



Quasquicentennial Flashback

Glimpses from 125 Years of DAR History

In the earliest days of the National Society, even as members worked to establish the framework of the organization, Daughters took immediate action to honor the memory of the men and women who were indispensable to the fight for American independence. The subject of their initial effort never fired a weapon or held public office, but her historic significance is indisputable.



19th-century wood engraving of Mary Ball Washington, based on a painting

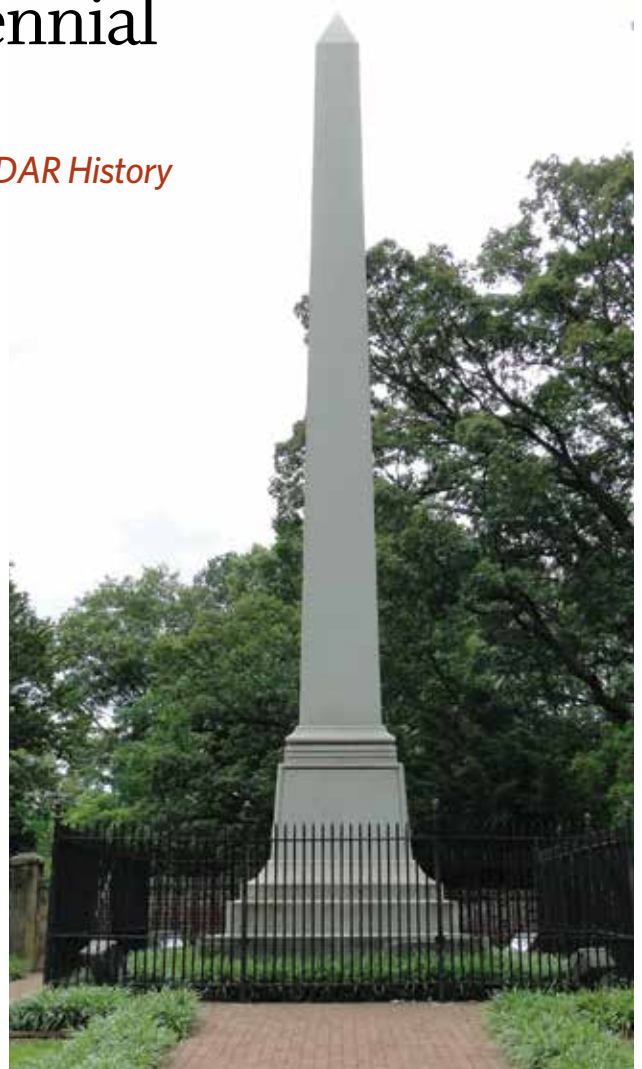
Mary Ball Washington, mother of George Washington, brought into the world the man whose military leadership and executive wisdom ushered the United States into being. For the National Society, the Mary Washington Monument project “established the tradition of giving of ourselves for others,” said President General Marie H. Yochim in a centennial address printed in the October 1990 *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine*.

In 1789, shortly after

Mary’s death, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution to erect a monument in her honor. President Andrew Jackson laid the cornerstone in May 1833 at Mary’s burial site at Kenmore, the Fredericksburg, Va., home of her daughter Betty Washington Lewis. But progress stalled, and the monument remained unfinished. An ad in an early 1889 edition of *The Washington Post* announced, “The Grave of Mary the mother of General George Washington to be sold at public auction, March, 1889, at 4 p.m.”

Seeing this, Margaret Hetzel wrote a letter asking the paper to administer a fund to save the site and finish the monument. The dollar she enclosed became the first donation. Mrs. Hetzel served as an officer in both the National Mary Washington Memorial Association and the NSDAR, which were founded just eight months apart.

At the National Society’s organizational meeting on October 11, 1890, Founder Mary Desha introduced a resolution to support the completion of a monument to Mary Washington, and encouraged “every patriot to send in a contribution large or small for this purpose.” It passed unanimously.



The proposed monument had reached this stage before, but this time the two women’s organizations united to turn plans into reality. DAR members contributed nearly three-fourths of the \$11,000 raised for the project, according to Mrs. Yochim’s centennial address.

A new cornerstone was laid October 21, 1893, the original having sustained irreparable damage during the Civil War. The Mary Washington Monument, which echoes the design of the Washington Monument, was dedicated May 10, 1894, before an audience that included President Grover Cleveland and President General Letitia G. Stevenson.

As Minnie F. Mickley wrote in the March 1913 edition of *American Monthly Magazine*, “Thus the resolution of Miss Mary Desha’s, adopted at the first meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution, has been faithfully fulfilled by the women of America . . . all joined in placing the monument to Mary the mother of Washington, erected by her countrywomen.”