

Guide to the George Mason letters to John Augustine Washington III, October 25-November 2, 1859

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Title Statement

Guide to the George Mason letters to John Augustine Washington III, October 25-November 2, 1859

Subtitle: George Mason letters to John Augustine Washington III C0315

Author: Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Beckman

Publication Statement

Date: June 22, 2018

Publisher: George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2018-06-22T15:59-0400

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Revision Description

2019-02-13 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

C0315

Date

October 25-November 2, 1859

Language

English

Abstract

Two letters from George Mason (the grandson of George Mason IV through his son William) to John Augustine Washington III (great-grandnephew of George Washington) after John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry.

Creator

Mason, George, 1797-1870

Physical Characteristics

0.25 linear ft.

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions on personal use. Permission to publish material from the George Mason letters to John Augustine Washington III must be obtained from the Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries.

Acquisition Information

Both letters purchased separately by the Special Collections Research Center in 2017.

Processing Information

Processing of the November 2, 1859 letter and EAD markup completed by Elizabeth Beckman in June 2018. Elizabeth Beckman, the Manuscripts and Archives Librarian, decided to add the October 25, 1859 letter, purchased separately (but from the same dealer), to the collection in July 2018. EAD markup was revised by Elizabeth Beckman.

Preferred Citation

George Mason letters to John Augustine Washington III, C0315, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries.

Biographical note

George Mason (1797-1870) was the grandson of George Mason IV of Gunston Hall (author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and namesake of George Mason University in Fairfax, VA). He was the second son of William Mason, George Mason IV's fourth son, and was married to Virginia Mason. Many of the descendants of George Mason IV were plantation owners and slaveholders until after the American Civil War.

John Augustine Washington III (1821-1861) was the great-grandnephew of George Washington. He inherited Washington's Mount Vernon estate, and (as noted by Matthew Costello) was the last Washington to own the plantation ('John Augustine Washington III'). Washington III, a slaveholder, served in the Confederate Army in the Civil War and was killed in 1861 at the Battle of Cheat Mountain.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of two letters from George Mason to John Augustine Washington III. Both letters were written in the weeks after John Brown attempted to begin a slave insurrection at Harper's Ferry in what is now West Virginia. In the first letter, dated October 25, 1859, Mason is concerned about slaves and freed blacks in possession of guns in Fairfax County; he implores Washington to coordinate the seizure of these weapons using "a good and efficient patrol - all of native born men" raised specifically for the job. In the second letter, dated November 2, 1859, Mason suggests forming a Volunteer Company in the wake of John Brown's raid, and he inquires whether Upton Herbert, the Superintendent of Mount Vernon, would be willing to take command of it.

Related Material

The Special Collections Research Center holds other collections from members of George Mason IV's family, including the [Mason Family Manuscript Account Book](#), and documents from John M. Mason and Maynadier Mason in the [Virginia historical documents collection](#).

Index Terms

Persons:

Mason, George, 1797-1870

Washington, John Augustine, 1821-1861

Subjects:

Harper's Ferry (W. Va)--History--John Brown's Raid, 1859.

Militia.

Slavery--United States.

Document Types:

Letters.

Alternative Form Available

Digitized versions of the letters can be found here: [George Mason letters to John Augustine Washington III.](#)

Bibliography

[Costello, Matthew. 'John Augustine Washington III.' George Washington's Mount Vernon, accessed June 22, 2018.](#)

[Michael Robert Patterson, 'Virginia Mason Mason,' Arlington National Cemetery Website, accessed June 22, 2018.](#)

['Upton Herbert.' George Washington's Mount Vernon, accessed June 22, 2018.](#)

['William Mason,' Gunston Hall, accessed June 22, 2018.](#)

Arrangement

The letters are arranged chronologically.

Contents List

[Level 1 Items]

Letter from George Mason to John Augustine Washington III,

Unit Date October 25, 1859

Mixed materials 1 (Box)

Container 1 (Folder)

Letter from George Mason to John Augustine Washington III,

Unit Date November 2, 1859

Mixed materials 1 (Box)

Container 2 (Folder)