



George Washington's Virginia farm, called Mount Vernon, is down the Potomac River, just sixteen miles south of the city which now bears his name. The plantation is eight miles from Alexandria, where the General and his family attended church in the old town.

The president himself designed the landscaped grounds where thirteen trees, from his lifetime, still survive. (So does an old map of his property which includes Washington's hand-drawn input.)

According to the Mount Vernon Estate web site:

When George Washington lived here, Mount Vernon was an 8,000-acre plantation divided into five farms. Each farm was a complete unit, with its own overseers, work force of slaves, livestock, equipment, and buildings.

The farm where Washington and his family lived was called the 'Mansion House Farm.' This is the part of the plantation that visitors see today. Washington developed the property's 500 acres to create a fitting setting for a country gentleman.

He designed the grounds to include a deep border of woods, rolling meadows, serpentine walkways, a pleasure garden, a kitchen garden, and groves of trees. Between the Mansion and the shores of the Potomac River lay an extensive park.

As nearly as possible, Mount Vernon was a self-contained community. Nothing was purchased that could be produced on site. Yet the Mansion House Farm was so well designed that the service lanes did not intrude upon the area reserved for the enjoyment of Washington, his family, and their many guests.

From the Potomac River on the east to the Estate's west gate entrance ran the pleasure grounds and wide vistas; along the north-south line were the outbuildings, or dependencies, where much of the work was done.

Like other Southern plantations of the time, Mount Vernon included slaves.

In 1799, when Washington died in his bed on the 14th of December, 317 slaves lived on the property. In his Will, the General freed the slaves he owned (to be emancipated after Martha's death) and provided funds for the continued care, support and education of many of them.

Martha (who also died in her bed) survived her husband by two-and-a-half years. They are both entombed at Mount Vernon.

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