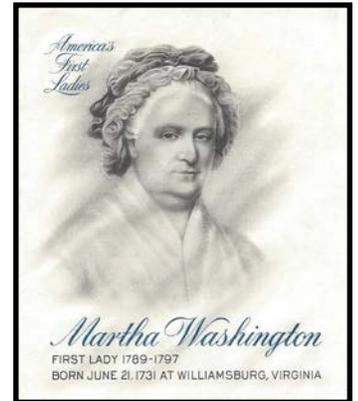


The Cover Story

Ladies who became FIRST

Martha Dandridge – the Third in a Series by Randall Priest

Martha Dandridge Custis Washington [Front Cover, Figure (2) & (3)] was born June 13, 1731, Martha Dandridge in New Kent County, Virginia, to John and Frances Dandridge. She lived an active and happy childhood on a profitable plantation. Martha was the first born, followed by three brothers and four sisters. She had no formal education, as was the custom at the time. However, she was schooled soundly in the domestic arts, and she learned them very well.

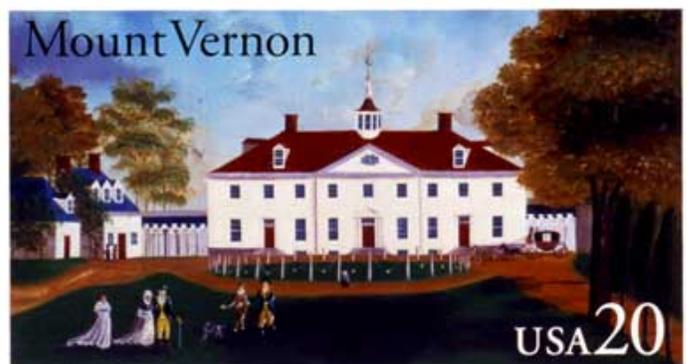


At nineteen, Martha married Daniel Parke Custis, a wealthy tobacco heir who was 20 years her senior. They lived at a plantation called "White House" on the Pamunkey River. They had four children, two of whom died in infancy leaving "Patsy and Jack". Daniel Custis died in 1757 leaving Martha to inherit a "dower's share" of her husband's large land holdings and much wealth, as well as trustee control over the inheritance of her minor children. At age 25 Martha took over responsibility of her husband's 17,000 acre estate. She proved to be very capable in taking care of the business of the estate and her family.

Two years later, in January of 1759, Martha married George Washington [Front Cover, Figure (1), (4) & (5)]. As a man who lived and owned property in the area, Washington likely knew both Martha and Daniel Custis for some time before Daniel's death. They did not have any children together, but they raised Martha's two surviving children, as well as two grandchildren.

When George became commander-in-chief of the Colonial Army during the Revolutionary War, Martha joined him during the winter encampments. Martha stepped up to help enlist nurses and organize collections of warm clothing for the soldiers. She helped with correspondence, discussed plans for battle, and did much by her presence to raise the spirits of the troops.

After the Revolutionary War ended, George resigned his commission as commander-in-chief, and Martha and George looked forward to a quiet, private retirement at the Mount Vernon estate. In just four years the retirement at Mount Vernon came to a close when the Electoral College unanimously elected Washington President. The Washingtons then moved to New York and later to Pennsylvania, temporary capitals. (The capital was moved to



Washington, D.C., in 1800 following construction of the Capitol and White House.)

Becoming the wife of the President was a role that had no precedence from which to glean roles and behaviors. However, Martha was an elegant, graceful, and learned woman with a bearing of her aristocratic Virginia roots. She was criticized as too "royal" by some and too "common" by others. But

to all who visited the President's house, "Lady Washington" (as she had been named by servicemen during the Revolutionary War) was the model of grace and propriety; eventually these qualities won her the affection and respect of all America.

Martha was not comfortable with a lot of 'pomp and circumstance' and declared that "I am fond of only what comes from the heart." Abigail Adams, who sat at her right during many parties and receptions, praised her as "one of those unassuming characters which create love and esteem."

After eight years as President, Washington was ready to return to his beloved Mount Vernon. The second retirement was different from the first. There was a constant stream of guests eager to pay their respects to the celebrated couple. However, George and Martha were very private people as evidenced when George died in 1799. Martha took all of their private letters and burned them. Even after George died, the people with political ambitions still felt that a visit to the 'grande dame' of America was needed if they were to be successful in their future.

Martha died on May 22, 1802, at the age of 70. She is buried next to George at Mount Vernon in an unpretentious tomb planned by Washington himself. Martha Washington appears on ten different U.S. postage stamps and with George on two postal cards.

Reference: Postal Commemorative Society // First Ladies of the White House by Nancy J. Skarmees // The Presidents of the U.S. of A. by Frank Freidel // whitehouse.gov/1600/first-ladies

Contest Results from May of 2015



The question that was asked in the May 2015 Philatelic Missive was as follows: The philatelic item depicted in photograph to the left appears to be an ordinary shipping box. Can you guess what was sent in this box?

Hint: The edible commercial contents of the box were invented in 1867. The vintage of the box is 1931, or later, and it measures ~14 x 12 x 6".



There was not a correct answer.



hidden surfaces.

The correct answer is an oleomargarine box which has a revenue stamp 1931 and state form 219, as well as other labeling on 3

Thank you to John C. Robbins, for this interesting and seldom seen, piece of history.