

The Forgotten Mother Of Our Country

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Historians have a tendency to over look important side lights of a person's character, when describing their eccentricities, thus presenting a false picture of their true character to future readers.

Mary Ball Washington, the Mother of Washington, has been seriously maimed by historians who have not taken the trouble to observe her life as she lived it. Most historians picked small short sketches of her life to endorse, but very few if any, ever show the great character that saved our Nation. Mary not only gave us a George Washington, but directed his life, and instructed him in how to live it.

Permit me to take a few of these short sketches, written by others about this wonderful Mary Washington and then tell the true story.

Many have given Mary Ball Washington the picture of an ill-tempered, cantankerous, quarrelsome woman, who ruled her family like a tyrant; some have wondered how George was able to stay at home as long as he did, or how he had been able to get along with his Mother. (Not one ever told of her problems, and how close, Mother and Son were to each other.)

Some even went so far as to say George never loved his mother, and could not get along with her. They have even written and said, He didn't care enough to attend her funeral. What they didn't appear to know or don't say is that Washington made a special trip to see his mother on April 15, 1789, which was the last time he saw her, and the next day he left for New York to take over the office of President of the United States.

His Mother died August 25, 1789, and it was not until September 3rd, eight days later, that he was informed of her death, at which time she had already been buried. How strange; Great men and Presidents are not allowed to have tears or show their sorrow.

Using a few FACTS that we all should have read or been told, let us return to tell the true story.

Taking a quick look at Mary Ball's Life, as she had to live it.

Augustine Washington, son of Colonel John Washington and the father of George Washington, at the age of 21, married Miss Jane Butler on April 12 1715. She was the daughter of Caleb Butler, an eminent Lawyer. They had a son, Lawrence Washington. After thirteen years of marriage, Jane Butler died in 1728.

Augustine Washington met Miss Mary Ball, daughter of Colonel Joseph Ball of Lancaster County Virginia, whose residence "Epping Forest" was situated near the mouth of the Rappahannock River. Miss Mary Ball was affectionately known as "The Rose of Epping Forrest." They wrote of her as a "Splendid specimen of womanhood, she was tall and stately with brown hair and large brown eyes, clear cut features and a serene, intelligent expression. She must have been a woman of particular striking appearance, far above the ordinary comely and attractive beauties." The forgoing is just a short bit of what was written, on Miss Mary.

Augustine Washington married Mary Ball on March 6, 1730 (old calendar).

Eleven months later, George was born, Feb.11, 1731 (old calendar). The calendar was changed in 1731, thus moving George's birthday to Feb 22, 1732.

Betty was born June 20 1733.

Samuel was born November 16, 1734.

Jane was born January 17, 1736.

John Augusta was born Jan 13, 1737.

Charles was born May 2 1738.

Mildred was born June 26, 1739.

Augustine Washington died in 1742, when George was only 11 years old.

Here was a young woman who had been pregnant all of her married life, I don't know of anything that could make a woman more cantankerous, and quarrelsome. It was a little wonder she was short tempered at times. Also she was left a widow with seven small children, the oldest 11 years, and very little money with which to support her little family.

Facing the world alone was no place for a woman with seven (7) snail children.

However George understood and loved his mother deeply. In fact when he went to work for Fairfax at the age of 16; all of his earnings went to his mother to help support the little family.

Age 16 was the turning point of George's life; very few historians ever look at this part of Washington's life or even appear to care about giving credit to Mary for saving George for them to write about.

Yes, it was Mary Washington who saved George for his Country. I will now explain.

Probably the most wonderful thing that ever happened was at the age of 16. George, with the help of his half brother Lawrence, filled out papers to join the British Navy as a midshipman.

Mary, who despised the British, on finding what was happening, made a quick trip to see George and told him not to join the British Navy and expressed her dislike for the British (which is another forgotten story).

George (finding out how his Mother felt) obeyed his Mother, tore up the papers, and went back to both school and work for Lord Fairfax. It was about at this time, Lord Fairfax became like a second father to George Washington.

His Mother, pleased that George had obeyed her, on advice from Sally Fairfax, procured a pen-knife from England and presented it to George in appreciation for him obeying her wishes. She also told George at that time, "Always obey your Superiors."

George loved the little knife, and as instructed, went to Sally Fairfax, to have her teach him how use it, to make and trim a quill. Sally being an expert with the pen knife, and the one who made and trimmed all

the pens in the Fairfax Family, lost no time in the instructions to George.

I might say at this point in our story, this is how Sally became one of the ladies of George's early life, which is also gossip. Sally was like an older sister to George, she was originally Sally Cary, until she married George William Fairfax, who was like a brother to him. So let us hear no more about this so-called love affair.

I might say, for the record of truth. Lord Fairfax sent George to William & Mary with a letter of instructions to the Dean, to further his education in surveying, and examine the young man for a degree in surveying. On June 8th 1749 George received his surveyor's commission from William and Mary College.

While away at College, George was attracted to a Miss Mary Cary, (who just happened to be the sister of Sally Cary Fairfax, who I have previously mentioned). George for some reason called Mary Cary, Molly. But that's another story for another time.

After graduation, George had little time for romance. He went to work for Lord Fairfax. So we leave his love life for another time.

At this point let us pause to think about what might have happened if George had not listened to his Mother, and had joined The British Navy? There never would have been a Washington or anything named Washington.

There never would have been a George Washington for us to remember. There never would have been a George on the Frontier or French and Indian War, nor A General Washington of the Revolutionary War, nor a President of a United States of America.

In fact, we can only wonder if we would be a United States as it is today if there had never been a George Washington. Or how History would have been written.

It is safe to say, "We would have lost the Revolutionary War, without Washington, Who would have been our Generals? (We had two who were traitors.) No need to mention names.

But we should get back to Mother Mary, and her little knife, and its memory. Washington carried the little knife all of his life and on one occasion explained its significance to his friend General Knox.

At Valley Forge after Congress had failed to provide food, clothing and shelter for the poorly equipped army, he wrote out his resignation as Commander in Chief, called his staff together to advise them of his actions. Gen. Knox being present and recalling the story of the knife, reminded Washington of what his Mother had said, adding a few words of his own. "Always obey your Superiors," "you were commanded to lead this Army and no one has ordered you to cease leading it."

Washington is said to have replied, "There is something in that. I will think it over". Half an hour later he tore up his resignation, determined to fight to the end.

Thus a Mother's gentle command may have shaped the destiny of our Nation, and changed the map of the entire world.

Another time, when President of the Country, Washington was displeased with the actions of one of the Governors on the question of ratification. Washington was writing a letter demanding action. His pen point bent, and he had to reshape it, while trimming a new point with his pen-knife, he decided to let Congress write the letter. Two months later, the Governor not only ratified but stood behind Washington on another decision with Congress. Washington knew he had a friend he could count on.

But let us return to Mary Washington, although when we write about George, we are also writing about Mary, the Mother. Mary Washington is represented as being an austere woman, whose attitude was somewhat awe-inspiring to those around her. George must have inherited some of her character.

The Mother of Washington was known for her aversion to a demonstration of deep emotion, and her illustrious Son was of the same temperament. According to one story, Washington was constructing a letter to Congress, while sitting for a portrait, when dispatches were hurriedly handed to him. He merely glanced at them and went on with

the business of the moment. The letter and dispatches contained news of the capture of Burgoyne.

An anecdote, similar to the above, has it that a messenger rode at top speed for some distance to deliver a letter from Washington to his mother during the later days of the war.

Mrs. Washington was found in her garden busily at work among her vegetables. She interrupted her work long enough to take the letter, but made no move to open it. The rider waited until his impatience caused him to exclaim.

"Madam, the whole community is interested in that letter."

At that she opened the letter which gave a detailed account of a recent victory; but all the news she gave the Messenger was the remark, "George generally carries through anything he undertakes."

Tradition has it that Mary Washington could think of George only as "her boy".

On one occasion she was informed that George had put up at the local tavern. This so displeased his Mother that she at once exclaimed, "Go tell George to come home instantly.

In a short time the General appeared, somewhat abashed.

However, George understood his Mother and loved her deeply. George was the one person who never forgot how much his Mother had done for him. George always supported as well as obeyed his Mother.

There was another who fortunately understood and loved both the Son and Mother. That was MARTHA the wife, who followed and lived close to George all during the war, but that is another story.

Yes, I for one have always contemplated just what might have happened if Washington had disobeyed his Mother, and joined the British Navy? Also what Providence had to do with the establishment of the United States of America?

I thank you, Mary Ball Washington.

