

# A Guide to the George Mason Papers, 1775-1789

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## History

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There are no restrictions.

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There are no restrictions.

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## Biographical Information

## Biographical information

George Mason of "Gunston Hall" in Fairfax County, Virginia, was born 11 December 1725. Mason represented Fairfax County in the House of Burgesses from 1758 to 1761; in the 3rd, 4th and 5th Virginia Conventions from 1775-1776; and in the House of Delegates from 1776 to 1781 and 1786 to 1788. In the 5th Virginia Convention, Mason was appointed to the committee which wrote Virginia's first state constitution. Mason authored the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which has appeared in every subsequent state constitution. Mason attended the federal Constitutional Convention in 1787, but did not sign the document because it did not have a bill of rights at the time. This lack of a bill of rights also led to his opposition to the Constitution during the Virginia ratification convention in 1788. When the Bill of Rights was finally added to the federal Constitution, it was based on his Declaration of Rights. George Mason died at Gunston Hall, in Fairfax County, 7 October 1792.

## Scope and Content

Papers, 1775-1789, of George Mason (1725-1792) consisting of correspondence, drafts of amendments, bills, declarations, and petitions. Papers concern the work of Mason during the Virginia Conventions and his time in the Virginia House of Delegates. Of interest is a copy, by Mason, of the first draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, a draft bill for the establishment of a Land Office, and material related to the Mount Vernon Convention, which among other things established navigation rights of shared waterways between Maryland and Virginia.

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged chronologically.

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### **Letter, George Mason, Gunston Hall, to Col. William Aylett, King William County, 2 October 1775.**

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### **Virginia Declaration of Rights (Copy in Mason's hand circa 1778), 18 May-12 June 1776.**

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### **Amendment to stand before preamble of the House of Delegates bill for exempting the different societies of dissenters from contributing to the support and maintenance of the church as by law established, and its ministers and for other purposes therein mentioned, 30 November-9 December 1776.**

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**Letter, George Mason, Gunston Hall, to Col. William Aylett, 19 April 1777.**

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**Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for more effectually securing to the officers and soldiers of the Virginia line the land reserved to them; for discouraging present settlements on the northwest side of the Ohio River, and for punishing persons attempting to prevent the execution of Land Office Warrants (one page of amendments marked A in Mason's hand), 2 November 1779.**

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**Bill introduced in the House of Delegates to repeal so much of the act "for the support of the clergy and for regular collecting and paying levies" as relates to the payment of salaries heretofore given to the clergy of the Church of England, 18 November 1779.**

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**Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for establishing a fund for the purpose of borrowing money for the use of the United States and other purposes (endorsement only in Mason's hand; he introduced the bill and probably drafted it), 20 December 1779.**

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**Petition to the House of Delegates by sundry freeholders and inhabitants of Fairfax County complaining of the power of the justices of the county courts, and protesting against a proposed change of location of the county court from Alexandria, 8 June 1782.**

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**Petition to the House of Delegates by William Allison and Thomson Mason, Jr. stating they have erected a water mill for manufacturing tobacco snuff; they fear combinations of importers will ruin them unless an importation duty of one shilling a pound is laid on foreign tobacco snuff, 19 May 1783.**

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**Petition to the House of Delegates by sundry freeholders and inhabitants of Fairfax County stating they are informed application has been or will be made to confirm payments made by British debtors into the public treasury not at the real but at nominal value; to exonerate them from their creditors; to burden the public with the difference and to levy it by taxes on the people. This is unjust and iniquitous and the petitions pray that such payments be reduced by the scale of depreciation and repaid with interest to several individuals who paid in the same, 18 June 1783.**

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**Petition to the House of Delegates by sundry inhabitants of Fairfax County stating they are informed that petitions will be offered to repeal the act "to prevent extensive credits," which they feel was founded and good policy and productive of the happiest effects to the community. Pray act not be repealed., 18 June 1783.**

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**Letter, George Mason and A. Henderson, Mount Vernon, to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, 28 March 1785.**

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**Copy of a letter from the Commissioners of Virginia and Maryland to the Honorable, The President of the Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 28 March 1785.**

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**George Mason's account against the commonwealth (Accompanying are two orders by Governor Edmund Randolph on the auditor), 30 March 1785-28 September 1787.**

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**"Compact with Maryland respecting navigation of Potomack" (The Mount Vernon Convention. Contains also the signatures of Alex. Henderson, Dan. of St. Thomas Jenifer, W. Stone, and Samuel Chase), 28 March 1785.**

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**Petition to the House of Delegates by various inhabitants of Fairfax County stating that since the year 1778 they had brought sundry slaves from Maryland and had failed to make proper affidavits. Ask additional time for this purpose, 20 October 1789.**

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