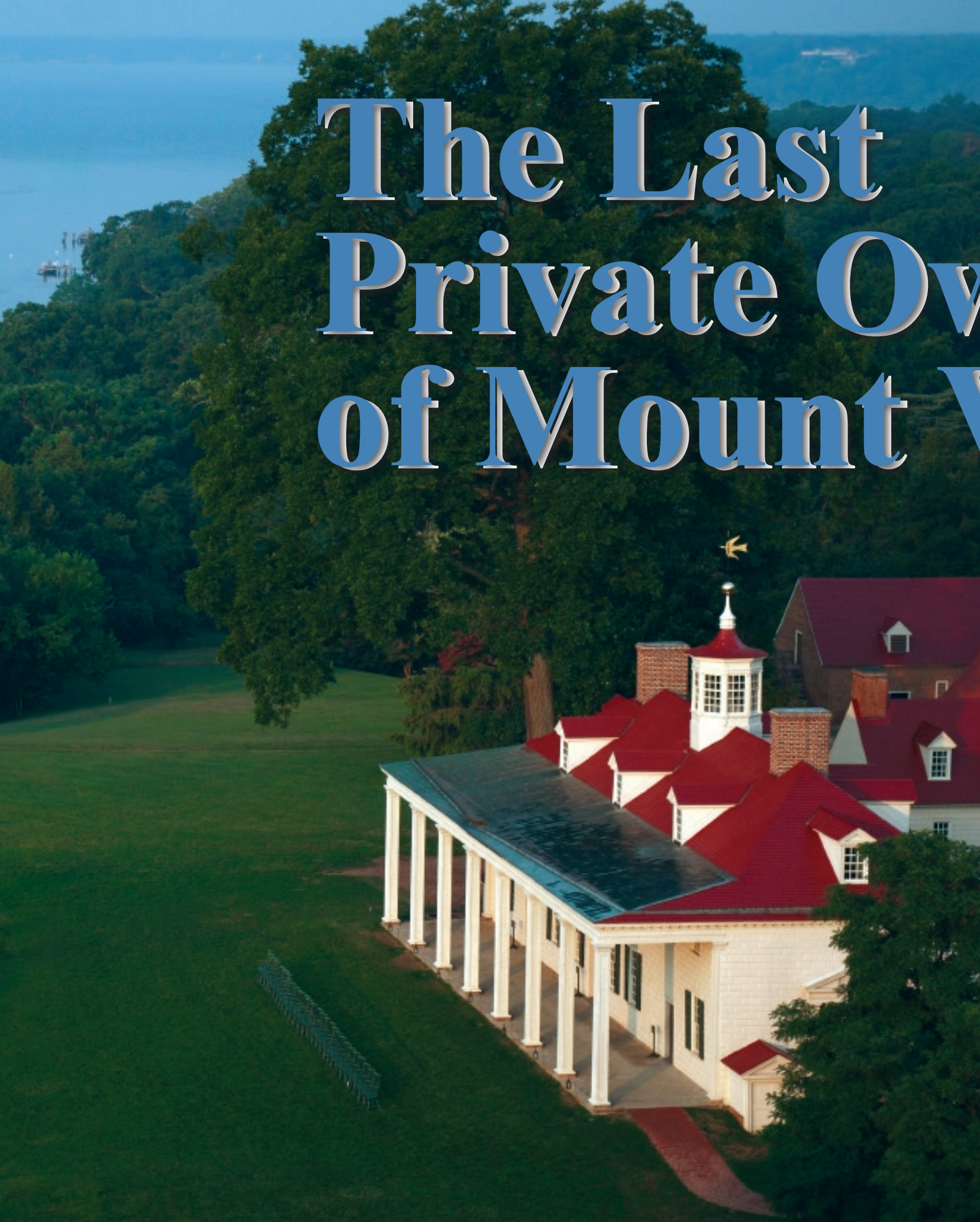


The Last Private Owner of Mount Vernon



By Patricia A. Kaufmann



Owner Vernon

Grandnephew of George Washington and the Last Private Owner of Mount Vernon. A dear Family Member, Friend, and Aide-de-Camp to his Great Uncle, the Commanding General of the Army of Northern Virginia

John Augustine Washington III served as aide-de-camp on the staff of General Robert E. Lee, who was a relative by marriage. Washington was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel during the campaign of Western Virginia. General Lee shared with him both his tent and his unpretentious field fare. Lt. Col. Washington is shown in full uniform in Figure 1, and Lee in Figure 1a.

R.E. Lee was famous, of course, but John Augustine Washington, III was well respected in his own right as the grandnephew of President George Washington and, importantly, as the last private owner of Mount Vernon. A "Bird's Eye View of Mt. Vernon, The Home of Washington," is shown in Figure 2 at left.

The war-weary cover shown in Figure 3 is addressed to "Col. John A. Washington, Care Gen. R.E. Lee, Richmond, Virginia." It is postmarked Salem Fauquier Va. / Jul 2 [1861] with a matching PAID and manuscript "5" rate. This is CSA catalog type A, listed with an asterisk, a legacy listing not seen by the main catalog editors.



Figure 1a.

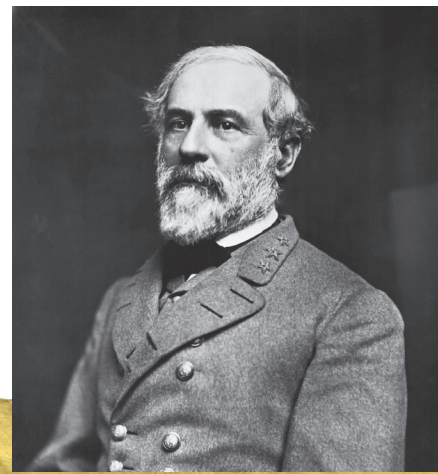
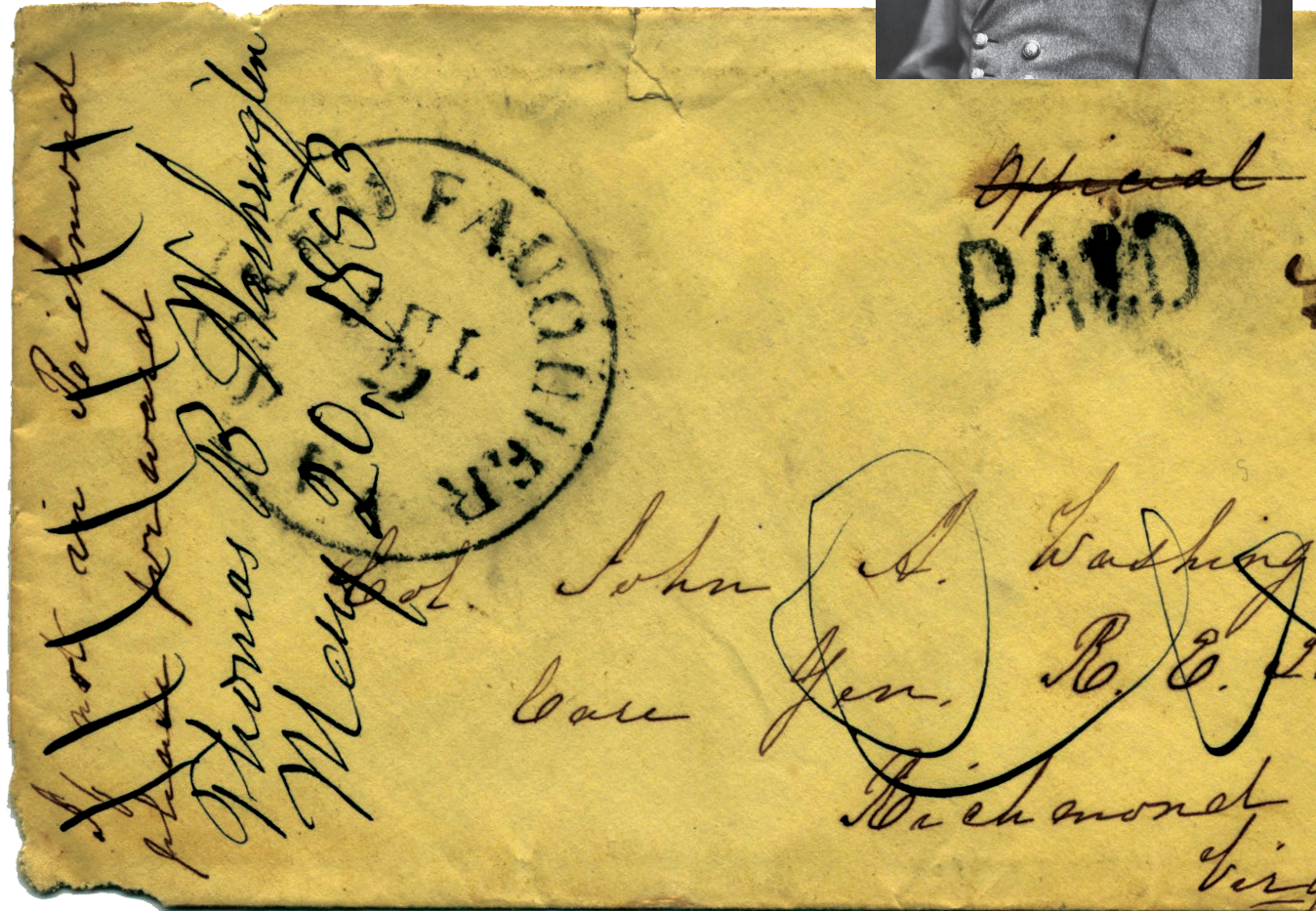


Figure 3. Cover addressed to Col. John A. Washington, Care Gen. R.E. Lee, Richmond, Virginia, postmarked Salem Fauquier Va. / Jul 2 [1861] with a matching PAID / manuscript "5" rate.



In the Virginia Postal History Society Catalog, this marking is listed as being used July-August 1861.

Salem Fauquier is today an unincorporated town with a population of 1,480 per the 2010 census. Salem was the town and Fauquier was the county – unusual that both were in the postmark this way.

"Official" is crossed out right above the PAID marking. The docketing up the left side seems to indicate the sender was Thomas B. Washington, May 20, 1853. The handwriting in the docketing does not appear to be of the period and this is definitely an 1861 use, not 1853.

Figure 4 shows a Way cover from Kinloch, the Turner family plantation northeast of The Plains in

Fauquier County, Virginia. It is manuscript "Way" with matching "Paid 5" – in different handwriting. It is addressed to Col. Jno A. Washington, Richmond, Virginia. This origin location is unlisted in the CSA Catalog.

The original 4-page letter, the first page of which is shown in Figure 5, is headed Kinloch, July 15th 61 with a salutation to "My dear Augustine." It is signed E.C.T. – Edward Carter Turner (1816-1891). He was called Ned.

The first Turner to be documented in Virginia was Col. Thomas Turner (d. 1758), an emigrant from England. Major Thomas Turner (1772-1839) was the first member of the family to live in Fauquier County. His wife's aunt married Gen. Henry "Lighthorse Harry"



The artist John Trumbull's full length portrait of George Washington painted by Trumbull in 1780 when the General of the Continental Army was with his troops along the lower Hudson River, quite far from his home on Virginia's Potomac River.



Figure 4. 1861 Way cover (hitherto unrecorded) from Kinloch (The Plains, Virginia), with manuscript "Paid 5" addressed to Col. John A. Washington, Richmond, Virginia. **Above:** hand-sketched scenes from the Mount Vernon estate in the mid-18th century.

Lee, and because the mother of Robert E. Lee.

Ned inherited Kinloch upon the death of his father in 1839, an estate of 2,252 acres with a large number of slaves. Two of his sons served in the Confederate Army and both were casualties of the war.

Ned did not advocate secession, nor actively work for the Southern cause. He and his family greatly suffered under "Mosby's Confederacy," as his Northern connections were cause for suspicion. The Turners were intertwined with all the most prominent families of the time, including the families of Lee, Fitzhugh, Cocke, Washington, Carter, Randolph, Shirley, Stuart, Taliaferro, and more.

Ned tells Augustine – also called Gus - in this letter that the militia has been ordered out in Fauquier and that he'll be compelled to serve.

He says, "This is a bitter pill. Not that I care for standing in the rain or sleeping on the ground, but when I think of leaving a house full of defenseless women and children entirely at the mercy of the Negroes with no white man in the neighborhood to call on in case of trouble, it makes me shudder to the soles of my feet."

Way

Paid 5

Col. Geo. A. Washington
Richmond
Virginia

Ned states he has no overseer. He mentions others who have the same problem. He encloses a note (Figure 6) from James F. Jones and advises if Winchester falls into the hands of the enemy (it did, repeatedly), Gus should move his family to some place of safety. Jones had just been informed that Ned would be compelled to serve in the militia and that Washington's overseer is with Jones and feels Gus will be in the same position (he was). Jones feels there must be an exemption for such situations.

Way Mail

The average Confederate collector has no idea what way mail is unless he is also a student of U.S. postal history. This category of Confederates is rarely discussed and was not cataloged by August Dietz, nor his successors, until this was rectified in 2012 in the

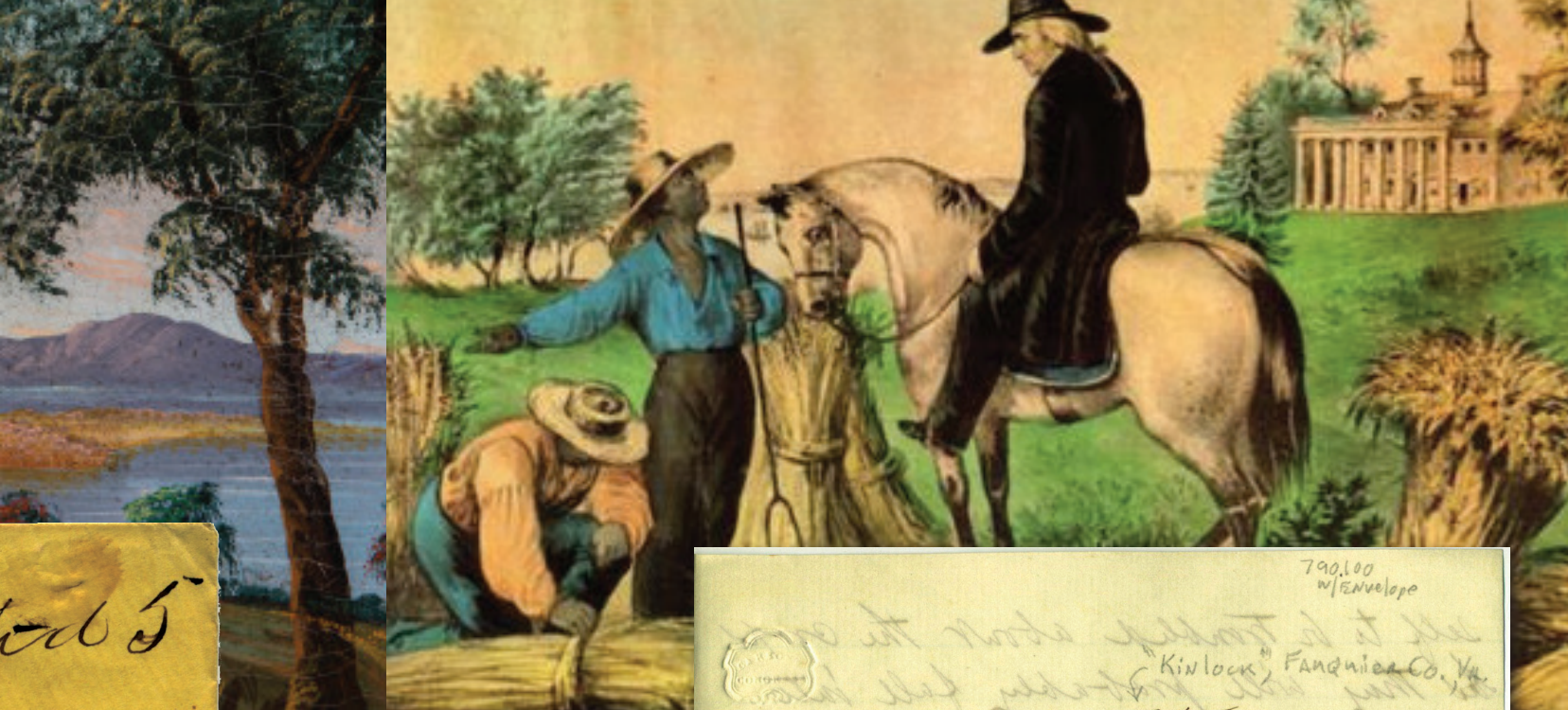


Figure 5. First page of letter headed Kinloch, July 15, [18]61, to John Augustine Washington from Ned Turner; it was carried in the "Way" cover to Richmond.

790,100
w/Envelope

Kinloch, Fauquier Co., Va.

Kinloch 15th
July 15th 61.

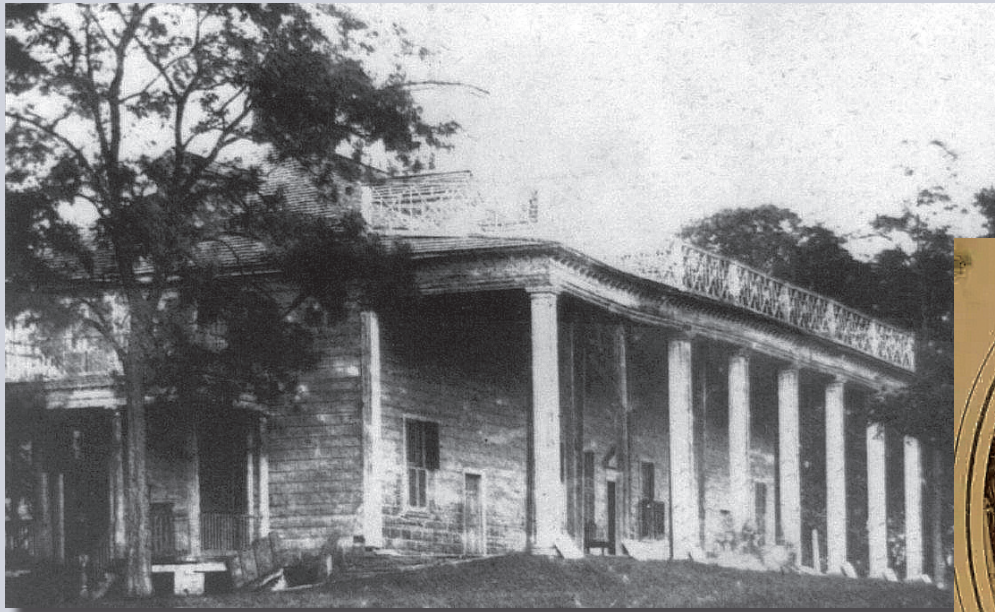
My dear Augustine

The Militia as you know has been ordered out in this & adjoining Counties. As I shall not have reached my forty fifth year until the 5th day of next month I shall be compelled to go & serve out the number of days intervening between this time and that. This is a bitter pill. Not that I can fear standing in the rain or sleeping on the ground, but when I think of leaving a house full of defenceless women & children entirely at the Mercy of the negroes with no white man in the neighborhood to call on in case of trouble it makes me shudder to the soles of my feet. I do not allow my-

CSA catalog. The section is only two pages long because it has attracted little prior attention. Such uses are scarce, and listings have not been specifically accumulated to any degree by collectors or students.

Confederate way mail is scarcer than U.S. way mail, perhaps because it is infrequently identified as way mail. By 1860, the use of the "way" designation in the United States had waned.

As explained in the catalog, way mail has been recognized as a category of mail since colonial times. It was addressed under the Constitutional postal system in the first United States postal statute (Section 15, Act of February 20, 1792) and was defined in Section 15 of the United States Act of May 8, 1794, as "...



Ann Cunningham



The Mount Vernon Ladies Association

Shown Above: Mount Vernon as it looked in 1858 not long after the women of the south had formed an organization—that still exists today—to own, perpetually care for, and open it for view and appreciation of the public

The Mount Vernon Ladies Association owns and maintains Mount Vernon. Ann Pamela Cunningham founded the Association in 1853. The Association purchased Mount Vernon from George Washington's heirs in 1858 for \$200,000 with the goal of saving the estate and preserving its history.

It was a daunting task. But the Association—with the help of countless American citizens—worked tirelessly to save Mount Vernon and 500 of its acres. Over the years, many prominent people contributed to the cause such as Henry Ford and Thomas Edison.

The estate faced potential destruction during the Civil War but was declared neutral ground and remained open to the public and intact. The Association continues to work to safeguard the integrity of Mount Vernon and its stories.

letters received by a post-rider or other mail carrier on his way between two post-offices..."

When the Confederate Provisional Congress adopted a constitution on February 8, 1861, it led to the establishment of Confederate postal rates. The following day, Congress adopted the Act of February 9, 1861, which continued all laws of the United States in force and in use as of November 1, 1860, which were not inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States. This included all laws governing the Confederate Post Office Department. Specifically, this addressed all laws and regulations contained in the Postal Laws and Regulations issued by the United States on May 15, 1859, (1859 PL&R) and not con-

flicting with the laws of the Confederacy.

Letters received by a post office too late to be bagged but before the mail carrier departed were also handled as way mail. Way mail was transported by all the normal means of mail transportation—stage-coach, horse, railroad, or steamboat.

Way letters received by a mail carrier on his way between two post offices was to deliver the letters to the next post office on his route. If demanded, the carrier could receive one-cent for each such letter delivered. If paid, the fee was added to the postage on the letter and the postmaster was required to annotate such letters with the word "Way" next to the rate.

Rules applying to way mail were effective June 1,

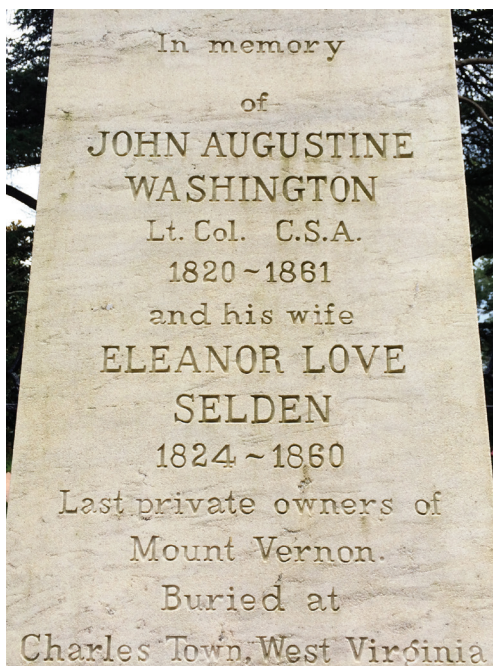


Figure 12. Detailed inscription on monument of John Augustine Washington (III) and his wife, Eleanor Love Selden Washington

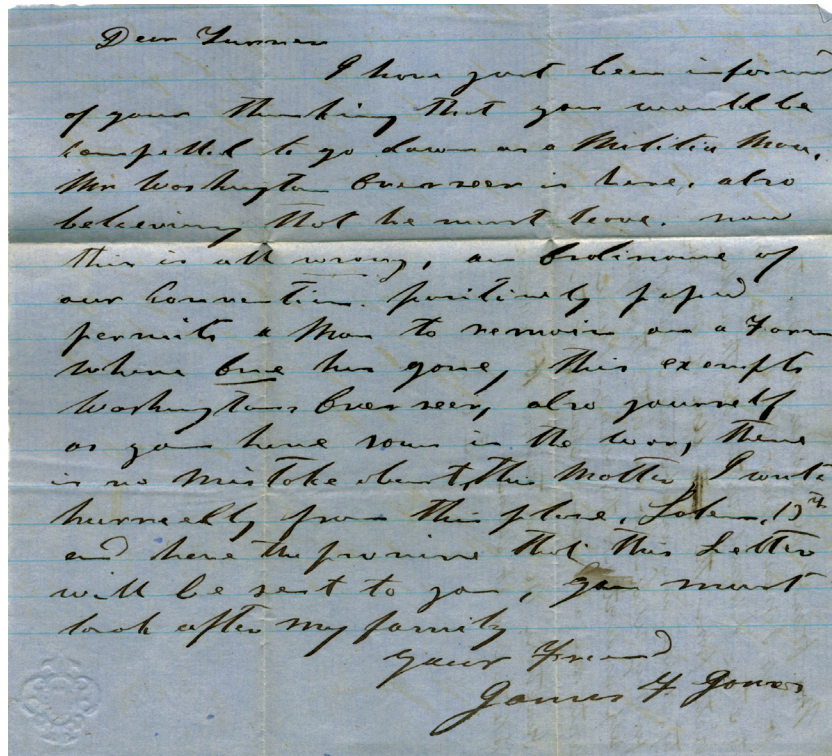


Figure 6. Letter from James F. Jones to Ned Turner, enclosed to Gus Washington in the Way cover with Ned's letter in Figure 5.

Figure 7. Front entrance of Waveland, home to John A. Washington III after he sold Mount Vernon.



1861. The fee was charged to the addressee of the letter. These are most often found with a hastily scrawled "Way" in pencil, crayon, or ink. Less often, they are found with scarcer handstamped markings and the price they command increases accordingly.

Prepaid loose mail picked up by route agents on railroads and steamboats between stations and landings was also classified as way mail, but normally not

marked as such, making it harder for current-day postal historians to identify.

Theoretically, way mail could exist from any post office in the Confederacy from the time a state seceded through the Confederate period. But mail actually identified as way mail is far from common.

In the case of loose letters carried by steamboats having a mail contract, if no mail carrier was aboard, the captain of the contract vessel was required to receive the loose letters as way letters only if the letters were prepaid by stamps. Unpaid loose letters were treated as ship letters and rated differently from way mail.

The CSA catalog further explains the role of the railroads, station agents and route agents in handling way mail. The letters in local bag mail were deemed to have entered the mails at the local post offices

where they received the postmarks and were, if appropriate, also rated.

The local pouches were secured by iron locks for which the route agent had the keys. Like through-bag mail, letters received from local post offices and placed in the local bags did not receive the types of markings listed in the CSA catalog, as they cannot be distinguished from other bagged mail merely because they were carried on a train.

The way marking applied to such mail was both an origin and an accounting marking. As an origin marking, it indicated where the letter entered the mail system. As an accounting marking, it indicated the way fee had been paid to the carrier and that the fee should be collected from the addressee.

During the Confederate period beginning June 1, 1861, fourteen postmarks are listed and only twelve towns are listed without postmarks, one of which is an institutional holding.

Since the catalog was published, the number of Way listings is growing as people become aware of them and report them to me and others who are keeping such censuses. I accumulate new and corrected information for future catalog editors. When so few items are known, catalogers are often reluctant to publish listings. But one must begin somewhere for collectors to be aware they might have something in such a category, thus the two-page beginning of a way mail section.

John Augustine Washington III (1821-1861)

The grandnephew of George Washington was born to John Augustine Washington II and Jane Charlotte Blackburn Washington. He spent his younger childhood at Blakeley Plantation near present day Charles Town, West Virginia. In 1829, the Mount Vernon estate became the property of his father. Young Augustine, or Gus, as he was also known, enjoyed an affluent lifestyle as the son of a wealthy planter. He graduated from the University of Virginia in 1840 and returned home in 1841 to manage the plantation for his mother. He was the oldest living male heir.

Gus quickly realized the deteriorating estate was not the profitable plantation his great-great uncle once managed. Poor harvests took their toll and constant interruptions by sightseers were a hindrance and an annoyance. With his lands yielding such little profit, he decided to embrace tourism and implemented business strategies to make

money from those who flocked to see the estate. Although he first tried to sell the property to both the federal government and the State of Virginia, neither would meet his terms. Instead, he sold 200 acres of the Mount Vernon estate, including the mansion, outlying buildings and family tomb, to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1858 for \$200,000.

In 1859, Washington bought the grand home of Waveland, shown in Figure 7. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 and remains essentially unchanged since the days of Washington.

A Sad Finale

In a letter dated September 6, 1861, Washington wrote to his brother-in-law, Dr. William Fontaine Alexander (1811-1862), "I don't know when I shall leave this region, or indeed whether I ever shall do so, as of course my chances are the same as those of other men, and I know some of us will never get away." Washington died one week later.

While reconnoitering in the Cheat Mountains (now West Virginia), John Augustine Washington III was shot and killed during a skirmish at Elkwater in Randolph County during the Western Virginia Campaign early in the war.

Scouting parties of opposing sides met in the Cheat Mountains in unforgiving muddy and wooded, rocky terrain. The Confederate scouting party was led by Major W.H.F. (Rooney) Lee, son of Robert E. Lee. Mortally wounded with three musket balls, Washington fell from his horse. Rooney Lee's horse was killed but he succeeded in catching Washington's horse and thus escaped. He lived to become a Major General, one of the most distinguished cavalry commanders in the Army of Northern Virginia.

In the National Archives, I found a letter addressed to Hon. Simon Cameron, U.S. Secretary of War, shown in Figure 10. It is headed "Head Quarters Cheat Mountain Division, Huttonsville, Oct 30, 1861, and signed by J.J. Reynolds, Brig. Genl."

The letter states, "...that the three shots received by Col. Jno. A. Washington, all of which were plainly visible on his body, were fired by Sergeant John I. Weiler (not Lieber as heretofore reported), Corporal Wm. L. Birney, Private Wm. F. Johnson. All of Company 'E' 17th Indiana Regiment. In accordance with the tenor of your letter of 22d, I have distributed the articles among these soldiers, Sgt. Weiler receiving the Revolver."

According to General R.E. Lee, Col. Washington's pistols were sent by General Reynolds to Cameron, but he ordered them, and other souvenirs of war, to be distributed to the soldiers who killed him, although he retained one pistol. They included gold-plated spurs, a powder-flask, letters through which a bullet had passed, and more. His sword was attached to the pommel of his saddle and thus escaped with Rooney Lee. His field glass, retained by Reynolds, was eventually given to Augustine Washington's son, George.

As is often the case, the story told by Sgt. Weiler is similar but slightly different. He stated the articles captured were reported by General Reynolds to the War Department. Cameron congratulated the soldiers involved, decided to keep the navy revolver and instructed the balance of articles be given to Weiler.

Joseph Jones Reynolds (1822-1899) had served under Lee as an assistant professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, but in September 1861 they faced each other with hostile forces.

The Battle of Cheat Mountain (September 12-15, 1861) was the first battle in which Robert E. Lee led troops during the Civil War, sent to Western Virginia by Confederate President Jefferson Davis to coordinate the various Confederate forces in the region and regain lost territory.

On September 14, 1861, General Lee sent a letter under flag of truce to the Union commander inquiring about Col. Washington, who was barely clinging to life when last seen being captured by Union forces.

The opposing sides met and, with courteous military ceremony, transferred the remains of Col. Washington. Any enthusiasm the Confederates may have had for the fray evaporated with Washington's death.

Figures 11-13 show the Washington family memorial in Zion Episcopal Churchyard in Charles Town, West Virginia. Some say it is a cenotaph plot, although other sources state the original remains are

interred or were reinterred there.

Washington died September 13, 1861, leaving his seven (some sources say eight) children orphaned. General Lee, expressing his own deep grief at the loss of his friend, personally broke the news of his death to the children. Augustine's younger brother, Richard Scott Blackburn Washington, took the children in, raising his own seven children as well as his older brother's children.

Patricia A. Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965, enthusiastically embraced organized philately in 1969, and became a full-time stamp dealer in 1973, today specializing solely in Civil War material. She enjoys contact with readers and may be reached at trishkauf@comcast.net.



One of the rare photographs of John Augustine Washington, the last private owner of George Washington's Mount Vernon estate.



Figure 13. Close-up of Washington surname at base of his cemetery monument