

ART. XI—*Whitehaven and the Washington Family* By W. S. HARPER, ESQ.

*Read at Workington, June 16th, 1880.*

THE substance of the following short paper was communicated by the writer to a Whitehaven newspaper a few years ago. Under ordinary circumstances its object would have been answered by such publicity as it then received; but a gentleman interested in this Society expressed an opinion that it was desirable to place the few facts it contained on permanent record in the Transactions of the Society. A more important purpose may perhaps be served, if it leads to a little attention being concentrated on a subject so interesting in itself, as the pedigree of that branch of the Washington Family from which the illustrious first President of the United States sprang.

The writer may here state that for a few of the facts contained in the paper he is indebted to Miss Fanny Bland, a lady who has taken much trouble to elucidate the Washington pedigree.

So far as the present paper goes, it is principally the Washingtons of Whitehaven on whose family or business relations any light can be thrown; and one would fain hope that not only in Whitehaven alone, but in other parts of the county, there still exists some material as yet unrevealed which would establish a connecting link between that family and the immediate ancestors of George Washington. Whitehaven, as is well known, had much to do with the early training of Paul Jones, who accomplished for the rebellious Provincials by sea very much what Washington did by land. It would be not a little singular if the town could also establish a claim to be associated with the family which numbered George  
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Washington amongst its scions, or even if it could be satisfactorily shown that Whitehaven was the port from which his paternal great-grandfather sailed to better his fortune in the New World.

So far as researches into the Washington pedigree have gone, it seems certain that John and Lawrence Washington, two brothers, then married, sailed from England to Virginia about 1655-7, settled in Westmorland County, made their wills in 1675, and died within a few days of each other in 1677; and that the first-named, John Washington, was the great-grandfather of the President. The will of John Washington was a somewhat curious one, showing, amongst other things, how rich this old-world settler was in tobacco, which was to the Virginian planter what flocks and herds were to the Old Testament patriarchs; but it does not concern us to notice the will further than to state that by one of its provisions John Washington left certain property in England, together with £1,000 and 4,000 weight of tobacco, to his sister, who had come, or was about to come, to Virginia from this country. It may be stated incidentally, however, that he directed his body to be buried on the plantation on which he lived, by the side of his first wife and her two children; that a funeral sermon was to be preached, and no other funeral kept; and that a tablet with the Ten Commandments was to be sent for to England and given to the Church. The two brothers were buried together, in a vault on the estate. The estate, which is beautifully situated between Pope's Creek (called after the family of John Washington's second wife) and the Potomac River, still belongs to one of the Washington family.

The important question arising out of the will of John Washington is—Where was this property in England situated? It is not specifically named in the will, otherwise without doubt the obscurity surrounding George Washington's ancestry would ere this have been satisfactorily

torily cleared up. It is a rule of English law, I believe, that all interests in land should be in writing ; and on the supposition that John Washington really owned property in England at the close of the 17th century, it is not only possible, but even probable, that documentary evidence may lie hid in some nook or cranny to connect him with it. Lawrence Washington (John's brother), it may be noted, also left some property in England, to his daughter Mary ; but in his case also it is unknown where that property lay. In neither will was situation indicated.

The writer has seen it stated that John and Lawrence Washington emigrated from Whitehaven to America in 1657, in the good ship "Resolution" of this port. There is no evidence of this, so far as I know. An old print of Whitehaven in 1642 shows that the port then possessed a substantial quay, and was resorted to, if it did not actually own, a fair number of full-rigged ships, though of comparatively small tonnage ; and in a list of vessels belonging to the various seaports on the Cumberland coast thirty years or so after this date, it is stated that Whitehaven had no less than thirty-eight vessels, of a burden varying from four to sixty-one chaldrons (the chaldron being two tons thirteen cwt.) The extensive trade subsequently carried on between Whitehaven and Virginia, and which had reached its highest pitch of prosperity at the outbreak of the American War of Independence, had begun even then ; and as the brothers undoubtedly came from some part of the North of England (this is now admitted by all competent authorities), it is exceedingly probable that they sailed from Whitehaven, as the nearest port, in one of the vessels which were carrying on the Virginian trade over two centuries ago.

So far as the "Resolution" is concerned, however, it does not appear in any list of Whitehaven vessels until 1685—thirty years after the emigration of the two brothers, though, of course, it is possible enough it formed one of  
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the fleet of the port's mercantile marine for years previous to that date. The Resolution was a Virginian trader of 94 tons, and was commanded in 1685 by one Richard Kelsick—one of the old Whitehaven family of that name, no doubt. The captain of the vessel in which the Washingtons took passage was named John Greene; but of course, under the circumstances, no deduction can be drawn from this change in names. What is certain is that we cannot now tell in what ship the brothers sailed from England. Whitehaven Custom House records might have given this much information had they been preserved; but unfortunately they are not. Through the kindness of a late Collector, I was permitted to make search through a pile of neglected, musty old books and papers, in a vain endeavour to elucidate this point. They were all that had come down through two centuries or more, and had escaped the latter-day fate of being packed into hogsheads for the paper-mill; but these forgotten annals of Whitehaven shipping contained nothing earlier than 1735.

We know, however, from a transaction that took place on the voyage, that the owner of the ship, in which the brothers John and Lawrence Washington crossed the Atlantic, was named Edward Prescott, and the captain, as already stated, John Greene. The crew suspected a woman on board, named Richardson, of being a witch, and on that plea hung her; and John Washington, incensed at this outrage, preferred a charge against Prescott, who was held to bail by Governor Fendall, of Maryland, to answer it at the next Provincial Court held at St. Mary's. On the 30th September, 1659, Washington wrote from Westmorland County to the Governor as follows:—

“Hon'ble Sir,—Yours of this 29th instant, this day I received. I am sorry y't my extraordinary occasions will not permitt to bee att ye next Provincial Court to be held in Maryland ye 4th of this next month. Because then, God willing, I intend to gett my young sonne baptised. All ye company and gossips being already invited. Beside, in this  
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short time, witnesses cannot be got to come over. But if Mr. Prescott be bound to answer itt, yee next Provincial Court after this, I shall doe what lyeth in my power to gett them over. Sir, I shall desire you for to acquaynt mee whether Mr. Prescott be bound over to ye next Court, and when ye Court is, that I may have some time for to provide evidence, and soe I rest.—Yo'r ffriend and servant,

JOHN WASHINGTON.'

How the charge ended I am unable to say. From the fact of the owner being proceeded against in this Provincial Court, it would follow, I think, either that he was on board the vessel when the murder was committed, or that the vessel belonged to one or other of the small ports on the Virginian or Maryland shores of the Potomac.

It might be pointed out also, though it must count for very little, that the woman put to death was named Richardson, which is, I believe, generally accepted as a Cumberland name. Possibly she was merely one of the harmless Quaker sectaries, whose aggressive zeal, after the manner of her sect at the time, might have shocked the orthodoxy of Prescott's crew. A large Quaker emigration, as we know, set in to the American Colonies during the latter half of the 17th century, and in too many quarters—certainly in all the New England States—the followers of George Fox were looked upon with hostility, and treated with shocking barbarity. We know that in 1656 the Commissioners of the United Colonies denounced them as "fit instruments for propagating the kingdom of Satan," as "notorious heretics," and set on foot the most savage cruelties which whipping, torture, and death could compass. Further, just about the time the two brothers landed in Virginia, it had become the practice in all the New England States to carefully examine all quakers, to ascertain whether they bore the supposed mark set on witches by their infernal master. Bearing this in mind, it may easily be, as already said, that the woman Richardson was simply a poor Quakeress, who had fallen under  
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the suspicion of the crew as a witch ; and in this connection it may be worth noting that in 1654 (as Mr. R. S. Ferguson records in his "Early Cumberland and Westmorland Friends") we find that a Quaker named *Richard Richardson* is stated to have been sorely bruised in the face while abetting a zealous friend named Stubbs, who had a call to go into the Steeplehouse at Dean and interrupt the parson. All this, it may readily be admitted, is far-fetched, and very slightly increases the presumption—if, indeed, it increases it at all—that the brothers Washington and their unfortunate fellow-passenger embarked at Whitehaven. But the fact remains that we have three names associated with the vessel besides those of John and Lawrence Washington, and it might help to dispel what is obscure, if by any means further information regarding one or other of them could be stumbled upon. If Elizabeth Richardson had any connection with this district, perhaps some trace of it might be found in the records of the Pardshaw meeting-house, which are, as I understand, in the custody of a gentleman at Lorton.

The above exhausts all we know regarding the emigration of the two brothers. From what particular district they came is uncertain. Warton, near Carnforth, is indubitably the old home of the family, and the father and ancestors of the emigrants may have been born there ; but it is the case that any Johns or Lawrences whose names appear in the Warton registers in the early part of the 17th century as baptisms are also to be found as burials. There is no John or Lawrence unaccounted for. So far as we have gone, there has been nothing specially noteworthy in the connection of Whitehaven with the Washington family. We have no proof that the brothers John and Lawrence were settled here ere they emigrated to Virginia, and I may add that I am (for reasons which would cumber this paper with irrevelant matter to narrate) sceptical as to the claims which have been put forward on behalf of Shap,  
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and, in less degree, of Westmorland generally. There is a bare possibility that the brothers came from some part of the country—perhaps the parish of Washington in Durham—and settled in Whitehaven, where the coal trade in particular was being energetically developed by the two first Whitehaven baronets. At all events, whether this was so or not, we had a branch of the Washington family located in Whitehaven at the close of the 17th century, and during the first half of the 18th. No proof has so far been discovered that they were in any way related to the emigrants; but it is at least worth a consideration whether, looking to the trade carried on with Virginia, the Whitehaven Washingtons might not originally have settled here as agents or correspondents for their relatives in the colonies. The Washington family here were dyers, and it might be that the dyewoods used by them were sent from that great centre of Whitehaven trade, Virginia. There are numerous entries relating to the Whitehaven Washingtons in the registers at St. Bees and St. Nicholas's Churches. The oldest notes the christening of "Ellin, ye Daughter of Robt. Washington, Jan. 31, 1696-7." In the volume of the St. Bees registers commencing 1538, and concluding 1650, the name does not once occur, so we may reasonably conclude that the family was not then represented here. Robert Washington's, "Dyer" Washington's name, first occurs as an inhabitant of Whitehaven in 1695; in the Court Books of the Manor in 1707. The following is a list of all the entries relating to the Whitehaven Washingtons to be found in the register of St. Nicholas's Church:—

1696-7. Jany.	31.	Ellin ye daughter of Robt. Washington	chrisd.
1698-9. Feby.	19.	Mary ye daughter of Robt. Washington	chrisd.
1699-0. Feby.	18.	Robert ye son of Robert Washington	chrisd.
1700. April	13.	Mary ye daughter of Robt. Washington Tangier Row	burd.
" "	17.	Robert ye son of Robt. Washington Tan- gier Row	burd. 1701.

1701.	June	13.	Alice ye daughter of Robt. Washington	chrisd.
1703.	March	5.	Thomas ye son of Robt. Washington	chrisd.
1708.	May	4.	Alice the daughter of Robt. and Eliner Washington	burd.
1713.	Septm.	5.	Thomas ye son of Robt. Washington	burd.
1728.	Decm.	16.	Eleanor wife of Robt. Washington Dyer	burd.
1731.	Novem	9.	Lawrence Washington Dyer and Grace Bell spinr. both of Whitehaven by virtue of Lycence granted by F. Yates	mard.
1742.	May	8.	Robert Washington Dyer	burd.
1744.	Octob.	31.	Mr. Thomas Washington a stranger	burd.
1766.	May	19.	Lawrence Washington Bransty	burd.
1782	June	4.	Grace Washington King Street	burd.

From the Register of Grants belonging to the Lords of the Manor of St. Bees, we are able to glean some particulars as to the head of the family, Robert Washington. On the 3rd of February, 1707, he purchased from James (afterwards Sir James) Lowther a dyehouse, 17 yards front, in Tangier Street, with the garden backwards, and a parcel of land six yards broad and 37 yards long, by the beck side, at a rent of 2s. per annum, tenure freehold, paying for his purchase £40. This property is still used as a dye-house by the present owners, Messrs. Brown and Son. Under date the 28th of March, 1715, there is a further reference in the same register to another acquisition of Robert Washington's:—"Robert Washington, admitted originally of a parcel of ground of a tenterclose and garden, 27 $\frac{1}{8}$  yards north side, behind No. 7 b, 55 yards on west side, next rope-walk, 65 yards on the east side, and ten yards at the south end; rent 10s.; tenure, triple tenure from 28th May, 1715; fine, £1 10s." This second transaction of Robert Washington's seems to have related to land on or about the Whitehaven Cab Company's premises, and close to a street then or subsequently called "Hartley Street," which led from Tangier Street, on the lines of the present George Street, to a ropewalk belonging to the Hartley family. The tenterclose would be, I presume, a place for the worthy

dyer to dry his cloth. Robert Washington did not, however, retain this last purchase. On the 24th February, 1736, he surrendered it to Sir James Lowther for the consideration of £16 14s., and by that surrender the triple tenure was extinguished, and the property became freehold. In July, 1739, Sir James granted this parcel of ground, in freehold, to Thomas Hartley and Samuel Sandick—no doubt to be used for some purpose connected with the adjoining ropewalk, which existed on the site of the further end of George Street till about 1766. Robert Washington was succeeded in his business as a dyer by Lawrence Washington, who was probably his son, though his name does not appear in the Church registers previous to his marriage in 1731. That is to say, he does not seem to have been christened in Whitehaven.

We find from this Lawrence Washington's will (kept at Lancaster), made in 1759, and proved at his death in 1766, that he bequeaths to Grace, his widow, his "good dwelling-house in Tangier Street, with dye-house and garden, free rent of 1s. to Sir James Lowther, Bart., and half of that pew or seat in Trinity Chapel, No. 133," &c. The witnesses to this will are James Hodgson, Thomas Winder, and Thomas Hodgson. The will of Grace, widow of Lawrence Washington, dated 1779, bequeaths the whole of the before-mentioned property to Elizabeth, wife of Joseph Allison, of Whitehaven. Richard Clarke, of Newcastle, has a legacy of £5; Sally Fraser, spinster, of Whitehaven, £5; Betty Fisher, of Newlands, 10s. 6d.; and Ruth Rowland, of Newlands, 10s. 6d. The witnesses to this will are B. Hynes, George Clarke, and J. Wennington. Messrs. Brown's deeds of the dye-house begin with this Joseph Allison and his wife Elizabeth, whom I am disposed to connect with the once well-known family of Allison or Ellison, largely engaged in the tobacco trade in Whitehaven, and who occupied and owned a handsome mansion on the site of the Lonsdale Hotel, near the railway

railway station. This transfer of the property may be taken as pointing to some connection between the Ellisons and the Washingtons here, and the tobacco trade with Virginia might connect the former with the Washingtons from whom the President descended. I may add that no mention is made in the *Cumberland Pacquet*, the Whitehaven newspaper of the day, of Grace Washington's death; and this is not a little singular, looking to the carefully-kept obituary which the *Pacquet* furnished even at that early date. Perhaps this last of the Whitehaven Washingtons of whom we have any record, though buried at Whitehaven, did not die there; and her decease was thus overlooked in probably the only paper then published in the county. It may be she died at Keswick or neighbourhood; and hence this remembrance of half-a-guinea each to the two old ladies of Newlands, who may have paid her some little attention in her last illness. When I first wrote on this subject there was an old man then living (he may be yet) at Newlands, who perfectly well remembered Betty Fisher and Ruth Rowland, the recipients of Grace Washington's bounty. They are both buried in Crosthwaite Churchyard.

In conclusion, I may say I have a strong belief that the ancestor of the illustrious soldier-president George Washington sailed from Whitehaven to Virginia, and had a connection of some kind with the town—perhaps in the shipment of tobacco, dyewoods, and other Virginian produce. I am the more inclined to this opinion owing to the fact that a Whitehaven gentleman, a well-known antiquary, now deceased, has been heard to say something to this effect; and I feel convinced that he had some special knowledge on the subject. What that may be cannot now be ascertained. Every man, even where special tastes are lacking, takes with him to the tomb a certain amount of knowledge, which is thus lost to the world for ever. This subject has suffered like others from  
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this never-ceasing cause; and in giving a few facts and hazarding a few surmises, opening up as they do a number of side channels, I can only hope that others may find themselves in a position to contribute something more or less important to a much-vexed question, and one of no little interest locally.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—The Home of the Washingtons seems likely to stir up a controversy as fierce as that which raged over the birth-place of Homer. The American publication, known as Harper's New Monthly Magazine, for March, 1879, in an article entitled the "English Home of the Washingtons," put forth a claim for Sulgrave, in Northamptonshire, though the great American genealogist, Colonel J. L. Chester, has some time ago disposed of its claims in a very able and elaborate essay. Major Newsome, R.E., in a brochure, privately printed, advances a rival claim, Adwick-le-Street, county York. Miss Bland, who is a member of this Society, has devoted much time and trouble to this subject, having visited America for the purpose, and personally searched through the parish registers and probate offices in all likely places. Miss Bland has been very generous in aiding others with the results of her labours. It is to be wished that she herself would record them, ere they be lost, or others step in.