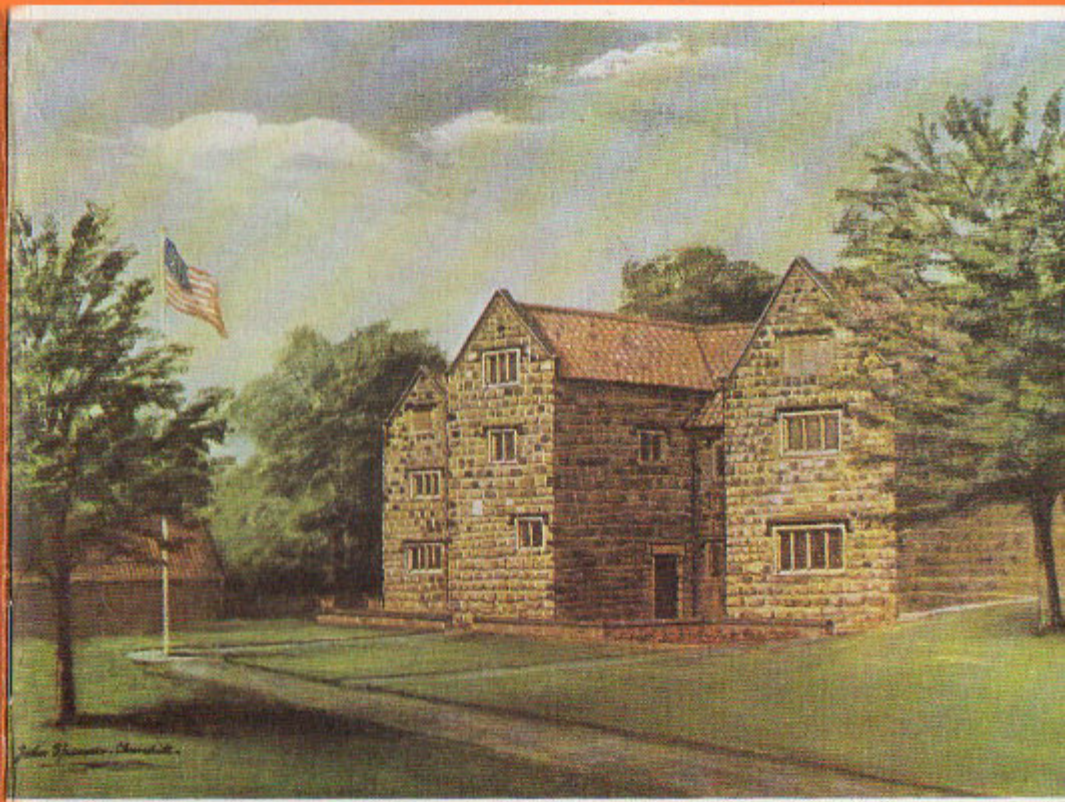


Washington Old Hall



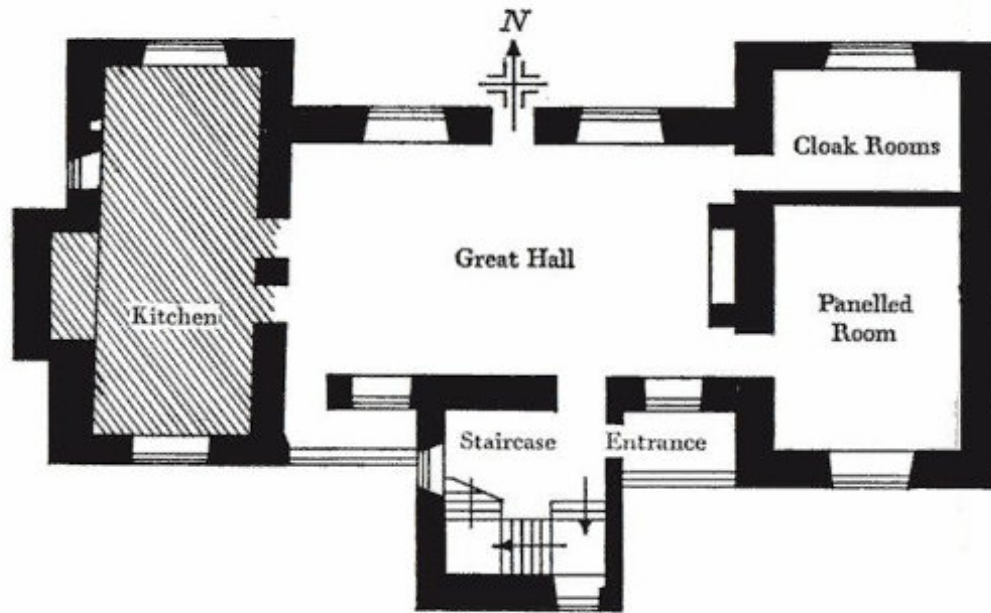
THE NATIONAL TRUST

Washington Old Hall

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1979

Washington Old Hall



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

The shaded part of the plan shows where the medieval walls still stand.

LOCATION

Washington Old Hall is situated in Washington Village, *District 4* of Washington New Town. It can be reached from the south by turning left from the A1 road to Newcastle on to the A1251, or by taking the A182 from Houghton-le-Spring. From the north, turn left from either the A1 on to the B1288 and then on to the A182, or from the A194 from Newcastle on to the A182 signposted to Washington. Thereafter follow signs for *District 4*, Washington Village.

Cover painting of Washington Old Hall by John Spencer-Churchill, nephew of Sir Winston Churchill.

Used as a tenement and finally condemned as unfit for human habitation in 1936, the restored Washington Old Hall stands today as a testimonial to Anglo-American co-operation in the north-east of England. It is a small manor-house, originally built in the twelfth century of local sandstone, and is the place from which George Washington's family took their name. In 1613, the descendants of the first Washington sold the house and it was partially demolished and the present house built on the foundations. Three and a quarter centuries later, this second house came on the market for demolition, but was saved by a local Preservation Committee, who restored it with the help of generous gifts from both sides of the Atlantic. It was then that parts of the old medieval house were found still embedded in the seventeenth century structure. In 1955 it was officially opened by the American Ambassador, and two years later it was given to the National Trust, who took the unusual step of accepting it without an endowment in view of its historical importance to both England and America. Today, it is let to the Sunderland Metropolitan Council, who use part of the top floor as a Community Centre almost daily. The ground floor and a bedroom have been furnished by the Trust as a typical seventeenth and early eighteenth century manor-house with the help of funds provided by the many friends of the Hall.

The rose garden was laid out at the expense of Miss Mabel Choate of America, and the lower garden was recently given to the Trust, and laid out by the then Washington Urban District Council to the National Trust's design, and planted with shrubs, old roses and other plants given by well-wishers. The lower garden is maintained by the Sunderland Council.

WASHINGTON AND THE WASHINGTONS

Many people think of Sulgrave Manor in Northamptonshire as the home of the Washington family in England. In fact, they only lived in that district for about a hundred years; before that they had been in Lancashire and Westmorland for three hundred years, and before that again, when they first emerged from the obscurity of the early middle ages, they were natives of County Durham. Washington Old Hall was the home of George Washington's direct ancestors for five generations, and of the Washingtons and their descendants for four hundred and thirty years.

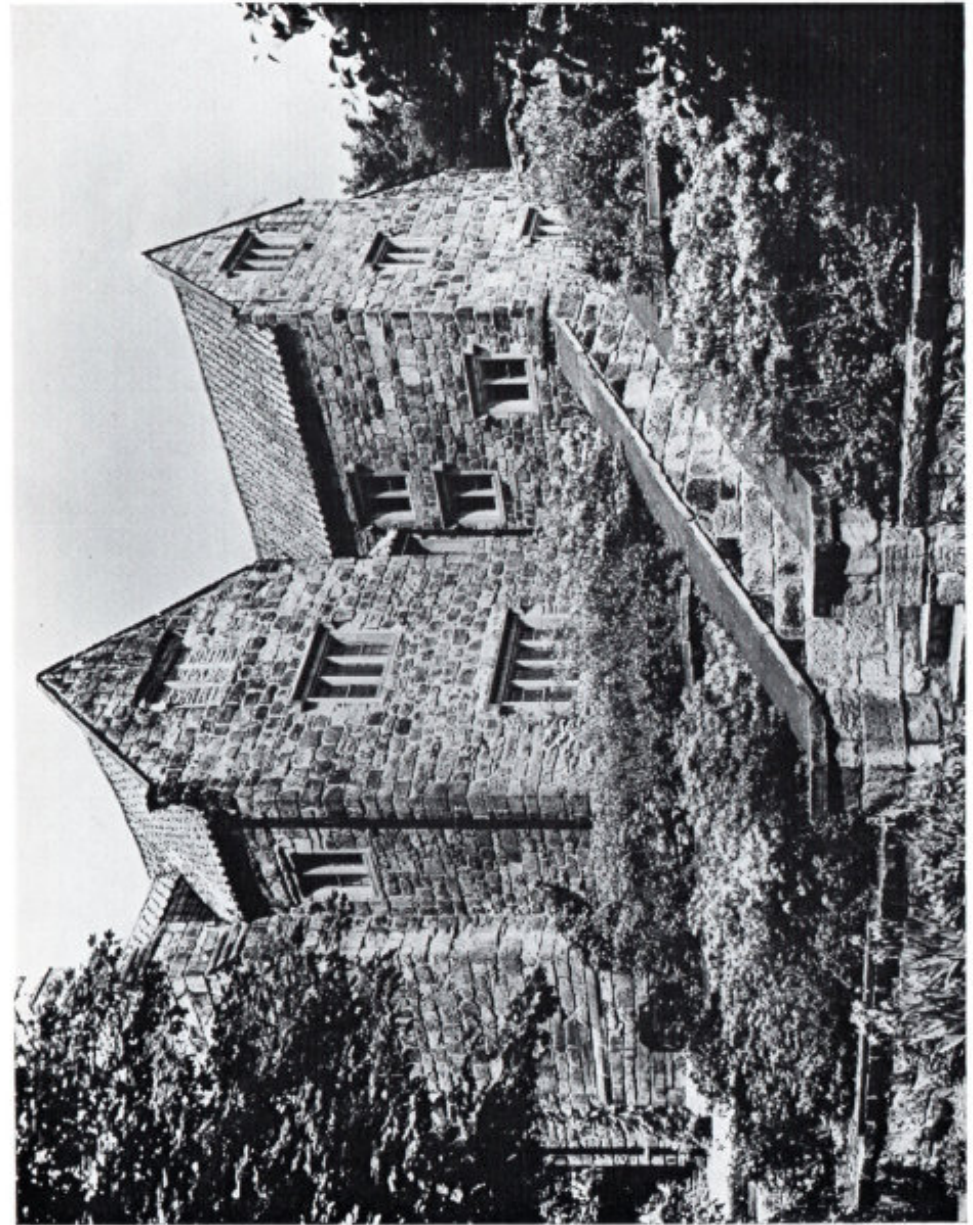
The first ancestor of George Washington to live there was William de Hertburn of Hartburn, near Stockton-on-Tees in the County of Durham. He came to Washington before 1183. Surtees, in his history of Durham, says that according to the Boldon Book, which is the Durham counterpart of the Domesday Book:

'William de Hertburn held the whole vill, except the Church and the Church Lands in exchange for his vill of Hertburn, which he had released to the Bishop, by a free rent of £4, and by the service of attending the Bishop's hunt with two greyhounds.'

As was the custom before surnames existed, William de Hertburn dropped the name of Hertburn and assumed the name of the place that now belonged to him, 'de Wessyngton'. This is an Anglo-Saxon name from 'Hwaes', a Saxon chief, 'Inga' meaning the family of, and 'Tun' an estate: the estate of the Hwaes family.

Whether William de Hertburn actually built the old manor-house, or whether he took it over ready built, is not known.

The senior branch of the Washingtons continued to live there until 1599 when a William, seventh in descent from William de Hertburn, left it to his daughter Eleanor who married Sir William Tempest of Studley, Knight. It then went to the descendants of their daughter Dionisia who married Sir William Mallory.



Washington Old Hall from the Lower Garden



The Great Hall

It is often said that the manor was alienated in 1376 by a much quoted deed of that date, which bears the Washington seal and is now in the Pierpont Morgan Collection in New York. Actually this deed is a settlement, not a conveyance, and the manor continued in the possession of Washington descendants until it was sold in 1613 to William James, Bishop of Durham, who settled it on his youngest son, Francis James.

In order to link up these Washingtons of County Durham with George Washington, one must go back to William, fourth in descent from William de Hertburn. This William married a Westmorland heiress and had three sons: Walter (of Washington Old Hall), Robert (of Carnforth in Warton) and John, who married Elizabeth daughter of Gilbert of Burneside near Kendal and acquired land in the neighbourhood. Elizabeth's home, Burneside Hall, still stands about two miles north of Kendal although its tower is now partly ruined. John's brother, Robert, married Joan de Strickland of Sizergh Castle which is still the home of the Strickland family but owned by the National Trust.

The original Washington arms were a silver lion rampant on a red field, a good example of which, circa 1460, may be seen today in Durham Cathedral Library. Circa 1346, they adopted the arms of the de Eslingtons, of Northumberland.

The new arms, argent, two bars gules, in chief three mullets of the second are first found on a deed of 1346. They are also found on the seal of the document of 1376 already mentioned. They appear, carved in stone, on the west front of Hylton Castle, three miles from Washington, and in many other parts of the country, but unfortunately there is no early example at the Hall itself. They were the arms of George Washington and, it has been suggested that they were the origin of the American flag, the Stars and Stripes, although there are many who consider this unlikely.

As can be seen from the family tree on pages 10-11, the direct line follows through two more Roberts and then through John, the younger brother of another Robert who married an heiress, Joan Croft, and went to live in Warton, a village

six miles north-east of Lancaster. There were Washingtons at Warton until 1825, and there is still a house there known as Washington House, which stands on the site of one once owned by the family.

Robert, grandson of the first John of Warton, was one of the largest landowners in north Lancashire in the later fifteenth century. He probably caused the church tower at Warton to be built. It is late fifteenth century and over the west door are the Washington arms.

Robert's younger grandson, John, married Margaret, a daughter of Robert Kytson, whose son, Thomas, was knighted and in 1533 became Sheriff of London. It is of interest that Sir Thomas' daughter married Sir John Spencer of Althorp and is the direct ancestor of Sir Winston Churchill.

John Washington's son, Lawrence, went into the wool trade and moved to Northamptonshire. He did very well as a wool stapler and sheep breeder, became Mayor of Northampton in 1532 and owned estates from Higham Ferrers to Sulgrave. In 1539 he bought the Manor of Sulgrave from the King, and built the manor-house, which became the home of his family for almost exactly a century. He died in 1584 and was buried in St James's Church, Sulgrave, where his tomb may be seen.

His son, Robert, succeeded him and in 1601 transferred the ownership of the house to his eldest son, Lawrence, who sold it to a cousin in 1610, while his father was still living in it. Robert died in 1619, having had fifteen children of whom Lawrence, born at Sulgrave, married in 1588 Margaret Butler, daughter of a Sussex family who could trace their descent from the royal Plantagenets. He left Sulgrave in 1604 and lived at Wicken in 1610, where Lord Spencer had an estate; he seems indeed to have been permanently associated with Lord Spencer's affairs. He is buried in Great Brington Parish Church and his gravestone is carved with the Washington arms impaled with those of Butler.

Lawrence and Margaret had several outstanding children. The second son, William, married the half-sister of the Duke

of Buckingham and was knighted. The eldest was also knighted, by Charles I, as Sir John Washington of Thrapston. Thomas, the fourth child, was page to Prince Charles, later Charles I, and died aged eighteen in Madrid. George Washington was descended from the fifth child, the Reverend Lawrence Washington, M.A., B.D., who was born at Sulgrave in 1602. Lawrence became a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and was Rector of Purleigh from 1633-1643, when he was deprived of that living because of his loyalty to the King, but he later became Rector of Little Braxted in Essex, where he died in 1653.

Lawrence's son John emigrated to America in 1656 and settled in Virginia, possibly because of his father's treatment by Parliament during the Civil War. His son, yet another Lawrence, and his grandson Augustine paid temporary visits to England, but the family's settlement in Virginia was permanent. In 1732, Augustine's son was born in Wakefield, Westmoreland County, Virginia; he was George Washington, who was to become General Washington, leader of the forces which secured the independence of the American Colonies, and who became the first President of the United States of America in 1789.

The Setting of The House

Washington Village is an old village situated in the centre of the new development area of Washington New Town, in the northern industrial and mining area of County Durham. Though the immediate surroundings have suffered from industrial development, at the centre of Washington Village there still lies a village green with some old houses round it. There is an old smithy, now a working pottery, and just off the square, below the church on its wooded hill, stands Washington Old Hall. The gates are on the main road, but the Hall stands back half way up the hill to the church. The gates are eighteenth century and were a gift from Chapter XI of the Colonial Dames of America.

On the right of the gates is the custodian's lodge. It is of the same date as the Hall and probably used to be the bothy. It was restored at the expense of Mr. Charles Sumner Bird of Walpole, Massachusetts, who did much else to help the restoration work of the whole property.

The rose garden was laid out at the expense of Miss Mabel Choate, as a memorial to the late Mr. Eric Underwood who did so much to promote Anglo-American relationships. A bust of Mr. Underwood by Frank Dobson stood in a niche at the east end of this part of the garden but was moved to the top of the staircase in the Hall after being damaged by vandals in 1974. The lower garden, reached by two flights of stone steps, was given to the Trust by Mr. and Mrs. John Mothersole and was laid out by the Washington Urban District Council to designs by the Trust, and was planted with gifts and by voluntary labour in 1971-72. A flagpole stands on the terrace south of the house from which the Stars and Stripes are flown on the three American festivals, February 22nd, July 4th and November 23rd. The stone sundial was part of a gift from Mr. Walter Annenberg, American Ambassador in London in 1972, and the pair of

eighteenth century eagles at the top of the steps were a Bicentennial gift from Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson of Houston, Texas, in 1976.

THE EXTERIOR

Washington Old Hall is a fairly typical example of a small English manor-house of the early seventeenth century. Built of local sandstone, it partly stands on the old twelfth century foundations, retaining some of the outer walls at the west end and the letter H plan, with the Great Hall flanked on either side by a gabled wing. Midway between these is a boldly projecting south wing which houses the staircase and entrance lobby. The main entrance used to be on the north side, where the elevation is strictly symmetrical. Here there was a projecting portico whose shape can still be seen outlined on the existing stonework, and the present north door would have been the inner door.

The house had come down in the world when, in 1936, it was saved from demolition by a Preservation Committee, formed locally by Mr. Frederick Hill. Having acquired it, the first task of the Committee was to remove modern partitions set up when the house was a tenement, and to pull down other accretions and to make the building watertight. In the course of this work they made the discovery that the original manor-house had not been entirely destroyed in 1613, but that substantial parts of it had been allowed to stand, particularly at the west end of the house. A pillar and part of two walled-up arches to the kitchen were discovered, also the jamb and part of the arched head of a window in the west wall, to the right of the fireplace as seen from inside.

THE INTERIOR. (Everything in the building has been chosen by the Trust and given by friends of the property, except the furnishings of the Community Centre rooms. The names of all benefactors, and descriptions of their gifts,

are shown in two books displayed in the showcase at the head of the stairs.)

The Lobby. In the wallcase to the right of the Custodians' desk on entering the front door of the building are some objects connected with the Washingtons including a Staffordshire bust and a full-length figure of George Washington, always a popular subject with the potters. There is also a curious wax bust of him, some small pictures and engravings and a Wedgwood oval plaque in creamware.

The Great Hall. Originally the communal eating place of the house, no trace now remains of the dais which would have stood at the eastern end in medieval times and where the family and guests would have taken their meals, with their retainers eating at the central table. The Screens which traditionally separated the kitchen from the Great Hall have gone, but an interesting feature is the pair of arched doorways in the west wall leading into the kitchen; this wall is a survival of the original twelfth century manor-house, as has already been explained. The fireplace at the east end came from Newburn Manor, an old house on the Tyne now demolished. It has a device of swords and heart carved on the head and was given by Viscount and Viscountess Gort circa 1950.

The furniture includes a massive side table used as a refectory table, with loose top, from the early seventeenth century; a carved oak court cupboard and Flemish oak side table of the same date, an early eighteenth century oak longcase clock with square brass dial; a carved front oak linen chest and large side table of the early 1600's, some early 'Yorkshire' or 'Derbyshire' chairs, circa 1660, with hooped and scalloped carved rails, and a sword chest. The centre table is set with pewter plates and mugs, a bottle and copper jug and a wooden butter bowl. The 'joined' stools are of several patterns and would have been stored under the table when not in use. On the side tables are an oak writing

desk, a medicine chest, an old spoon rack and various pieces of Delft pottery. The hanging cupboard on the north wall was once used for storing food out of the reach of rats. The chandeliers are old copies of a seventeenth century design in brass. The paintings are mostly of the seventeenth century schools and four are on loan from the Bowes Museum. The fine sepia drawing of 1776 on a drum-head parchment, by Joshua Trumbull of Salem, Massachusetts, is of George Washington with his horse and was presented to the Old Hall by Mr. Charles Sumner Bird. The oil-painting which hangs beside it is also of General Washington and his white charger and was painted in the 1770's by John Singleton Copley of Boston. It was presented to the Hall by Mrs. P. Fellowes of Rotherham in 1977 following the visit of President Carter.

The Kitchen. This has an open fireplace of the later period, equipped with a roasting jack and spits from an old mansion; the jack is of the type which is turned by a vane placed in the throat of the chimney and rotated by the currents of hot air from the fire, though it is now operated by electricity to show visitors the system.

On the right of the fireplace is part of one of the windows of the original house, a deeply splayed opening with arched head, and between this and the fireplace is another window with oak frame and mullions of intermediate date. The oak beam over this with stopped chamfer, shows that the original window was blocked to make way for the second, which in its turn was partially blocked to make room for the right-hand jamb of the fireplace.

It is thought that most, or perhaps all, of the walls of the kitchen are survivals of the original building.

The centre refectory table is seventeenth century, as is the court cupboard and the Irish 'wake' table under the south window. Tradition is that these tables were used to rest a coffin on while the mourners held their 'wake' round it. On it is a Welsh spoon rack and a brass pestle and mortar. To the

left of the fireplace is an eighteenth century doughbin, and to the right a small food cupboard. The dresser is eighteenth century as are the copper pans in the hearth. The cookery book is dated 1664, and contains some interesting and to us amusing recipes. Beside it on the table is a pair of late seventeenth century sugar nippers, mounted on a block, an early meat fork, an hour glass and a copper chocolate pot. The dummy-board figures are late seventeenth century and may have been intended to cast shadows on the walls at night to give the room a permanently occupied air. The cone of sugar was specially made in the seventeenth century manner by Tate and Lyle and presented in 1976 by the firm. Some of the brass implements in the fireplace were sent from California in 1978 by Robert Winchester.

The Panelled Room. At the east end of the Great Hall is the withdrawing room; the private room of the owner and his family, which was always at the dais end of the hall.

The walls are covered in fine Jacobean panelling, which is of quartered oak and came from the Old Manor House, Abbots Langley, and was given by Miss Mabel Choate in memory of her father who was American Ambassador to Britain. She also gave some of the furniture. The fireplace is original.

To the left of the door on entering is a seventeenth century wool winder and, beyond the contemporary settle, is a fine carved and marquetry fronted chest for clothes. To the left of the fireplace is an eighteenth century 'cricket' table and to the right a spinning wheel of the same date with another 'joined' stool. Opposite the door is an Elizabethan oak splay-fronted court cupboard, with marquetry panels and four carved bulbous supports, and on the right of the door is another oak 'cricket' table, traditionally supposed to be so called because these tables were used in village inns and often carried outside for people to use when watching cricket matches on the village green. Another version is that

the three legs resembled cricket stumps. On it stands a mid-seventeenth century stump-work cabinet of fine needlework. This was the gift of Mr. Harris Masterson of Texas, who has also generously helped the Old Hall financially in other ways. Various pieces of Delft are arranged about the room and the vase on the early eighteenth century oak gate-legged table in the centre of the room, is from seventeenth century Persia.

The Dutch seventeenth century oil-painting hanging above the court cupboard is by Jacob Esselens (Amsterdam 1626-87) and shows two horsemen on the beach at Katwijk inspecting a catch landed by fisherfolk. The large harbour scene over the settle is a fanciful view of Paris and was painted by Jan Abraham Beerstraten (Amsterdam 1622-66). It portrays the Tour de Nesle (twice), the Louvre, the Pont Neuf, Notre Dame and the Tour St Jacques and is a typical capriccio of the time. Both pictures were presented to the Old Hall in 1976 and 1977 by Mr. and Mrs. G. F. Pettit, to commemorate the Bicentennial and the visit of President Carter to the property. The two watercolours of the Old Hall are by George Price Boyce and are dated 1860: they were purchased in 1978 with funds given by well-wishers. Boyce was a local artist (1826-97) and the pictures were exhibited in 1923 when they were the property of Sir Hugh Bell whose family owned Washington New Hall and whose daughter was Lady Trevelyan.

Of the three framed pieces of needlework, the smallest is the finest and came from the Percival Griffith collection. It was presented by Mr. Reginald Lumb of Harrogate. The remaining two oil-paintings are on loan from the Bowes Museum. The chandelier and wall-lights are copies of seventeenth century originals.

The Staircase and the First Floor. The original staircase was long ago burnt out and it has been replaced by one of the same period. This came from the White Hart Hotel, Guildford, and was given by Lord and Lady Gort.

On the first small landing hangs a large family tree of George Washington, drawn by the College of Arms in London, in which his ancestry is traced back to King John of England, and above it is the fan given to Martha Washington by General Lafayette. Beside these, on the windowsill, is a bust of George Washington after the French sculptor Houdon (1740-1828) who stayed with Washington at Mount Vernon in 1785. This was given to the Hall by Mr. Sumner Bird, as was the second bust farther up the stairs. On the second flight hangs a framed copy of the American Declaration of Independence in 1776.

On the larger landing at the top of the stairs are two glass showcases while on the wall hang two interesting pieces of American needlework. The first showcase contains two books in which all the gifts made to the Old Hall together with the names of their donors are recorded. Among other things of interest also in the case are two glass goblets. One is of English pressed glass with a raised design to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1876. The other is of Edinburgh Crystal lead glass and commemorates the 200th Anniversary of the Declaration in 1976 and was presented to the Old Hall in the same year by Sunderland Metropolitan Council. The second case contains various newspaper cuttings and letters including one from President Carter following his visit in May 1977.

Above the two cases hangs the flag of the American Bicentennial, presented to the Earl of Antrim, Chairman of the National Trust, in 1975, when he visited America to present to the American people a 25-year lease in title of the Old Hall as a goodwill gesture at the start of the Bicentennial celebrations.

The Bedroom. At the west end of the large room on the second floor used as a community centre lies the Bedroom. This was opened as such on May 6th 1977, the day that President Jimmy Carter and Prime Minister James Callaghan



The Kitchen



Bedroom

visited the property. The framed coloured print of a painting of Mount Vernon, signed and inscribed on the reverse by the President, was presented by him to mark his visit. The raffle ticket signed by George Washington hangs to the left of the glass case containing a uniform of the Washington Greys.

The fine oak bed is Flemish or German and dates from the seventeenth century. It has cupboards at both ends, the one in the head with sliding doors and the one in the foot with a hinged lid. The early eighteenth century walnut cradle is English as are the seventeenth century stained-wood baby-walker and small oak court-cupboard. The walnut veneered candle-stands and the two chairs upholstered in contemporary needlework are all seventeenth century Dutch, as are the pieces of Delftware. The rushlight-holders on the gate-legged table are typical of the period. On the windowsill stands a fine nineteenth century jug decorated with the American eagle, a map of the United States and figures of Washington and Liberty. Although it looks like Liverpool ware, it is signed by the Staffordshire artist Morris of Shelton. Another jug stands on the blanket chest and is of stoneware. It has a moulded design of George Washington holding a sword in one hand and the Declaration of Independence in the other, on one side, and a scene where he is bidding farewell to his mother, on the other. In between is a shield with nine stars and stripes together with four flags. The jug is stamped 'E. Walley' with the date April 18th 1856.

Two of the three rooms (formerly six) of the top floor of the Hall, containing their original Tudor fireplaces, make up the Community Centre and are used daily by the people of Washington for various functions and are maintained, as is the whole property, by the Sunderland Metropolitan Council, as tenants of the Trust. With an eye to the future, the Trust has decided, with the agreement of the Council, that the property must be adequately endowed and to this end an international appeal for funds was launched in 1975 to

coincide with the Bicentennial celebrations in America. A sister organisation to the Trust, to be called Royal Oak, was founded in New York as an American charity with American directors and Trustees to enable American citizens to join in this and other conservation projects of the Trust in this country. Once endowed, Washington Old Hall will thus be saved for ever as an important part of Anglo-American joint heritage.

Applications forms for membership of the Royal Oak Foundation, New York (which gives free entrance to all National Trust properties), are available in the Hall.

Sheila M. Pettit
George S. H. L. Washington

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(further details overleaf)

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