

Washington Was Modern In More Ways Than One

Father Of His Country, Judged By Present Standards, Was Up-To-Date

By Etta May Smith

WEEK-END traffic accidents—real estate subdivisions—million-dollar night card parties—advertising—big game hunting—scientific farming—shopping for a second-hand vehicle.

Not only are these conditions to be met by the modern man of 1937, but they were conditions that were met by George Washington, born 205 years ago.

For George Washington, judged by all the standards of today, was a modern. Although he lived when this country was very young, he was not only abreast of his times, but was way ahead of them. If he were alive today he would probably be driving one of the better cars, (American made, of course!),—but one which was easy on the upkeep, backing real estate subdivisions, and attending Rotary luncheons.

Lotteries were popular and legal in Washington's day, many of them being for religious and educational purposes. Washington took his share of such chances and recorded the results in his account books, often with dry humor. In 1766 he wrote that he "invested" in the York Lottery, though with no beneficial results. In 1775, he held, in the six tickets he held, in the land lottery in Uster county, New York, were "fortunate." On another occasion he invested 1 pound 4 shillings in a raffle for an encyclopedia Britannica, "which," he recorded regretfully, "I did not win."

Washington was modern, too, in his attitude toward advertising. He appreciated the fact that it pays to advertise. When he had a parcel of land he wanted to subdivide he put a large advertisement in the Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser, stating that he had obtained patents for upwards of 20,000 acres of land on the Ohio and Great Kanawha, and that he proposed to divide the same into any sized tenements that might be desired and lease them upon moderate terms. That deal also established his status as a modern realtor.

Still further evidence of his faith in advertising is contained in an advertisement in a New

York newspaper in 1780 in which he stated that he supplied his house servants with cash for operating his home (the presidential mansion), and that he would not be responsible for bills contracted by them.

Washington, for presidential tours, set the precedent which has been followed ever since and greatly enlarged upon. Depreciation and inflation of currency proved just as puzzling and troublesome to Washington as it does to us. In a communication to the President of Congress on April 23, 1779, Washington said: "Is there anything doing, or that can be done, to restore the credit of our money? The depreciation of it has got to so alarming a point that a wagon-load of money will scarcely purchase a wagon-load of provisions." He was quite disgruntled when the price of pork advanced after he had placed an order for same.

We are fully able to understand, since 1929, the attitude of the Father of his Country toward speculation, "speculation, speculation, engrossing, forestalling," he wrote to a friend, "with all their concomitants, afford too many melancholy proofs of the decay of public virtue, and too glaring instances of its being the interest and desire of too many, who would wish to be thought friends, to continue the war."

Despite the busy life he led in politics, fighting, and farming, Washington had the thing the modern man is demanding more and more—leisure. He was a good horseman. According to his expense account his riding outfit for himself and horse would have been the envy of even the movie

cowboys of today. Hunting was one of his favorite sports. However, not all his hunting experiences were confined to foxes in the vicinity of his Virginia home. In the autumn of 1770 he went "big game hunting" in the Ohio region with his friend Dr. Craik.

Washington believed in "going West," though not in the movie sense. Nor did he wait for Horace Greeley to point the finger in the direction of the setting sun. As far back as 1748 he went West, going over the Alleghanies, and liked it so well that he went West several times. He believed that the West had valuable resources and would be a valuable addition to the Atlantic Coast colonies. He even predicted that Detroit would one day be an important trade center.

Washington has been termed America's first "scientific farmer." He did his own experimenting and from the results built up his own theories. He tested the seeds in various soils and tried out a variety of fertilizers. He kept a weather record and experimented as to the best time for planting. He rotated his crops and kept records of his returns. He was successful in grafting. Because tobacco impoverished the soil, he turned his tobacco fields into grain, grazing, and orchards. He studied and practiced methods

for conserving and improving the soil.

The best of tools and newest productions of machinery were demanded by Washington, and if some new idea did not prove satisfactory, he quickly discarded it for a newer, more practical one. He was not afraid of departing from the old way of doing things.

Washington was alarmed at the ill-treatment of farm lands and said that within a few years the increased sterility of lands would force the inhabitants to seek new locations. He would not have been surprised at the droughts and dust storms of recent years. He wanted to teach the people how to improve their land and increase their crops. For that reason he tried to establish a department of agriculture to do for the farmer just the things it is doing today.

A keen interest in commerce

and transportation facilities was taken by Washington and he had a vision of opening highways to the West so that Western farmers might have a market for their crops. He was financially interested in several transportation projects.

Washington shared the modern idea that parents fall short of understanding their offspring. After the Revolution, when he was a distinguished man and his house was constantly full of notable visitors, his mother, Mary Ball Washington, wrote that she would like to visit Mount Vernon and spend some time there with him and Martha. In reply Washington wrote that he did not want her to come; that she would not understand the people who were with him, and that they would not understand her; that she would be miserable in such society and that it would make him unhappy.

Washington did a seemingly unmodern thing when he refused a salary as President. Although he had just been forced to borrow money, he told Congress that he did not wish a salary, but that they could pay his expenses if



they desired. They did desire, and appropriated \$25,000 annually for this purpose. In refusing this salary he set the precedent which fortunately has been followed by

some public spirited men of our times who have called themselves dollar a year men.

Washington refused a crown, and, like a recent ruler of an

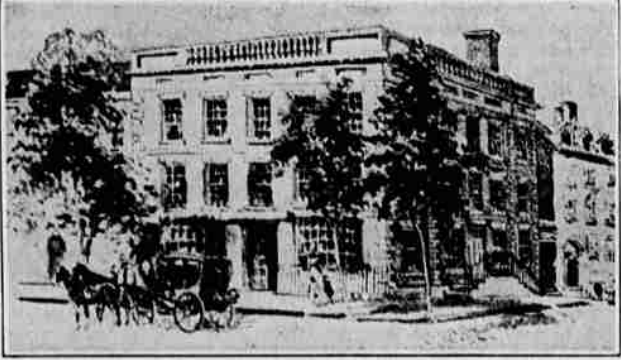
Anglo-Saxon Nation, leave of his people as he

As citizen, burgess, trustee, and president of faithful, forward-looking constructive service.

In both private life and life Washington stood progress. He was not looking backward and the past. He refused to be then prevailing conditions. He believed in change and forward progressive movement.

He was a bold experimenter because he was not afraid of an attempt to get away from the old order of the colonies were necessary to obtain their freedom from old rule. Because he believed in cooperation he led the way into a union which would mutual benefits for all.

The success and progress of Modern America is testimony to the fact that Washington was one of the modern men.



The First Presidential Mansion, At Pearl and Cherry Streets, New York.

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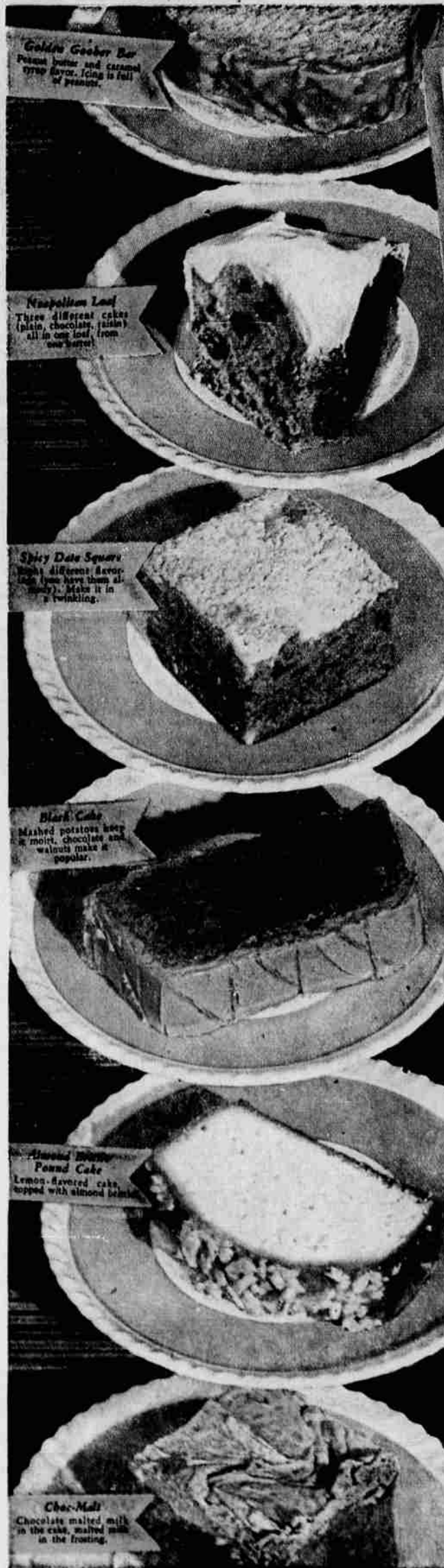
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lous and lead us to expect that our friends at Paris in a little time will come flying through the air instead of ploughing the ocean to get to America."

Another proof of Washington's interest and knowledge of modern devices was shown as early as 1776 when he wrote Thomas Jefferson a description of a powder-charged submarine torpedo, which, when striking an anchored ship, would destroy it. That same year Washington spent the night on the dock at New York harbor and heard the explosion of the first submarine which was attempting to destroy Admiral Howe's flagship, the "Eagle."

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