

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

FACTS REGARDING THE "FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY"



MUCH has been written of our great hero, George Washington, and more is yet to be written as the years roll by. One of the most readable, interesting and entertaining articles that has come to our notice recently appeared in an issue of *The Oregonian*, and is as follows:

George Washington's diary for the year 1799 contains the following entry:

"February 11.—Went up to Alexandria to the celebration of my birthday. Many maneuvers were performed by the uniformed corps, and an elegant ball and supper at night."

This was the year of his death. He died on the 14th of the following December, but his diary 10 years earlier, in 1789, contains a similar entry, the date, February 11, being "old style" and corresponding to February 22 of the modern calendar.

Thus it appears that Washington's birthday was celebrated by a grateful people while he was still alive. It was also made every year the occasion of quiet merrymaking at Mount Vernon, where all the slaves on the estate, who numbered about 150, enjoyed a special holiday, with much feasting and drinking of "methigler"—a harmless brew of fermented honey, water and spices.

Neighbors and old friends were invited to dinner as a matter of course and 25 or 30 people sat down to that bounteous meal in the "banquet hall" at the north end of the mansion.

The estate was 12 miles in area, much of it being forested. It was in a region exceedingly rich in game, and the venison, wild turkey, canvas-back duck and partridge served at Mount Vernon were obtained at the expense of powder and shot—not to mention the delicious fish which the river supplied. The master of this baronial property raised his own beef and mutton and his vegetables were grown in a kitchen garden which to the present day produces regular crops of such "truck" for market.

With all these dishes, put on the table at one time after the manner of the day, each gentlemen present, who might chance to find himself opposite something that needed carving, was expected to perform that duty. Puddings and pies accompanied the rest of the provender, leaving nothing for what we should call dessert except fruit and nuts, which were brought on after the cloth was withdrawn from the polished mahogany.

With the dessert came the wine, and plenty of it. There was "sack"