

Mason, George papers

George Mason Papers

1706-1858

Title Statement

Mason, George papersGuide to the George Mason Papers Mss. 39.2 M38

Author: Finding Aid Authors: Special Collections Staff.

Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections Research Center

William & Mary Special Collections Research Center
Earl Gregg Swem Library
400 Landrum Dr
Williamsburg, Virginia
Business Number: 757-221-3090
spcoll@wm.edu
URL: <https://libraries.wm.edu/libraries-spaces/special-collections>

2007-07-18

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-05-15 12:18:10 -0400.

Language Usage: The collection description/finding aid is written in English

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Mss. 39.2 M38

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/1170

Unit Date

1706-1858

Language

English

Creator

Mason, George, 1725-1792

Creator

Mason, Ann

Creator

Mason, John, 1766-1849

Creator

Mason, John Thomson, 1815-1873

Creator

Mason, Stevens Thomson, 1760-1803

Extent

0.01 Linear Foot

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Purchases.

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Biographical Information:

George Mason IV (December 11, 1725 - October 7, 1792) was a United States patriot, statesman, and delegate from Virginia to the U.S. Constitutional Convention. He is called the "Father of the Bill of Rights". For all of these reasons he is considered to be one of the "Founding Fathers" of the United States. Mason wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which detailed specific rights of citizens. In addition to anti-federalist Patrick Henry, he was later a leader of those who pressed for the addition of explicitly stated individual rights as part of the U.S. Constitution, and did not sign the document in part because it lacked such a statement. His efforts eventually succeeded in convincing the Federalists to modify the Constitution and add the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments of the Constitution). The Bill of Rights is based on Mason's earlier Virginia Declaration of Rights.

Mason served at the Virginia Convention in Williamsburg in 1776. During this time he created drafts of the first declaration of rights and state constitution in the Colonies. Both were adopted after committee alterations; the Virginia Declaration of Rights was adopted June 12, 1776, and the Virginia Constitution was adopted June 29, 1776.

Mason was appointed in 1786 to represent Virginia as a delegate to a Federal Convention, to meet in Philadelphia for the purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation. He served at the Federal Convention in Philadelphia from May to September 1787 and contributed significantly to the formation of the Constitution. "He refused to sign the Constitution, however, and returned to his native state as an outspoken opponent in the ratification contest." One objection to the proposed Constitution was that it lacked a "declaration of rights". As a delegate to Virginia's ratification convention, he opposed ratification without amendment. Among the amendments he desired was a bill of rights. This opposition, both before and during the convention, may have cost Mason his long friendship with his neighbor George Washington, and is probably a leading reason why George Mason became less well-known than other U.S. founding fathers in later years. On December 15, 1791, the U.S. Bill of Rights, based primarily on George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights, was ratified in response to the agitation of Mason and others.

At the convention he was one of the five most frequent speakers and he always spoke with confidence. He believed that slave trade should be abolished, even though he himself owned slaves; he believed in the disestablishment of the church; and he was a strong anti-federalist. He wanted a three-part government, but he also wanted very powerful state governments.

An important issue for him in the convention was the bill of rights. He didn't want the United States to be like England. He foresaw sectional strife and feared the power of government.

Mason died peacefully at his home, Gunston Hall, on October 7, 1792. Gunston Hall, located in Mason Neck, Virginia, is now a tourist attraction. The George Mason Memorial is located in East Potomac Park, Washington, D.C., near the Thomas Jefferson Memorial; it was dedicated on April 9, 2002. A major bridge connecting Washington, DC, to Virginia is officially named the George Mason Memorial Bridge (it is part of the 14th Street bridge complex). George Mason High School and George Mason University located in Fairfax,

Virginia, is named in his honor, as are Mason County, Kentucky, Mason County, West Virginia and Mason County, Illinois.

Scope and Contents

Letters, 1779-1792, from George Mason at "Gunston Hall," Fairfax Co., Va. to his son John in Bordeaux, France and to Richard Henry Lee commenting on Maryland's claim to Virginia's western lands; and a political essay, post 24 January 1791 by Mason on representation in Fairfax Co., Va. Includes papers and letters of other members of the Mason and Thomson families, in particular, Stevens Thomson Mason (his will and a letter to James Monroe on Alien and Sedition Laws), Armistead Thomson Mason (his will), Ann Mason; and biographical information by John Thomson Mason.

Related Materials:

A large portion of Mason's papers are housed at Mason's former estate, now a museum known as the Gunston Hall Plantation, Mason Neck, Va. See the following link for more information

<http://www.gunstonhall.org/>

Keywords

Correspondence

Financial records

Manuscripts (document genre)

Virginia--Politics and Government--18th century

Alien and Sedition laws, 1798

Fairfax County (Va.)--History--18th century

Fairfax County (Va.)--History--19th century

Lee, Richard Henry, 1732-1794

Description of Subordinate Components

Papers

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/269266

Unit Date 1706-1858

Mixed Materials Manuscripts Group 2 Box 21 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English

Scope and Contents

Item 1: Ann Mason, [Stafford Co., Va.], to Haswell and Hunt, London, [England], Ca. 1743 Cy. of L. 1p.

Item 2: Ann Mason, [Stafford Co., Va.], to John Thomson, London, [England], Ca. 1743 Cy. of L. 1p.

Item 3: G[eorge] Mason, "Gunston Hall," [Fairfax Co., Va.], to Richard Henry Lee, n.p., April 12, 1779 ALS. 4pp. Including TCy. of ALS. 2 items.

Item 4: Will[ia]m Fitzhugh, Calvert County, [Md.], to William Bruff, n.p., May 13, 1781 ALS. 1p.

Item 5: G[eorge] Mason, "Gunston Hall," [Fairfax Co.], Virginia, to his son John Mason, Bordeaux, [France], May 14, 1789 ALS. 7pp. Including TCy of ALS. 2 items.

Item 6: Ste[ven]s Thom[son] Mason, Loudoun County, [Va.], to Robert Carter, "Nominy [sic] Hall," [Westmoreland Co., Va.], February 26, 1791 ALS. 2pp.

Item 7: G[eorge] Mason, "Gunston Hall," [Fairfax Co.], Virginia, to his son John Mason, Bordeaux, [France], April 16, 1791 Including TCy of ALS and XCy of ALS. 3 items.

Item 8: G[eorge] Mason, "Gunston Hall," [Fairfax Co., Va.], to his son John Mason, George Town, Maryland, August 20, 1792 ALS. 5pp. Including TCy of ALS. 2 items.

Item 9: Ste[ven]s Thom[son] Mason and Wilson C. Nicholas, Phil[adelphi]a, [Pa.], to James Monroe, Richmond, [Va.], April 29, 1800 Cy of LS. 2pp.

Item 10: Ste[ven]s Thom[son] Mason, Phil[adelphi]a, [Pa.], to James Monroe, n.p., May 15, 1800 Cy of LS. 1p.

Item 11: Tho[ma]s Randolph, Richmond, [Va.], to "Betsey," E[lizabeth] Moir, W[illia]msburg, [Va.], February 25, 1807 ALS. 3pp.

Item 12: Moncure, Robinson, and Pleasants, Richmond, [Va.], to John T. Mason, Jr., Lexington, Kentucky, February 15, 1820 ALS. 3pp. Including an ANS from J[ohn] T. Mason, n.d., n.p.

Item 13: Ann C. Mason, "Temple Hall," to Elizabeth Moir, Lexington, Kentucky, October 20, 1821 ALS. 4pp.

Item 14: M[?] Mason, Raspberry Plain, to her son John Thomson Mason, Indian Fields, near Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, May 31, 1823 ALS. 2pp.

Item 15: Jo[h]n Thomson Mason, Baltimore, [Md.], to Charles Lanman, n.p., June 7, 1858 Biographical information concerning Thomas Mason, Stevens Thomson Mason, and Armistead Thomson Mason for Lanman's directory of U.S. Congressmen. ALS. 2pp. Purchased from Maury Bromsen.

Item 16: N. Carroll Mason, n.p. to Judge [John Thomson] Mason, n.p., June 16, 1858 Biographical information concerning Stevens Thomson Mason and Armistead T. Mason. ALS. 1p. Including Sen. James Murray Mason's (George Mason's grandson) response to Charles Lanman's request for information concerning George Mason. Purchased from Maury Bromsen

Item 17: Jo[h]n Thomson Mason, Baltimore, [Md.], to Charles Lanman, n.p., June 22, 1858 Biographical information concerning Thomas Mason, Stevens Thomson Mason, and Armistead Thomson Mason for Lanman's directory of U.S. Congressmen. ALS. 3pp. Purchased from Maury Bromsen.

Item 18: Will of Mary Thomson, March 21, 1706 D. 3pp.

Item 19 Will of William Thomson, November 23, 1739 D. 4pp.

Item 20: Bill of loading for tobacco shipped by Stevens Thomson Mason upon the ship Glory, August 1, 1785. 1p.

Item 21: Political essay by G[eorge] M[ason] concerning the right of suffrage and the disposition of the county of Fairfax in the re-districting of Virginia for the election of congressmen, Ca. 1790 AMsS. 3pp.

Item 22: Will of Stevens Thomson Mason, April 22, 1803 Cy of DS. 6pp.

Item 23: Will of Stevens Thomson Mason, September 27, 1815 Cy of DS. 3pp.

Item 24: Will of Armistead T. Mason, November 7, 1818 ADS. 10pp.

Item 10: Stevens Thomson Mason, Philadelphia, PA., to James Monroe

Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/576610

Unit Date 1800-05-15