

A Finding Aid to the Washington Forgeries, Facsimiles, and Bookplates Collection, 1863-1945. WFC

Washington forgeries, facsimiles, and bookplates collection
1863-1999

Title Statement

A Finding Aid to the Washington Forgeries, Facsmiles, and Bookplates Collection, 1863-1945. WFC

Author: by Katherine Hoarn, Special Collections Librarian

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Profile Description

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Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

WFC

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/48

Unit Date

1863-1999

Text

D:7 (Shelf)

Language

English .

Creator

Spring, Robert, 1813-1876

Creator

Cosey, Joseph, 1887-1950

Creator

Washington, William Lanier, 1865-1933

Creator

Weisberg, Charles, -1945

Extent

1 Linear Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections at The George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research during scheduled appointments. Researchers must complete the Washington Library's Special Collections and Archives Registration Form before access is provided. The library reserves the right to restrict access to certain items for preservation purposes.

Preferred Citation

[Name and date of item], Washington forgeries, facsimiles, and bookplates collection, [Folder], Special Collections, The George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon [hereafter Washington Library], Mount Vernon, Virginia.

Biographical / Historical

Cosey, Joseph (1887-1950): Joseph Cosey, born Martin Coneely, was active as a forger between 1929 and into the 1940s. He forged documents of famous American historical and literary figures like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, and Edgar Allen Poe, often using old paper and period writing instruments to make the documents look authentic.

Spring, Robert (1813-1876): Robert Spring was born in England but moved to Philadelphia around 1858. He is most noted as a forger of George Washington signatures, letters, and receipts. Spring developed his own recipe for antiquated ink and often used sheets of paper cut from old books. After his first arrest in 1858, he moved to Canada and posed as an impoverished widow selling family documents. Spring was arrested a final time in 1869 and died in a Philadelphia charity hospital in 1876.

Washington, William Lanier (1865-1933): William Lanier Washington, a descendant of George Washington's older half-brother Augustine, sold off Washington relics and memorabilia at auctions in the early 1900s. While most of the early sales were of authentic relics, William Lanier later sold fake relics with Washington family crests attached to them in partnership with noted Washingtoniana collector Henry Woodhouse.

Weisberg, Charles (-1945): Charles Weisberg, nicknamed "The Baron," was active as a forger from the 1930s until his death in 1945, at Pennsylvania's Lewisburg Prison. Although he is remembered as one of the greatest forgers of Abraham Lincoln documents, Weisberg also forged George Washington letters and surveys of Mount Vernon.

Woodhouse, Henry (1884-1970): Born Mario Terenzio Enrico Casalegno in Turin, Italy, Woodhouse moved to Troy, New York, in 1904. He gained fame as an aviation writer, publisher, and business investor and was an avid collector of George Washington artifacts. Woodhouse sold Washington relics of questionable authenticity through his New York gallery in partnership with Washington descendant William Lanier Washington.

Scope and Contents

The collection of Washington forgeries and bookplates from the 19th and 20th centuries measures 1 linear foot. Found within the collection are forged Washington documents from notorious forgers Robert Spring, Joseph Cosey, and Charles Weisberg, as well as unidentified forgeries. The collection also contains bookplates – originals, restrikes, and spurious copies – from the Washington family and correspondence related to the sale of forgeries.

Related Materials

The Library of Congress holds a collection of Washington forgeries in the George Washington papers, 1592-1943.

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799 -- Forgeries
Woodhouse, Henry, 1884-1970

Custodial History

The collection is assembled from gifts and purchases made between 1887-2018. Materials are periodically added to the collection as they are acquired.

Description of Subordinate Components

Series 1. Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15462
Language English.

William Lanier Washington, Westport, to Henry Woodhouse, New York

Unit ID 2018-SC-013-004
Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15465
Unit Date 1929 January 15
Text 1 (box)
Container 1929.01.15 (folder)
Language English.
Creator Washington, William Lanier, 1865-1933
Extent 1 pages28 x 22 cm
Scope and Contents
Typescript signed. Stamped "CONFIDENTIAL" in red. Lanier Washington offers Woodhouse some Washington relics for sale.
Keywords
Woodhouse, Henry, 1884-1970

Series 2. Manuscript Forgeries

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15463
Language English.

Subseries 2.1. Robert Spring Forgeries

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15466
Language English.

Robert Spring forgery of George Washington to Jabez Huntington, 1781 April 10

Unit ID W-652
Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/7188
Unit Date between 1850? and 1869
Text 1 (box)
Container SPRING 1 (folder)
Links
"George Washington to Jabez Huntington, 10 April 1781" by Robert Spring: 2016-04-06
<http://catalog.mountvernon.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16829coll27/id/36/rec/2http://cdm16829.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/api/singleitem/collection/p16829coll27/id/36/rec/2>
Language English.
Creator Spring, Robert, 1813-1876
Extent 1 Leaves12 x 21 cm
Keywords
Forgeries
Washington, George, 1732-1799

Robert Spring forgery of Dogue Run survey fragment

Unit ID 2018-SC-071
Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15483
Unit Date between 1850? and 1869
Text 1 (box)
Container SPRING 1 (folder)
Language English.
Creator Spring, Robert, 1813-1876
Extent 1 Leaves6 x 20 cm
Scope and Contents
Forgery of a survey fragment in the hand of George Washington, possibly by Robert Spring.
Keywords
Washington, George, 1732-1799

Subseries 2.2. Joseph Cosey Forgeries

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15467
Language English.

Joseph Cosey forgery of George Washington's general orders, 1775 July 3

Unit ID RM-889; MS-5387
Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/7187
Unit Date 1930s?
Text 1 (box)
Container COSEY 1 (folder)
Language English.
Creator Cosey, Joseph, 1887-1950
Extent 1 Leaves11 x 19 cm
Scope and Contents
Forgery attributed to Joseph Cosey but possibly the work of Robert Spring.
Keywords
Washington, George, 1732-1799

Joseph Cosey forgery of check to J. W. Pierce, 1783 August 7

Unit ID 2018-SC-013-002

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15468

Unit Date 1930s?

Text 1 (box)

Container COSEY 1 (folder)

Language English.

Creator Cosey, Joseph, 1887-1950

Extent 1 Leaves9 x 18 cm

Scope and Contents

Manuscript with forged signatures of George Washington and Aaron Burr.

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

Burr, Aaron, 1756-1836

Joseph Cosey forgery of an embargo on fishing vessels, 1794 March 28

Unit ID 2018-SC-013-001

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15469

Unit Date 1930s?

Text 1 (box)

Container COSEY 1 (folder)

Language English.

Creator Cosey, Joseph, 1887-1950

Extent 1 Leaves30 x 26 cm

Scope and Contents

Manuscript with a forged George Washington signature.

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

Subseries 2.3. Charles Weisberg Forgeries

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15470

Language English.

Charles Weisberg forgery of George Washington to James Wood, 1796 September 12

Unit ID 2018-SC-013-003

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15473

Unit Date between 1930? and 1945

Text 1 (box)

Container WEISBERG 1 (folder)

Language English.

Creator Weisberg, Charles, -1945

Extent 1 Leaves29 x 20 cm

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

Subseries 2.4. Unidentified Forgeries

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15471

Language English.

Forgery of George Washington to David Humphreys, 1796 June 1

Unit ID A-421

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/7189

Unit Date 1900s?

Text 1 (box)

Container UNIDENTIFIED 1 (folder)

Language English.

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

Humphreys, David, 1752-1818

Forgery of land application by Luke Cats for a tract of land in Northumberland county Pennsylvania, 1794 October 11

Unit ID 2018-SC-074

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15484

Unit Date date unknown

Text 1 (box)

Container UNIDENTIFIED 1 (folder)

Language English.

Extent 1 pages34 x 22 cm

Scope and Contents

Printed form with forged Washington signature.

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

Series 3. Bookplates

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15464

Language English.

Subseries 3.1. George Washington Bookplates

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15472

Language English.

George Washington bookplate restrike

Unit ID A-263; M-794b

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15474

Unit Date circa 1890

Text 1 (box)

Container GEORGE WASHINGTON 1 (folder)

Language English.

Extent 1 Leaves13 x 9 cm

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

George Washington bookplate restrike

Unit ID RM-1079; MS-5723

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15475

Unit Date circa 1890

Text 1 (box)

Container GEORGE WASHINGTON 1 (folder)

Language English.

Extent 1 Leaves17 x 13 cm

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

George Washington spurious bookplate

Unit ID W-794a

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15476

Unit Date circa 1863

Text 1 (box)

Container GEORGE WASHINGTON 2 (folder)

Language English.

Extent 1 Leaves86 x 69 mm

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

George Washington spurious bookplate

Unit ID RM-1108; MS-5790

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/15477

Unit Date circa 1863

Text 1 (box)

Container GEORGE WASHINGTON 2 (folder)

Language English.

Extent 1 Leaves96 x 88 mm, mounted on 12 x 17 cm card stock

Keywords

Washington, George, 1732-1799

Subseries 3.2. Bushrod Washington Bookplates

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/21261

Language English.

Bushrod Washington bookplate

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/21262

Unit Date 1800s

Graphic Materials 1 (box)

Container BUSHROD WASHINGTON 1 (folder)

Language English.

Extent 1 Leaves14 x 10 cm

Keywords

Washington, Bushrod, 1762-1829

Series 4. Facsimiles

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/17756

Language English.

The George Washington Folio produced by the United States Mint

Unit ID 2018-SC-093

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/17761

Unit Date 1999

Text 1 (box)

Container 1999 (folder)

Language English.

Extent 20 Sheets

Scope and Contents

Reproductions of six manuscripts from the life of George Washington, with a letter from Philip N. Diehl, Director of the United States Mint.