder. We would say that surveying in the mountains of Virginia was somewhat more strenuous than on the prairies of Illinois.

Ferry Farm

It is a strange coincident that the two historic sites in Virginia, associated with Lincoln and Washington respectively, which I had looked forward to visiting with the greatest anticipation, offered the only disappointments on the entire trip. In last week's bulletin considerable emphasis was placed on the fact that City Point, where Abraham Lincoln spent the last two weeks of his life previous to the week of his assassination, has been completely ignored as a historical site. The same comment might be made with reference to the Ferry Farm, boyhood home of George Washington, as far as any adequate memorial development is concerned.

After visiting the impressive shrines at Fredericksburg, a trip across the river to the playgrounds of Washington is disappointing indeed. The tremendous possibilities of making these humble surroundings an inspiration to American youth seems to have been overlooked. When Abraham Lincoln was about 12 years of age he read Weems' story of George Washington. While the tradition of the cherry tree, the apple orchard, the garden seedlings, the old field school and the athletic contests at the lower ferry of the Rappahannock may not be objectively presented, yet Douglas Freeman in his first Washington volume recognized the importance of these early years.