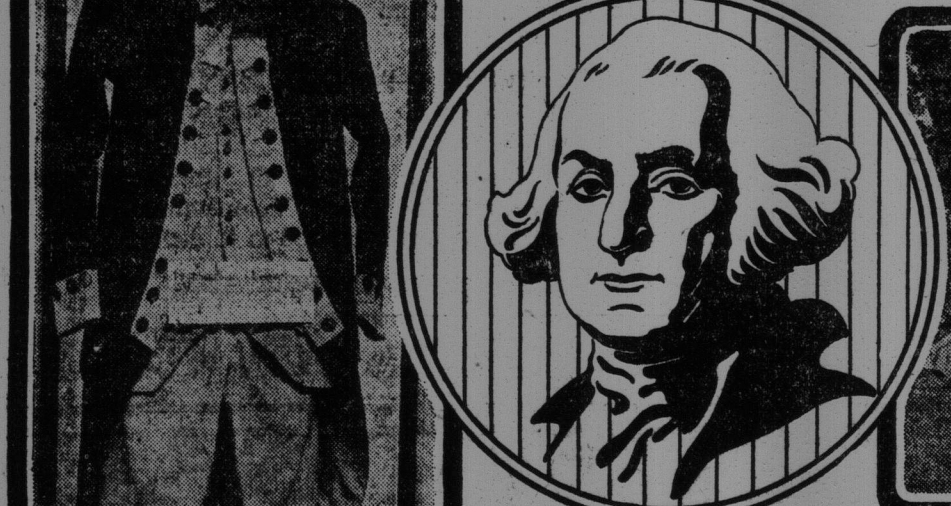


THE EVENING TIMES, ST. JOHN, N. B., FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1907.

Relics of GEORGE WASHINGTON

A. Y. H.

By WALDON FAWCETT



UNIFORM WORN BY WASHINGTON WHEN COMMANDED IN CHIEF OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY

If present plans are carried out an effort will be made in the near future to have the United States Congress appropriate funds for the purchase of one of the most interesting and most valuable collections of Washington relics extant. These really invaluable mementoes of the Father of His Country are now in the custody of Miss Mary Lee, daughter of the late Gen. Robert E. Lee, of the Confederacy, and who is, on her mother's side, a great-granddaughter of Martha Washington. The project for the purchase of these articles so closely associated with the life of the hero of the Revolution will, if carried out, bring into the possession of our national government all the most significant possessions of the first president of the republic.

Quite naturally, no doubt, the personal possessions of the savior of his country are regarded as all but sacred by a large portion of the American public. Certainly the care lavished upon them and the efforts for their preservation have not been equalled in the case of the remains of any other public man who has had a place in the history of the New World. The fact that this reverential regard was manifested from the very date of Washington's death is presumably responsible for the fact that the Washington relics were scattered or scattered as were the belongings of many a hero whose worth was fully appreciated only by posterity.

Almost all of the really important relics of the military career and private life of Gen. George Washington are now included in one or another of three general collections. One of these is, of course, the cherished accumulation now in the possession of Miss Mary Lee by right of descent. The second collection of rare Washington relics is that owned by the national government and which occupies the place of honor in the National Museum in Washington. The third is to be found at Mount Vernon, the home of Washington on the Potomac, and is to a considerable extent made up of relics donated or loaned by persons residing in various parts of the country.

It is a matter of congratulation that the objects that once belonged to Washington which are of the greatest popular interest are already in the possession of Uncle Sam, and, as has been explained, are on exhibition at the United States National Museum, where they may be seen by all visitors to the national capital. This collection includes that most interesting of all Washington trophies—the famous camp chest which was used by Washington all through the Revolution, his headquarters tent, used continuously during the war from Lexington to Yorktown, his baptismal robe and the last chair in which he sat prior to his death, and, finally, the Continental uniform worn by General Washington during the War of Independence.

All these literally invaluable souvenirs came into the possession of the government through the purchase by act of Congress in 1878 of what was known as the "Lewis Collection." Persons who are at all familiar with Washington's family history will surmise that these relics represent the inheritance of the other branch of the family, from that which keepsakes have come down to Miss Mary Lee. The two children of Martha Washington (adopted children of General Washington) and their heirs quite rightfully came into possession of most of the personal belongings of the distinguished family at Mount Vernon. But all who knew of Washington's fondness for the pretty Nelly Custis can readily surmise that she was presented with all the best of the mementoes, and it was this collection that Uncle Sam purchased from the Nelly Custis heirs for the sum of \$12,000 in the year 1878.

When the government first acquired these Washington relics they were deposited at the United States Patent Office, but in the year 1883 they were transferred to the National Museum, and there they have resided ever since. Every time an international exposition is held in any American city it is one of the ambitions of the management to secure the loan of these trophies as a special feature, but the relics which are kept in glass cases and closely guarded are accounted much too precious to permit of transportation about the country and their display in buildings not fireproof.

Until a very few years ago the relics of Washington now held by Miss Mary Lee were also on display at the National Museum side by side with those owned outright by the government, and the story of the restoration of these ancestral heirlooms to the representative of the Lee family is especially interesting now that there is reason to hope that the relics may be placed permanently in the safekeeping of the federal government. Just so could rightfully claim ownership to

them was for years in dispute, and repeatedly put the government officials in a quandary.

The federal authorities had taken possession of the relics soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, when the Union troops invaded Arlington, the beautiful home of Gen. Robert E. Lee, on the Potomac, opposite Washington. Now, the mansion at Arlington had been built by General Washington's adopted son, George Washington Parke Custis, and after the death of Martha Washington, the builder of Arlington had removed from Mount Vernon to his new home the silver plate, china and other household articles which had been bequeathed to him. The only daughter of the household in time married Robert E. Lee who came to make his home at Arlington, and thus the beginning of the war for the Union found the prized Washington relics left behind in a room in the basement of the home suddenly abandoned by the Confederate chieftain.

When Arlington was converted into a Federal Army camp the relics were sent to the Patent Office, at Washington, for safe keeping. A few years after the close of the war Mrs. E. R. Lee petitioned that the Washington relics be returned to her, and President Johnson, after a consultation with his cabinet, ordered that this be done, but Congress ordered a vigorous protest and passed a law prohibiting the secretary of the interior from allowing the articles to be removed from his department. The matter hung fire for years, and then when the government by act of Congress paid to the son of General Lee the sum of \$10,000 in settlement of his claim for the confiscation of the Arlington estate, many of the government officials deemed that this payment embodied a purchase price for the Washington relics, and under the supposition that they were government property the trophies were transferred to the National Museum.

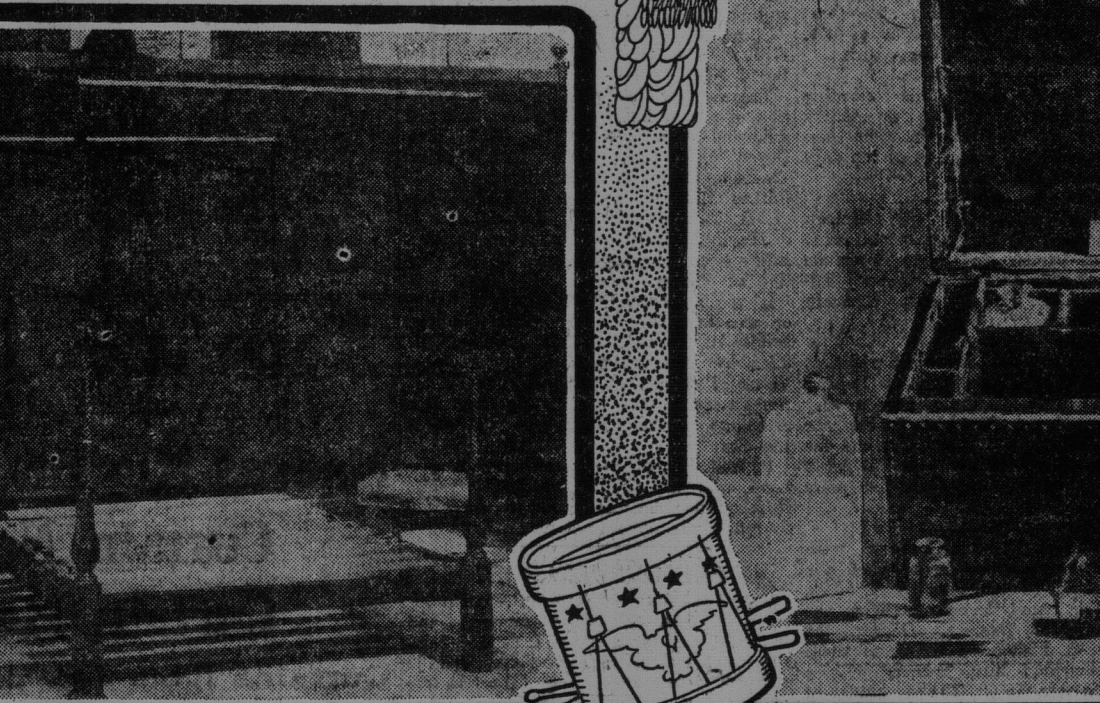
The next chapter in the story of the Washington relics brings us to the administration of the late President McKinley, to whom Miss Mary Lee applied for the restoration of the family heirlooms. Senator Daniel, of Virginia, transmitted the request which the chief executive immediately referred to the attorney general of the United States, P. C. Knox, who was at that time at the head of the department of justice, made a thorough investigation of the rather complicated situation, and finally reported that the government had never through any act of war lost proprietary claim to the relics, and that it was clearly within the jurisdiction of the president to release them to the heir of the original owner if he chose to do so. President McKinley thereupon issued instructions that the relics were to be turned over to Miss Lee.

It is understood that the relics that were restored to the Lees after two-score years are now stored in a building owned by a member of the family at Alexandria, Va. Miss Lee was earnestly importuned to allow the relics to remain in the National Museum, where they could be viewed by all visitors to that patriotic shrine, but she declined. So eager were the officials to be allowed to retain them as a loan that when Miss Lee announced her intention of selling the trophies they even offered to allow her to conduct the sale from the museum. In the end she did consent to leave in Uncle Sam's show place a few objects, notably two candleabra and the treasure chest in which General Washington kept his hands and other valuable papers.

The relic collection which it is now hoped the government may purchase from Miss Lee is especially rich in the old china used by the Washington family. There are numbers of pieces of the so-called Cincinnati and Lafayette sets, as well as the gold-rimmed white china and the old blue and white earthenware. According to tradition the Lafayette china have been handed down to excite the wonder and admiration of the present generation.



HEADQUARTERS TENT OF GENERAL WASHINGTON, BUILT BY THE MALL, WASHINGTON, D. C. ESPECIALLY FOR THIS PHOTO



GEORGE WASHINGTON'S CAMP CHEST USED ALL THROUGH THE REVOLUTION



CHARLES DRESSING TABLE, TEA TRAY, ETC.

The French army, but for all that the story is a very pretty one that history does not bear out the tale. For some of the plates in this collection more than \$100 each has been offered by collectors of ceramics, and these collectors were taking into consideration the rarity of the design rather than the historical interest that attaches.

The Lee collection is also especially rich in oddly shaped champagne and wine glasses and other cut-glass table appointments for the collection of which the former Widow Curtis apparently had something of a fad. Two quaint looking glass candleabra, each having two prongs and a central holder for flowers. Then there is a silver tea-tray and two small silver bearing the Washington coat-of-arms as well as a large cherrywood tea-tray that is unique in many respects. Yet another treasured relic is the elliptical-shaped table which was purchased by General Washington for use in the president's home in New York when the present metropolis was the seat of government, and which was later taken to Mount Vernon, and used there during the hospitalities that characterized the latter years of Washington's life.

The oldest article in the Lee collection and one which Mrs. Lee has kindly allowed the officials of the Smithsonian Institution to continue to exhibit at the National Museum, is the huge iron-framed lantern which was used to illuminate the great hall at Mount Vernon when its first owner, Lawrence Washington, was master there. The big lantern served a similar purpose at the mansion house on the Potomac during the regime of George Washington, and then it was transferred to Arlington and cast its glowing beams upon many a scene of old-time Southern merry-making at this famous habitation. Judging from the articles of personal adornment which have place in this treasure trove the Father of His Country was much more fond of gorgeous lace and shoelaces. Three or four pairs of these gold-mounted and jeweled ornaments have been handed down to excite the wonder and admiration of the present generation.

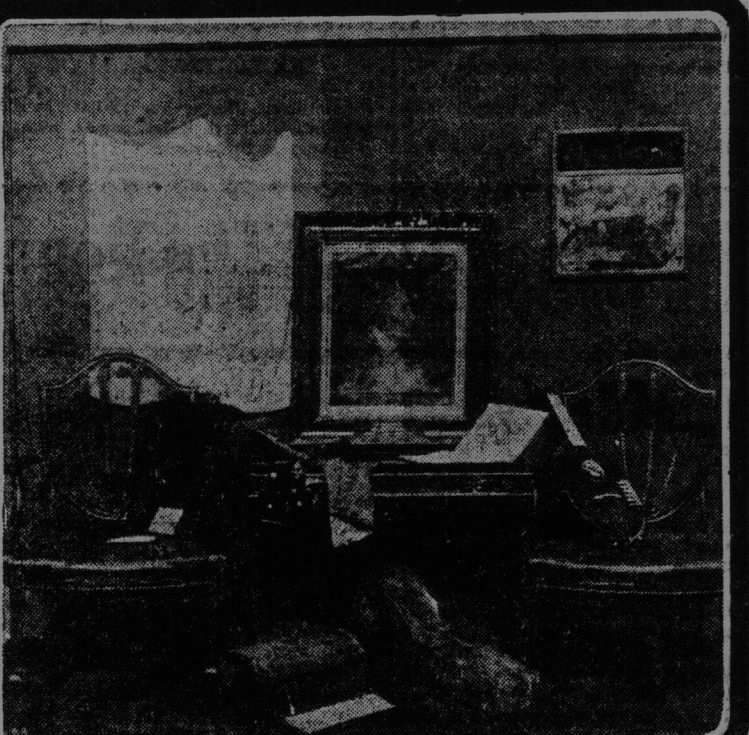
There are some of Washington's army tents in the Lee collection, but the most interesting of these campaign-houses is, as has been explained, already owned outright by the government.

Another interesting object to which Uncle Sam has a clear title is the bellows which was once used to fan into flame the embers in the great fireplace at Mount Vernon. Nothing, however, brings the present-day spectator closer to the conditions of Washington's life during the most momentous period of his career than the old camp chest previously mentioned. In this iron-bound box, with its numerous compartments for dishes and bottles, are to be seen the pewter dishes and the rather primitive knives and forks which Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army used on his table during the trying days when he was directing a military contest against overwhelming numbers of a superiorly equipped enemy. In the present government collection are also a number of tables, chair and mirrors, used in the first executive mansions of the nation, and at Mount Vernon, which, aside from their historic associations, are fraught with rare interest for all students of colonial furniture.

The relics which now repose at Mount Vernon in the very rooms they occupied in the days of General Washington are not, of course, owned by the government, but so far as their accessibility to the public is concerned, almost the same purpose is served, for Washington's home and tomb is open to the public every weekday in the year, and certainly the steady stream of patriotic pilgrims find more to interest and inspire them at the Washington home than could possibly be the case were the mansion on the Potomac shorn of its carefully preserved antiquities. One of the most interesting objects now at Mount Vernon is the harpsichord which General Washington imported from London at the unheard-of price of \$1,000 as a wedding present for his petted favorite, Nelly Custis. Here, too, is a flute which belonged to Washington, and the card table on which Washington and Lafayette played whist. On the wall of the

main hall at Mount Vernon hangs the key of the French Bastille, sent by Lafayette to General Washington after the capture of the famous French prison. On the floor of one of the parlors is a handsome carpet which Louis XVI. of France had made for General Washington. Owing to the law which prohibits our presidents from receiving gifts from foreign powers the American leaders never came into possession of the carpet. It was bought at auction by a man whose granddaughter, years after, sent it to Mount Vernon, so that by a strange twist of fate it finally came to grace the spot for which it was originally intended.

In the dining-room is a handsome sideboard which belonged to Washington, and in the south bedroom of the house, the room in which Washington died, is much of the furniture that was used by the greatest rebel of all time. Here is the bedstead upon which he died and the chair upon which lay the open Bible from which Mrs. Washington read to him almost up to the minute of his death. In almost every room are dishes or other articles of furniture which belonged to Washington, and such personal relics as his spectacles, reading glass, dressing case, holsters, ink stand, silver snuffers, etc. In the quiet old town of Alexandria, the community nearest to Mount Vernon, is a supplemental collection of Washington relics which are usually spoken of in conjunction with those at the Manor House. Here in Alexandria is the Washington Masonic Lodge, where the Father of His Country presided as worshipful master, and there is shown to visitors the chair in which he sat when presiding at the lodge meetings and the apron and collar which he wore when he was in the lodge. Here also may be seen the cherry wood clock which was ticking away the minutes in Washington's bedroom on the night he died and which, as the great man breathed his last, was reverentially stopped by Dr. Dick with the handle registering 21 minutes past 10, the hour they have ever since recorded. It will be seen from the above resume that almost all the important relics of



FURNITURE, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, ETC. FROM MT. VERNON

building in the world—is 862 feet in length and 260 feet in width, exclusive of projections. The floor space will aggregate 10 acres and more than half of this will be devoted to exhibition purposes. The Washington relics have the place of honor in the present museum, and it is expected that corresponding prominence will be given to them in the new structure. It is obviously important that the glass cases containing the Washington relics shall be so placed that they can ever be under the watchful eyes of armed guards.

WALDON FAWCETT.

WEDDINGS

Northrup-Legget.

Miss Annie Legget, eldest daughter of James Legget, of Pleasant Point, and Clarence Newton, Northrup, were united in marriage Wednesday evening, Rev. J. Chas. B. Appel officiating. Miss Birdie Legget was bridesmaid and Gerald Leroy Northrup, brother of the groom, acted as best man. After the wedding ceremony, a very tempting repast was partaken of. The bride and groom were the recipients of many handsome wedding gifts.

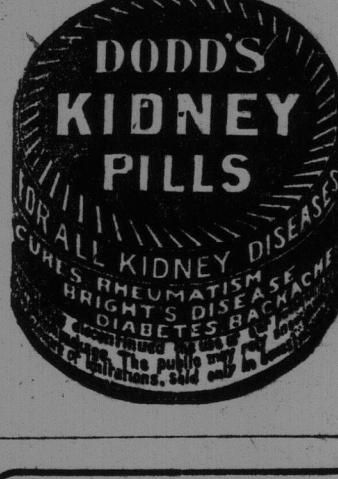
Siddall-Wry.

Sackville, Feb. 21.—The home of Mr. and Mrs. Willard Wry, Charlotte street, was the scene of a pleasing event last evening, the occasion being the marriage of their daughter, Alice Pauline, to Thompson Arvid Siddall, Rev. B. N. Nobles tied the nuptial knot, in the presence of eighty guests. The bride was handsomely gowned in white crepe de chine with trimmings of sequin, and embroidered chiffon, and carried a bouquet of roses and maiden hair fern. She was unattended. Harry Snowdon played the wedding march. After the ceremony and congratulations a tempting supper was served. The bride received a costly array of wedding gifts, including cut glass, silver, Limoges china and a number of substantial checks.

Mrs. and Mr. Siddall will reside in Sackville.

Thomas Dean, of the city market, has bought the Clifton House from Hanington, Teed & Hanington. The deal was completed yesterday, and Mr. Dean says the terms were private, but street report says the price paid was about \$10,000. Mr. Dean contemplates making no changes in his newly acquired property, at least for the present.

Fred. D. Miles has purchased Henry Niles' residence, 127 Douglas avenue, and will occupy it after May 1.



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