

**THE MASONIC PORTRAIT OF  
BROTHER GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON.**

**ORIGINAL PASTEL PORTRAIT FROM LIFE BY WILLIAM WILLIAMS,  
PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER 1794, PAINTED AT THE REQUEST OF  
ALEXANDRIA LODGE, No. 39, A. Y. M., WARRANTED BY THE GRAND  
LODGE OF PENNSYLVANIA, FEBRUARY 3, 1783, NOW THE ALEXANDRIA-  
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# **Washington's Masonic Correspondence**

**AS FOUND AMONG THE  
WASHINGTON PAPERS  
IN THE  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**

**Compiled from the original records, under the direction of the  
Committee on Library of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, with  
annotations.**

**BY**

**JULIUS F. SACHSE**

**LIBRARIAN, MASONIC TEMPLE PHILADELPHIA**

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[Pg ii]

***Grand Master  
1914-1915.***

[Pg iii]

The position of eminence, the great respect and the profound reverence in which the name of Washington is enshrined in the hearts of the American people, and particularly so, with the members of this Fraternity, and of all true lovers of liberty and freedom wheresoever dispersed, is the reason, if any be needed, why everything relating to this great man and worthy brother should be preserved for the future generations, to be used by them as a guide, in the cultivation of those cardinal virtues of Honor and Integrity, that

should ever characterize the conduct of a good man and a good Mason.

The collection and reproduction of the letters of Brother Washington, together with the text of this book, have been prepared under my supervision, and its publication is heartily approved.

*Grand Master.*

February 22, A.D. 1915—A.L. 5915.

[Pg iv]

[Pg v]

## CONTENTS.

Foreword

The Masonic Correspondence of Washington

Correspondence with Watson and Cassoul

Correspondence with Alexandria Lodge, No. 39, 1783

Pa

1

2

|  |             |    |
|--|-------------|----|
|  | <b>III</b>  |    |
| Correspondence with Alexandria Lodge, No. 39, 1784                         |             | 3  |
|  | <b>IV</b>   |    |
| Correspondence with King David's Lodge, No. 1, Newport, R. I., 1790        |             | 3  |
|  | <b>V</b>    |    |
| Correspondence with St. John's Lodge, No. 2, Newbern, N. C., 1791          |             | 4  |
|  | <b>VI</b>   |    |
| Correspondence with Prince George's Lodge, No. 16, Georgetown, S. C., 1791 |             | 5  |
|  | <b>VII</b>  |    |
| Correspondence with Grand Lodge of South Carolina, 1791                    |             | 5  |
|  | <b>VIII</b> |    |
| Correspondence with Grand Lodge of Georgia, 1791                           |             | 6  |
|  | <b>IX</b>   |    |
| Correspondence with Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, 1792                      |             | 6  |
|  | <b>X</b>    |    |
| Correspondence with Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 1792                     |             | 8  |
|  | <b>XI</b>   |    |
| Correspondence with Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, 1796                      |             | 8  |
|  | <b>XII</b>  |    |
| Correspondence with Alexandria Lodge, No. 22, Virginia, 1797               |             | 9  |
|  | <b>XIII</b> |    |
| Correspondence with Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 1797                     |             | 10 |
|  | <b>XIV</b>  |    |
| Correspondence with Grand Lodge of Maryland, 1798                          |             | 11 |
|  | <b>XV</b>   |    |
| Correspondence with G. W. Snyder, 1798                                     |             | 11 |

[Pg vii]

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Masonic Portrait of Washington  | <i>Frontispie</i> |
| J. Henry Williams, R. W. Grand Master                                 |                   |
| Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh on the Hudson                   | <i>Facing pa</i>  |
| Wise's Tavern, Alexandria, Virginia                                   | "                 |
| Moses Michael Hays (Portrait)   | "                 |
| Washington, (Houdon Portrait), 1786                                   | "                 |
| Mordecai Gist, (Portrait)   | "                 |
| Residence of President Washington in Philadelphia                     | "                 |
| Fac-Simile of Address   | "                 |
| Jonathan Bayard Smith, (Portrait)                                     | "                 |
| Rev. William Smith, D.D., (Portrait)                                  | "                 |
| Mount Vernon, 1783-1799   | "                 |
| Paul Revere, (Portrait)   | "                 |
| Washington, (St. Memin Portrait), 1798                                | "                 |
| Draft of Letter to Grand Lodge of Maryland                            | <i>Betwe</i>      |
| Press copy of Washington's letter to G. W. Snyder, September 25, 1798 | <i>en pa</i>      |
| Press copy of letter, October 24, 1798                                | "                 |

[Pg 1]

**FOREWORD**

**WASHINGTON'S** Masonic correspondence as found among the Washington papers in the Manuscript department of the Library of Congress, affords an insight of the great esteem in which Washington

held the Masonic Fraternity, of which since his early days he had been an honored member.

This is further shown by his great courtesy to the Brethren, in his replies to their addresses, no matter whether they were from a Grand or Subordinate Lodge. In this collection, were also found some of the original drafts of Washington's replies, together with copies of the various masonic addresses and letters to him, and in the case of Dominie Snyder, press copies of his answers.

In the present work an attempt has been made to group this matter together in chronological order, also to show some of the surroundings and conditions under which this correspondence was made, and of the Brethren who were prominent in the presentation

[Pg 2]

of these Eleven Addresses, which came to him from Seven of the Thirteen Colonies.

A complete set of photostatic fac-similes of these documents in the Library of Congress, has been secured for the Museum of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. Efforts were also made to obtain photographic copies of such of the Washington Masonic letters as were still in existence, which were successful except in two instances as noted in the text.

It will be noted that on April 30, 1789, Washington, while Master of his Lodge, was inaugurated President of the United States; this is the only instance where one of the fourteen Presidents, who were Members of our Fraternity was a Master of a Lodge during their term as President.

The esteem in which Washington held the Masonic Fraternity, is shown by the fact, that in almost every case he had both the address and his reply, copied upon opposite pages of one of his folio letter-books, now in the Library of Congress. These copies are respectively in the handwriting of Washington's private secretaries, viz:—Major William Jackson: Tobias Lear: Bartholomew Dandridge and G. W. Craik.

In addition to the above copies we have Washington's original drafts of his letters to Watson and Cassoul, to the Grand Lodges of

Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Maryland, to Paul Revere, and

[Pg 3]

as before stated press copies of his answers to Mr. Snyder.

A perusal of these original documents, as here presented, affords an excellent illustration of the *entente cordiale*, which existed between Washington and his Masonic Brethren.

Upon the other hand, how the Masonic Fraternity, during Washington's lifetime, venerated their august Brother, is shown by the addresses of this correspondence as retained by Washington.

Also by the various Masonic Memorial services held, after Washington's death, the chief of which was in Philadelphia, under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. The Masonic services held in every State of the Union, the many Eulogies and Sermons delivered and printed are matters of history.

How this veneration of the great Washington continued during the past years, is shown by the fact that there are no less than 53 Masonic Lodges in the United States, named after the illustrious Brother. This is independent of the numerous Royal Arch Chapters, Commanderies, and other Masonic bodies, that bear the name "Washington."

Washington Lodges are found in thirty-eight of the forty-eight States of the American Union.

The other ten States, which thus far have no "Washington Lodge" within their Jurisdiction, are Mississippi and Texas, together with the newer western States lately admitted into the American Union,

[Pg 4]

viz:—Nevada, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona.

In addition to the fifty-three Washington Lodges, there is also one each in Canada, the Island of Cuba and the District of Columbia.

In the Masonic Fraternity throughout the world, the name of Washington is ever kept in remembrance, as one of the brightest luminaries in the Masonic constellation, one of the most prominent



examples, being his full length oil portrait in Masonic clothing in the Hall of the Grand Lodge of England at London.

Acknowledgments are due to the Hon. Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress, for placing these documents at the disposal of the writer, and giving permission to have photostat copies made of same; also to J. Henry Williams, Esq., R. W. Grand Master of Masons in Pennsylvania and Masonic Jurisdiction thereunto belonging, for suggestions and encouragement in the preparation of this work.

Philadelphia, February 22, A.D. 1915—A.L. 5915.

[Pg 5]

## The Masonic Correspondence of Washington

**MUCH** has been written pro and con about Washington and his connection with the Masonic Fraternity. Thus far no complete set of his Masonic writings have been compiled or published. Such portions as have been printed were fragmentary, and issued for what may be called local purposes.

How careful Washington was of his Masonic correspondence is shown by the fact that he had copies made, in his private letter books, of most all letters sent him by the various Masonic Grand and Subordinate bodies, and his answers thereto, usually upon opposite pages. He thus had both the addresses and his reply at hand for easy reference. This fact shows the esteem in which Washington

[Pg 6]

held his Brethren of the Masonic Fraternity, as well as his own opinion of Freemasonry.

These letter-books are now in the Library of Congress, and photostat copies of such as relate to Freemasonry have been made for the Library of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

As to the authenticity of the Washington Letter Books, and how they came into the possession of the United States Government is explained by the following statement by Mr. Galliard Hunt, chief Manuscript division, Library of Congress:[\[1\]](#)

"They are a part of the Washington papers in  
"the Government's possession, purchased from the  
"Washington family, one lot in 1834 and the re-  
"mainder in 1849, and deposited in the Department  
"of State until 1903, when, by the President's order,  
"they were sent to this Library. They range in date  
"from 1754 to 1799. Some of them are partly  
"or wholly in Washington's hand-writing, and others  
"in the writing of his secretaries and their clerks.  
"There are no volumes of press copies, but there are  
"some press copies among the papers."

Washington in writing his answer to the various greetings, in most cases would first make a rough copy of his reply, then digest, alter, correct or change such parts or sentences as he thought proper. Then

[Pg 7]

after deliberate consideration, a fair copy would be made either by Washington or one of his Secretaries and signed by him, and sent to the Masonic bodies for which they were intended.

Fortunately some of the original drafts of these Masonic letters have come down to us; thus far five autographic copies have been found among the Washington papers in the Library of Congress at Washington.

1. Draft of letter written at Newburg, New York, August 19, 1782, to Watson and Cassoul of Nantes, France, thanking them for the Masonic Apron, embroidered by the nuns at Nantes, and which is now in possession of Alexandria-Washington Lodge, No. 22, at Alexandria, Virginia.
2. To the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.
3. To the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.
4. To the Grand Lodge of South Carolina.
5. To the Grand Lodge of Maryland; this draft is a two-page letter written upon a letter sheet and shows many changes and corrections; it is dated 1798.

In addition to the above original drafts there were found several addresses and the accompanying answers, which thus far have never been published, in fact no mention of them has ever appeared in print, viz:—

1. An address from the Grand Lodge of Georgia, together with Washington's reply.

[Pg 8]

2. A letter to Paul Revere, Grand Master of Massachusetts and his Grand Officers.
3. An address from the Brethren of Prince George's Lodge, No. 16, Georgetown, South Carolina, presented to President Washington during his visit to South Carolina, April 30, 1791, also his reply to same.
4. An address from the Brethren of St. John's Lodge, No. 2, of Newbern, North Carolina, and the reply to same.

Photostat copies of the above have also been obtained which make the most complete collection of the Masonic Correspondence of Washington which has thus far been compiled.

A careful study of this correspondence so carefully cherished by Washington puts an entirely new phase upon Washington's connection with the Masonic Fraternity, and his esteem of Freemasonry.

These papers absolutely thrust aside all of the statements, arguments and libels, brought forth by our misguided enemies at the time of the Anti-Masonic craze during the last century, and in a small way kept alive even down to the present day by some people who are blinded by their ignorance or malice.

Referring to some of their published statements that Washington never belonged to the Masonic Fraternity, and that there were no authentic Masonic letters nor copies thereof among his records so fre

[Pg 9]

quently made during the political Anti-Masonic craze, which swept over New England and the Middle States about eighty-five years ago, the following quotations from the Masonic literature of the period will prove interesting examples.

One of the chief statements made by these people, and brought before all their conventions and heralded in the public prints was: "That though General Washington caused to be carefully copied in books kept for that purpose, all his letters on every subject, no trace whatever of any of the five letters under consideration,<sup>[2]</sup> nor any letters to any other Lodge or Masonic body whatever, are to be found among the records of his correspondence."<sup>[3]</sup>

The chief authority upon whom the leaders of the Anti-Masonic movement at that time depended in their defamation of Washington, was Jared Sparks of Boston, who at the time was engaged writing a life of Washington, and then had access to all the Washington letter-books and papers, and from his connection with the Washington correspondence, was

[Pg 10]

supposed to be the best qualified to pass upon their authenticity.

Another of the charges made by the Anti-Masonic bigots whose chief object was to controvert facts was:

"That although Washington was *extremely scrupulous* in preserving his correspondence with all public or private bodies, there is not a line of his *relating to Freemasonry*, to be found among all his papers, except the correspondence with Mr. Snyder!<sup>[4]</sup> It is also a fact, that

Washington was equally scrupulous in dating his letters, and it is believed that not one can be found, which is without a date."[\[5\]](#)

It appears that the chairman of a committee of citizens of Boston called upon the officers of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts to submit their two Washington letters to Jared Sparks for his inspection. This the Grand Officers refused to do.

In return Sparks sent the following letter to the Chairman:

"Boston, February 18, 1833.

"*Sir*,—I received this morning your letter of the 15th instant, in which you inquire:

"Whether I have yet seen or had in my possession

[Pg 11]

any original letter or letters, in the hand writing of General Washington, addressed to any body of men denominating themselves Freemasons.

"In reply, I can only state that I have seen no letters from General Washington of the kind described in yours, nor received any communication on the subject, either verbal or written."[\[6\]](#)

"I am, Sir, "Very respectfully, "Your ob't servant, "Jared Sparks."

How Sparks could have overlooked the numerous entries in the letter books whose numbers and folios are here quoted, also the drafts of replies in Washington's hand-writing and signed by him (copies of which are here given in this work), can only be accounted for by the fact that he must have been carried away by the political excitement of the day.

Washington's connection with the Masonic Fraternity has been exhaustively traced by Brother James M. Lamberton, Past Master of Perseverance Lodge, No. 21, in his address "Washington as a Freemason," from the day of his entrance into Fredericksburg Lodge, No. 4, of Virginia, September 1, 1752, until the day of his death,

December 14, 1799, before the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, at its celebration of the Sesqui-Centennial

[Pg 12]

Anniversary of the Initiation of Brother George Washington into the Fraternity of Freemasons,<sup>[7]</sup> held in the Masonic Temple, in the city of Philadelphia on Wednesday, November 5, 1902.

It must also be remembered that Washington made a public profession of his membership in Philadelphia, Monday, December 28, 1778, when he walked in procession with his brethren of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, from the College at Fourth and Arch Streets to Christ Church on Second Street above Market Street, Philadelphia, where, after a prayer by Rev. William White, a sermon was preached for the "[Benefit of the POOR] by appointment of and before | The General Communication | of | Free and Accepted | MASONS | of the | State of PENNSYLVANIA, | on Monday, December 28, 1788, | Celebrated, agreeable to their Constitution, | as the Anniversary of | ST. JOHN the Evangelist, | by William Smith, D.D., | Provost of the College and Academy of Philadelphia." |

This Sermon was printed and dedicated to Brother Washington and a copy sent to him, which was bound with other pamphlets in a volume lettered "Masonic Sermons," and is so mentioned in the inventory of his estate and now in the Boston Athe

[Pg 13]

næum.<sup>[8]</sup> At this service over four hundred pounds were collected for the relief of the poor.

Rev. Brother William Smith, D.D., preached a number of Masonic Sermons in Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland; three of which delivered at the request of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania were printed, viz.:

*Sermon 1.*—On Brotherly Love, &c. Preached on the Anniversary of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 1755,

*Sermon 2.*—Preached on Monday, December 28, 1778, celebrated as the Anniversary of St. John the Evangelist. With an Appendix on the Character of Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus,

*Sermon 3.*—Preached before the Grand Lodge of Communication, on St. John the Baptist's day, June 24, 1795.

Original copies of the above are in the Library of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

Rev. Brother Smith reprinted the above in a Volume of Sermons with the following note:[\[9\]](#)

"N. B. The above three Sermons were preached at the request of the Grand Lodge of Communication, for Pennsylvania, and contains in substance all that the Author thinks it necessary to bequeath to

[Pg 14]

the Brotherhood, by way of Sermons, preached at different times and in sundry of the neighboring States, during 48 Years past."

By referring to the following letters and Documents it is shown that Washington's interest in Freemasonry and the Fraternity continued until the time of his death.

These documents cover the period from 1782 to 1798.

As these copies in our possession are photostat fac-similes of the original documents in the Library of Congress, there can never be any question of correctness or of their authenticity.

The finding and collating of this material will settle for all time to come the question of Washington's connection with the Ancient Fraternity, and his opinion and esteem of Freemasonry.

The earliest record we have of any Masonic Body proposing a masonic address to General Washington, was the resolution offered in King David's Lodge, No. 1, at Newport, Rhode Island, during Washington's visit to Newport in March, 1781, while the French Army under Rochambeau was quartered there. Washington arrived in Newport on the sixth of March and remained there until the thirteenth, when he left for Providence by way of Bristol.

It was in anticipation of this visit that the Brethren of King David's Lodge, of which Brother Moses

[Pg 15]

Michael Hays<sup>[10]</sup> was Worshipful Master, that a masonic greeting to General Washington was proposed. The following entry from the old Minute Book of the Lodge will explain why the project failed to materialize.

**W. M. KING DAVID'S LODGE, No. 1, NEWPORT, R. I., 1780-1781.  
GRAND MASTER OF MASONS IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1788-1793.**

Extract from the Records of King David's Lodge.

"Regular Lodge night, held at the house of Mr. James Tew, Wednesday evening, the 7th February, 1781. 5781.

"A motion being made that as our worthy brother, his Excellency General Washington, was daily expected amongst us, a committee should be appointed to prepare an address in behalf of the Lodge, to present him. Voted, That the Right Worshipful Master (Moses Michael Hays) together with brothers Seixas, Peleg Clark, John Handy, and Robert Elliot, be a committee for that purpose, and that they present the same to this Lodge at their next meeting for their approbation."

"At a Lodge held by request of the Right Worshipful Master, Feb. 14th, 1781. 5781,

"The committee appointed to draught an address to our worthy brother, His Excellency General Washington, report, that on inquiry they find General Washington not to be a Grand Master of North

[Pg 16]

America; as was supposed, nor even Master of any particular Lodge. They are, therefore, of opinion that this Lodge would not choose to address him as a private brother at the same time, think it would not be agreeable to our worthy brother to be addressed as such.



"Voted, That the report of the committee be received, and that the address be entirely laid aside for the present."[\[11\]](#)

Now as to the cause for this uncertainty how to address Brother Washington, it will be recalled that just at that time, the proposition sent out by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania nominating General Washington as Grand Master of all the Colonies, was then before the various grand bodies, but did not find favor in New England, in fact the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was the chief objector, and finally defeated the scheme to elect Washington the Grand Master General.[\[12\]](#)

The means of intercourse between the different

[Pg 17]

Masonic Bodies at that early day were so limited and uncertain that it offers a clear explanation for the uncertainty under which the brethren of King David's Lodge, No. 1, at Newport labored at that time.

During the Anti-Masonic craze in the last century, the above minute was extensively used by the political leaders of the Anti-Masonic party to strengthen their claim that Washington had never presided over any Masonic Lodge.

Following is a complete list of the Washington Masonic Correspondence, thus far found among the Washington papers in the Library of Congress.

Draft of Letter to Watson and Cassoul, Nantes, France, August 10, 1782.

Letter to Alexandria Lodge, No. 39, Virginia, December 28, 1783.

Address from King David's Lodge, No. 1, Rhode Island, August 17, 1790, and Washington's Reply.

Address from St. John's Lodge, No. 2, Newbern, North Carolina, April 20, 1791, and his reply.

Address from Prince George's Lodge (Moderns) Georgetown, South Carolina, April 30, 1791, and his reply.

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