

Historic Homes of Northern Virginia

and the

Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia

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FAIRFIELD, long the home of Warner Washington (1715-1791), is located four miles northeast of Berryville on the road towards Charles Town. In a direct line, it is six and a half miles northwest of Snicker's Gap in the Blue Ridge, where George Washington often crossed in coming to "Fairfield," and four and a half miles northwest (almost north) from Castleman's Ferry (now bridged) over the Shenandoah River, where the Washingtons and others of their day frequently forded the stream.

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Warner Washington was the eldest son of John, brother to Augustine, George's father. Consequently, he and George were first-cousins. Although he was seventeen years older than George, they evidently were fond of each other; George visited Warner on various occasions and lingered with him for days at a time.

Warner settled at "Fairfield," then in Frederick County, about 1765. His first wife was Elizabeth Macon, by whom he had a son Warner. His second wife, whom he married in 1765, was Hannah Fairfax, a daughter of William. By her he had sons Fairfax and Whiting and daughters Mildred, Hannah, and Catharine.

The late Col. Forrest W. Brown of Charles Town, whose mother was a Washington, in a letter of October 28, 1933, to the author stated that Warner Washington Jr. lived at "Clifton" where his first wife, Mary Whiting, died in 1794; that he married Sarah Warner Rootes in 1795; moved to "Audley"; thence to "Llewellyn," where he died.

"Clifton" and "Fairfield" are less than a mile apart.

The Lower Shenandoah Valley

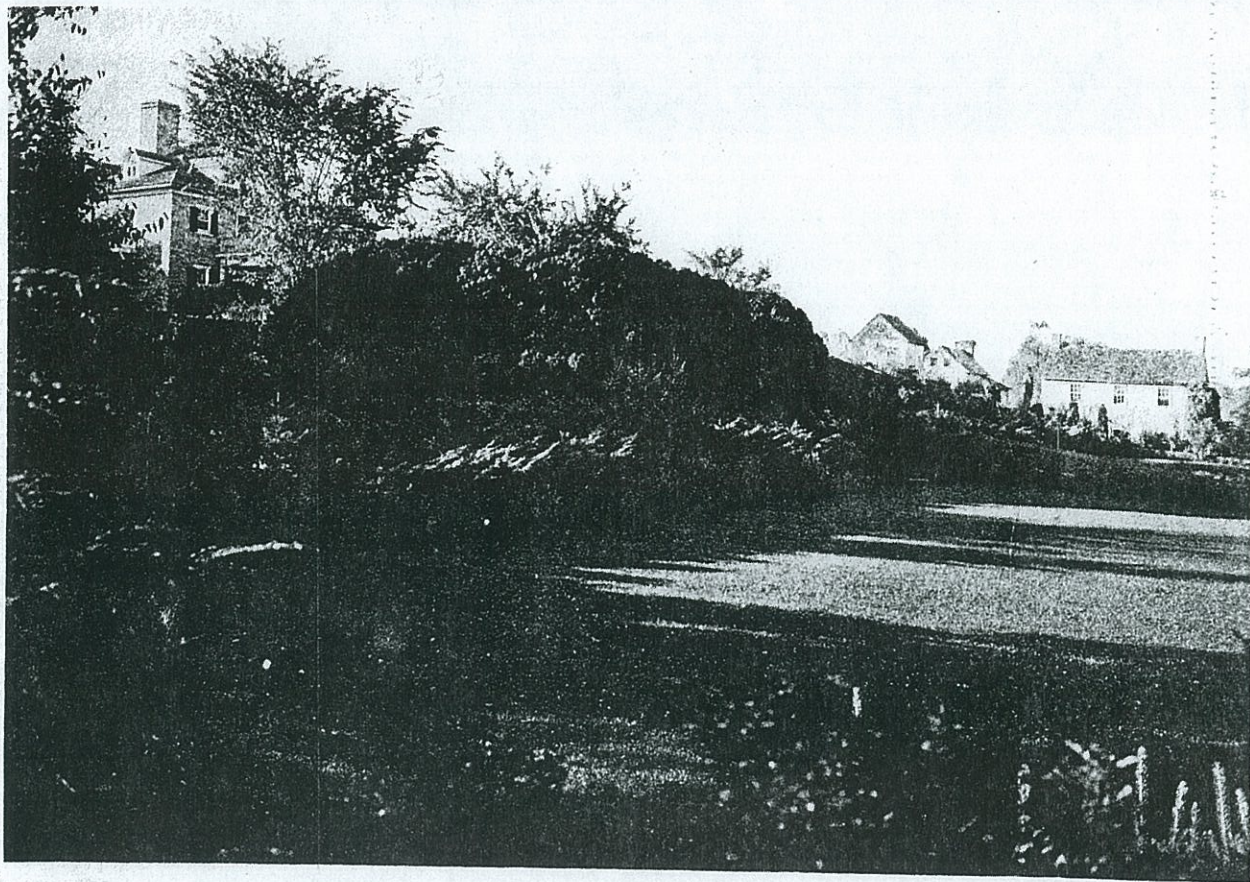
About five o'clock in the evening of August 1, 1769, as he records in his diary, George Washington arrived at his cousin Warner's. With him came Mrs. Washington, Patsy Custis, and perhaps other members of the family. They had dined at Snicker's. They were on their way to Bath (Berkeley Springs). Warner was not at home and did not return (from Winchester) until the afternoon of the next day. On the 4th, as George Washington wrote, "Mr. Thruston and Lady" dined at Warner's. This was no doubt Rev. Charles Mynn Thruston who had been inducted as rector of Frederick Parish the preceding November. Under the same date (August 4) Washington says: "Still at Mr. Washington's. . . . Note. I was detain'd this day and yesterday by ye waggon's losing 2 Horses."

"Ye waggon" was loaded with supplies for the proposed sojourn at the springs—and heavily loaded, no doubt. Four horses probably drew it, but the heavy load, the rough roads up from tidewater and across the Ridge, and the hot weather were too much for two of the faithful beasts. But on the morning of August 5 the little party left Warner Washington's and proceeded towards the springs via Jacob Hite's and Joshua Hedges'; arriving at the springs about one o'clock the 6th.

Jacob Hite, a son of Joist, lived at Leetown. He later moved to the Carolinas where he and most of his family were killed by Indians. Before reaching Hite's the Washingtons passed the site of "Harewood" where George's brother Samuel was then building or preparing to build.

The picture opposite shows "Fairfield" from the northwest; the one below is a close-up view of the same front from the southwest. The gardens are south and east of the mansion.





THE GARDEN AT FAIRFIELD, SOUTH AND EAST OF THE MANSION

After slightly more than a month at the springs with Lord Fairfax, Rev. Charles M. Thruston, and others, George Washington, his wife, and Patsy Custis returned home, stopping again at "Fairfield." There they spent the night of September 10, 1769, and started away early the next morning.

In March 1771 Washington spent a night with his cousin Warner. In June 1772 he tarried with him five days. In November 1774 he was again in Frederick on business and lodged "at Colo. Warner Washington's." In June 1788, after inspecting the canal at Harper's Ferry, he came up and dined (Tuesday, the 3d) with his brother Charles at Charles Town; thence he continued on to Warner Washington's where he spent the evening and night. His diary entry for the next day (Wednesday, June 4) is as follows:

"About 7 O'clock I left this place, Fairfield, bated at a small Tavern (Bacon fort) 15 Miles distant, dined at the Tavern of one Lacey, 14 Miles further, and lodged at Newgate 16 Miles lower down."

Newgate was the present Centerville in Fairfax County, Va.

From the foregoing items it appears that Washington was a rather familiar figure at "Fairfield."

Warner Washington made his will in 1789 and died in 1791. His widow, Hannah (Fairfax) Washington, made her will in 1802 and died in 1804. The records are in Winchester. She had been left a ring by General Washington in his will. Her daughter, Hannah Fairfax Washington, had married Peter Beverly Whiting of Gloucester County, Va., in 1788; she died in 1828 and is buried at Old Chapel.

The Lower Shenandoah Valley

The grounds surrounding the mansion at "Fairfield" are spacious and beautiful, shaded by numerous trees, adorned with well-kept gardens, and drained by a meandering brook. The house, of native limestone, stands on a slight elevation, with the main front towards the north-west. The older portion dates from the days of Warner Washington, though the Richardsons, who have been the proprietors for a century or more, have made various changes and additions.

One or two other dwelling houses have been erected near the main dwelling, and several barns and other farm buildings may be found in well considered locations. A large brick barn erected in the time of Warner Washington is a conspicuous and fascinating landmark.

On the whole, "Fairfield" is one of the most interesting and attractive places to be found anywhere in this country.

The photographs of "Fairfield" reproduced in these pages were made by Morrison in October 1935. The present owner is Mrs. John Donald Richardson. Nearby is the residence of Mr. Ralph R. Richardson.

The view below shows a delightful corner of the garden just south of the mansion, parts of which may be seen over the tops of the trees and shrubbery. Trees, shrubs, and flowers are effectively combined in extensive and alluring vistas. Slopes and terraces give pleasing variety to a contour that is naturally gentle and harmonious.

