

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

By Earl Godwin

GEORGE WASHINGTON was not born on February 22, but on February 11, a fact that is testified to in his own diaries. This may seem startling; but the fact is that the first President of the United States was born before the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in the colonies. At the adoption of the new style of daily timekeeping all dates were put forward eleven days.

From the time of Julius Caesar until a comparatively recent period in the world's history the civilized world measured its time by what is known as the Julian calendar. There was an error in it of eleven minutes a year; a slight space of time as time is counted, but sufficient to amount to ten full days in the sixteenth century, the time of Pope Gregory XIII.

The English Government, always conservative, did not see fit to recognize the error officially until 1752. When the new system was adopted things jumped ahead eleven days, because it was found that the vernal equinox that year occurred just that number of days ahead of the old reckoning under the Julian calendar. Spain, Portugal, and France had adopted the change in 1582; the Roman Catholic population of Switzerland, Germany, and Netherlands in 1583; Poland in 1586; and Hungary in 1587. Russia has never really adopted it—witness the letters that would come from that country dated something like this: "St. Petersburg, February 11-22, 1910."

George Washington was twenty years old in 1752 when the change affected the American colonies, and of course up until then he had held his birthday celebration February 11. Later on, when his birthday began to be looked upon as a public event even in his own lifetime, there were celebrations and receptions held on February 11.

For instance, one of the entries in Washington's diary of 1789 reads, "FEBRUARY 12—Went with the family to Alexandria to a ball given in my honor by the citizens of it and its vicinity in commemoration of my birthday." February 11 fell on Sunday that year.

And ten years later, the year of his death, he wrote in his diary, "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."

Washington's diary for 1760 shows that he spent his birthday working on his farm. "Went out early myself and continued with my people until which time we got the house two hundred and fifty yards. Was informed then that Mr. Diggs was at my house, upon which I returned, finding him and Dr. Laurie there. The ground being soft, we found it no easy matter with

twenty hands, eight horses, and six oxen to get the house along." They were moving a small house from one part of the farm to another.

Washington spent February 11, 1768, hunting for ducks. His diary for the year tells about it, but says nothing about what luck he had.

There is no record of any celebration of Washington's birthday by the army under his command until 1781, when Rochambeau and several other French and American officers sat down to a dinner February 12 of that year, drinking the health of the commander in chief, who happened to be absent.

Rochambeau wrote to Washington about it. "Yesterday, Sunday, was the anniversary of your Excellency's birthday. We have put off celebrating that holiday until to-day by reason of the Lord's day. We will celebrate it with the sole regret that your Excellency be not a witness of the effusion and gladness of our hearts."

Washington wrote in reply, "The flattering distinction paid to the anniversary of my birthday is an honor for which I dare not attempt to express my gratitude. I confide in your Excellency's sensibility to interpret my feelings for this, and for the obliging manner in which you are pleased to announce it."

Newport, Rhode Island, claims the distinction of having been the first town to celebrate publicly February 22 as "Washington's birthday." Fifteen years before George Washington died a citizens' association met and arranged for bells to be tolled and cannon fired and houses decorated with flags on February 22. A square rigged and romantic looking India merchantman, lying in the harbor, was the scene of a brilliant entertainment to commemorate the occasion that evening.

The Tammany Society of New York decided in 1790 to celebrate February 22 as the real Washington's birthday, and other cities adopted the new style from that time on. In 1791, Philadelphia, then the National Capital, had a rousing time on February 22. "The Gazette" for 1791 shows what happened in the Quaker City that day:

"Yesterday being the anniversary of the birthday of the President of the United States, when he attained the fifty-ninth year of his age, the same was celebrated here with every demonstration of public joy. The artillery and light infantry corps of this city were paraded, and at twelve o'clock a federal salute was fired. The congratulatory compliments of the members of the Legislature of the Union, the heads of the departments of the Union, foreign ministers, officers civil and military of the State, the reverend clergy and strangers and citizens of distinction were presented to the President on this auspicious occasion."

AN ODD LOT OF SIGNS

By J. L. Harbour

LIKE the best humor of other kinds, the humor of the sign is of the unconscious variety.

Those who create it are not aware of the fact that they are adding to the gaiety of nations by their productions, or it may be that their own sense of humor is too blunted for them to know it when they are amusing. The man who put out the following sign was surely versatile, and yet a sense of humor was not among his gifts or he must have seen its absurdity.

"High Class Music furnished here for Concerts, Receptions, Bawls, and Parties. Also Chairs Canned."

Equally wild was the range of accomplishments of the woman who set in one of her front windows a card bearing this information:

"Music Lessons, also High Class Washing done Here. Doughnuts for Sale Wednesday and Satterdays."

Though not strictly an advertisement, the following may not be out of place here as its purpose is to give information in regard to a salable article. A writer in "The Strand Magazine" says he found it on a bottle of tomato sauce:

"Tomatoe Sauce

The sauce are pur. The flavor are terrific. Hope not to think imitation as good as us sauce. We haven't put nothing but nice tomatoe in sauce which give us such fine terrific flavor. One taste will have more.

"Januwala and Co Main Road

"Taiping Straits Settlements."

The summer visitors in a New England rural district got no little fun out of a sign in a berry pasture near the public highway:

"Berry picking on these premises forbid. Trespassing persecuted. Berrys for sail at house above. Keep out. Eggs and chickens also for sail. Washing and fine ironing."

In one of the suburbs of Boston there was in a small store a window full of the most surprising landscapes, painted china, wash basins, rolling pins, flower pieces, and mirrors. A card had on it these words:

"Miss Blank, Artist. She done these. Lessons inside, 50 cents. Lessons outside, 75 cents. All kinds of painting did to order. Also Art Millinery. Come in."

One will often find some hilarious signs in the new mining camps of the West. The humor of these is none the less amusing because it is intentional. Visitors to one of the camps a few years ago were delighted to find the following before the door of a log cabin about ten by fourteen feet in size:

"Delmonico's Hotel and Rest-your-aunt. Rooms with or without Bawth. Thirteen course dinner on one plate. No objection to poodle dogs or infants in arms if accompanied by their parents. Elevator not running. Barber

shop and mannyure rooms closed for repairs. Turkish bawths a la washtub."

Nailed to another cabin was a pine board on which one read:

"Bored and Lodging. Day Bored. Call In."

One of the leading dance and concert halls in the early days of Leadville displayed every Sunday this sign:

"Grand Sacred Concert and Free Dance Here To-night."

A woman of versatility in a Western town put in one of her windows a placard on which she made the following interesting announcements:

"Art Painting Taut Here. Also Fanny Dancing and Fanny Embrodery. Millinery. Masag. Corns Cut. Fanny Hare Dressing. Table Boarders. Vokel Singing. Cooking Lessons and General Art Work."

A man who had gone into the chicken business on an extensive scale put up a large sign by the roadside, on which he made the following announcement to the general public:

"Powltry for Sale. Setting Eggs. Broylers. Ginny Hens. Fancy Fowls. Eggs and powltry supplied To Private families. Satisfaction Guaranteed."

The writer picked up at a summer resort in the West a card on which there was printed:

"Madame Antonious

"Lady astrologer. Seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, born with a caul over her face. Seeress. Locates lost articles. Reunites estranged lovers. Has gift of prophecy. Also restores gray hair to natural color and supplies deficiencies in figure. Brings back lost youth. Palm reader and fortune telling from cards. Patronized by crowned heads of Europe and general royalty. Private settings one dollar."

HONORED JUST THE SAME

WHEN Consul Boak of the Woodmen of the World was traveling through the South sometime ago, the train stopped for a lay over in a small town, and he went to a nearby store to make a purchase. The storekeeper could not make the correct change for the bill handed him, so Mr. Boak walked out in search of some one who could. Beside the door outside was an old negro sitting on a box whittling a stick.

"Uncle," he said, "can you change a twenty-dollar bill?"

At first the negro looked up in surprise; then, seeing the earnest look in Mr. Boak's face, he hastily rose, took off his slouch hat, bowed, and said, "Deed an Ah cain't, boss; but Ah 'preciates de honor you has confu'hed on me, jis' de same!"



Mr. Smoker—you don't have to be told that there is such a thing grown as real Havana tobacco.

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