

George Mason, Patriot and Statesman



IF THE word "immortality" be used with the familiar formula, "Some are born —, some achieve —, and some have — thrust upon them," it will be found that the last phrase most aptly applies to George Mason, father of the Virginia bill of rights, which substantially constitutes the first ten amendments of the Constitution of the United States. Florence Seville Herryman writes, in the Boston Herald.

Such a man was George Mason of Gunston hall, in Fairfax county, Virginia, who was the fourth to bear this name in America. But although he was "as patriotic as Washington, more intelligent than Jefferson, and far superior to Patrick Henry in philosophy," as some one has said, his name is as yet obscure compared to theirs, because he ignored opportunities to immortalize it to an extent scarcely paralleled by any other patriot.

Of English Descent.

George Mason exhibited, to a marked extent, qualities of mind and character which he had apparently inherited from his great-grandfather, the first George Mason of Brewood, Staffordshire, England, who had been a member of parliament under Charles I, and had fearlessly and eloquently opposed those royal measures which seemed to him arbitrary. Yet at the same time he believed in supporting the established order against radicalism, for he fought with the cavaliers against Oliver Cromwell, after whose victory he was obliged to escape to Virginia, where he settled in Stafford county, and soon gained wealth and prominence in the colony.

George Mason IV was born in Stafford (later Fairfax) county, Virginia, in 1725. No record of his birth has been found, and consequently there is extensive confusion as to the exact date. His education began early, for he attended a boarding school in Prince William county from the years 1736 to 1739, inclusive, at a cost of 1,000 pounds of tobacco annually for board, and 845 pounds for schooling and books. Such schooling had customarily been preceded by private tutelage at the young student's home.

Mason's Service to State.

Throughout his career George Mason contributed to the political literature of the United States some of the most important documents ever written.

The Non-Importation resolutions constituted his first outstanding piece of work, and were a momentous step toward the Revolution. George Washington, the near neighbor and close friend of George Mason, who was frequently associated with him in schemes for the public welfare, wrote to Mason warmly advocating non-importation associations, which should be bound by voluntary agreement not to import or use articles from England which were burdened with obnoxious duties. This scheme was thoroughly sound, as it attacked the Achilles heel of Great Britain, the purses of her merchants. Mason heartily favored the idea, and drew up the plans, which Washington was to sponsor at the next meeting of the house of burgesses, of which he was a member at the time, while Mason was not. Lord Botetourt, then governor of Virginia (and incidentally one of the sanest and most popular of all pre-Revolutionary incumbents of that office), had heard of these resolutions and felt obliged to dissolve the house before they could be offered. But its members met immediately afterward and unanimously adopted this Mason and Washington scheme.

Declined Seat in Congress.

George Mason was a member of the Virginia convention during the years 1775 and 1776. He was elected a delegate to the Continental congress in 1775 and again in '77, but he declined to serve, for his beloved had died in '73, only thirty-nine years of age, and he felt he owed his first allegiance to his motherless brood.

Yet in all probability the services he rendered the cause of liberty in his own state surpassed in importance anything he could have done in the Continental congress.

Early in 1776, in Virginia's last colonial assembly before the Revolution, George Mason drafted the Bill of Rights, his greatest work, and also the first constitution of Virginia, both adopted unanimously by the convention. The Bill of Rights was substantially the inspiration of the Declaration of Independence, for Jefferson was an intimate friend and enthusiastic admirer of George Mason, his senior by 18 years, and often visited Gunston hall, where there is now a "Jefferson"

room in which the great Democrat wrote an outline of the Declaration, Defended States' Rights.

Mason was one of the commissioners who made a compact with commissioners from Maryland on the jurisdiction of the Chesapeake bay, the Po-



George Mason.

tomac and Potomac rivers. A conference held by these commissioners at Mount Vernon was in reality the first steps toward a new federal government, for Maryland, ratifying the compact, proposed that Pennsylvania and Delaware should be invited to join them, and Virginia favored inviting all other states to consider a uniform commercial system.

George Mason's next great role was that of a delegate from Virginia to the constitutional convention in Philadelphia in 1787.

His activities in the convention were highly influential and altogether creditable. He was ever alert to the proceedings and on his feet in an instant



South Front of Gunston Hall.

to defend the states' rights with what Flanders termed "inflexible integrity and unbending republicanism." He was the first to argue that coercion could not be used against states; first to see the danger in the resolution that the national legislature should be empowered to call out the force of the Union against any delinquent member, and the first to suggest an acceptable alternative.

He opposed every measure which would perpetuate slavery, yet at the same time advocated that the South should be protected in regard to those slaves already held.

He proposed the Virginia constitution (which he had written) as a model for the new national constitution. But although a great number of features were adopted in this new organ which Mason had consistently fought against, such as a single executive, he was willing to sign until toward the end of the convention, when it passed the clause giving indefinite powers to congress and to the executive, and "the power given to congress, by a bare majority, to pass navigation acts," which would bind over the minority southern states to the eastern states.

So, on September 17, the Constitution was read and signed by all except Mason, Edmund Randolph and Elbridge Gerry. Mason returned to Virginia and led the fight the following year against ratification.

Within two years, as we recall, the Constitution received ten amendments, which were substantially Mason's bill of rights; and the eleventh amendment prohibiting suits against states in federal courts is the direct fruit of Mason's arguments.

But his fight proved vain, and he retired to Gunston hall, where he died a few years later, on October 7, 1792.

MEDFORD NEWS

Bliss Heine

Captain Hansen of the National Guards, staged a very interesting boxing program in the armory on Monday evening before a large crowd of fans. In the first preliminary Art Hautman, 118 pounds, and Billy Nelson, 113 pounds, fought four rounds to a draw; in the second preliminary Sonny Austin, 140, and King, 140, fought four rounds to a draw; in the third preliminary Warren "Kid" Bybee, 126, won in the third round over Bud Thomas, 126. The main event went nine rounds between Padelford of Medford and Johnson of Portland. Pad-

elford made the best showing throughout eight rounds and in the ninth Johnson came back fast and was given the decision by the referee.

Larry Simpson's Orchestra played a return engagement on Monday at the Oriental Gardens, again to a capacity crowd. This is the same orchestra that played the opening engagement.

The Oriental Gardens gave a very enjoyable and successful dance last Saturday evening with music furnished by Tillotson's 7-piece orchestra from Portland. This orchestra will be kept here for some time. The feature of the evening was a Charleston exhibition. On Monday evening the management secured a return engagement with Larry Simpson's 11-piece orchestra which made such a hit with valley dancers on the opening night. This is the finest dance orchestra ever heard in Medford.

In addition to having large fans recently installed, A. W. Walker has had the floor improved and a tank of ice water installed in his popular hall in the Medford building. This popular place continues to have

large crowds in attendance.

Nearly two hundred students have enrolled for the six weeks' summer course at the Ashland Normal.

More than 3,500 automobiles carrying nearly 11,000 people have thus far entered Crater Lake National Park. A number of the Guardsmen went up Saturday and Sunday.

SAM'S VALLEY

S. S. Abbott, was in Jacksonville last Saturday on business in connection with the Sam's Valley school district, of which he is the clerk.

R. V. Williams and family have moved to Medford to reside. We are sorry to lose Mr. and Mrs. Williams from our midst. However Mr. Williams still has his orchard property here in the valley.

Loyal D. Abbott was a business visitor in Jacksonville Saturday.

Mrs. F. M. McKinnis and daughter Wenonah, were the hostesses at a dinner last Sunday given in honor of the birthday of F. M. McKinnis who was 68 years of age on June 25.

The following guests were present for the occasion: Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Baker and children of Ashland,

Wm. C. McKinnis and family of Ashland, Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Roseberry and children of Medford, M. M. Abbott of Central Point, Mrs. C. E. Roach and daughters of Ashland.

Mrs. A. L. Baker and children are spending a few days at the farm home with her parents Mr. and Mrs. McKinnis.

The hot weather still prevails—although Tuesday was not quite as hot as last week.

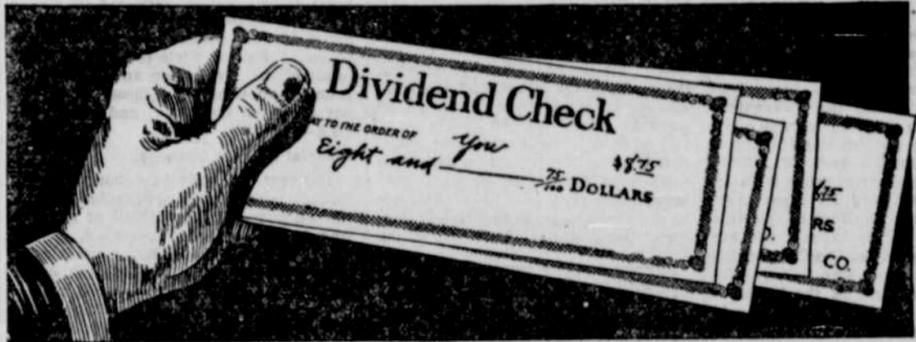
Mr. Bailey has moved into the house recently vacated by the Williams family. Mr. Bailey is employed on the Williams orchard.

Swimming seems to be the correct thing these hot days and evenings. Many of the young folks go to the river for a swim in the evenings.

5-acre tract for sale, good soil, plenty water in dry years at low rate, well drained, 3/4-mile from Grants Pass on state highway. Land values increasing, good market for strawberries, etc. \$1200 cash if taken soon. Address P. O. Box 173, Central Point.

Brick Ice Cream at Damon Cafe.

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