

A Guide to the George Mason Papers, 1775-1789

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There are no restrictions.

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There are no restrictions.

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Biographical Information

Biographical Information

George Mason of "Gunston Hall" in Fairfax County, Virginia, was born 11 December 1725. Mason represented Fairfax County in the House of Burgesses from 1758 to 1761; in the 3rd, 4th and 5th Virginia Conventions from 1775-1776; and in the House of Delegates from 1776 to 1781 and 1786 to 1788. In the 5th Virginia Convention, Mason was appointed to the committee which wrote Virginia's first state constitution. Mason authored the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which has appeared in every subsequent state constitution. Mason attended the federal Constitutional Convention in 1787, but did not sign the document because it did not have a bill of rights at the time. This lack of a bill of rights also led to his opposition to the Constitution during the Virginia ratification convention in 1788. When the Bill of Rights was finally added to the federal Constitution, it was based on his Declaration of Rights. George Mason died at Gunston Hall, in Fairfax County, 7 October 1792.

Scope and Content

Papers, 1775-1789, of George Mason (1725-1792) consisting of correspondence, drafts of amendments, bills, declarations, and petitions. Papers concern the work of Mason during the Virginia Conventions and his time in the Virginia House of Delegates. Of interest is a copy, by Mason, of the first draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, a draft bill for the establishment of a Land Office, and material related to the Mount Vernon Convention, which among other things established navigation rights of shared waterways between Maryland and Virginia.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged chronologically.

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Letter, George Mason, Gunston Hall, to Col. William Aylett, King William County, 2 October 1775.

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Digital Archival Object

Virginia Declaration of Rights (Copy in Mason's hand circa 1778), 18 May-12 June 1776.

Box 1

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Digital Archival Object

Amendment to stand before preamble of the House of Delegates bill for exempting the different societies of dissenters from contributing to the support and maintenance of the church as by law established, and its ministers and for other purposes therein mentioned, 30 November-9 December 1776.

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Digital Archival Object

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Resolution presented in the House of Delegates that gallies be exchanged with Congress, 18 December 1776.

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Resolution presented in the House of Delegates that Maryland act in concert with Virginia in supplying gallies for protection of Chesapeake Bay, 18 December 1776.

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Resolution presented in the House of Delegates to prevent the exportation of beef, pork, and bacon, 19 December 1776.

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Resolution presented in the House of Delegates to give the governor and council additional power (Interlineations and additions in different handwritings), 21 December 1776.

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Letter, George Mason, Gunston Hall, to Col. William Aylett, 19 April 1777.

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Letter, George Mason, Gunston Hall, to [Col. William Aylett], 8 June 1777.

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Resolutions presented to the House of Delegates recommending various means of taxation, [8 June 1777].

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Folder 1

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Bill introduced in the House of Delegates to enable public contractors to procure stores of provision necessary for the ensuing campaign and for defeating the evil intentions of those who have endeavoured to prevent the public herein, 29 December 1777.

Box 2

Folder 2

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for establishing a Land Office and ascertaining the terms and manner of granting waste and unappropriated lands, [8 January 1778].

Box 2

Folder 3

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced into the House of Delegates for adjusting and settling the titles of claimers to unpatented lands under the former government, 14 January 1778.

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Resolutions presented in the House of Delegates prohibiting entries for settlement on vacant lands on the Western Waters until the establishment of a Land Office, 24 January 1778.

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Petition to the General Assembly by the Ohio Company giving a brief history of the company and praying that the members of the company may receive patents as soon as a land office is established, 20 November 1778.

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Folder 1

Digital Archival Object

Depositions of Thomas Flemming, Thomas Crofts, and Lawrence Sandford in the handwriting of George Mason. These are concerned with the claim of William Savage, Fairfax County, whose Petition (now lacking) was considered by the House of Delegates on 3 December 1778, 3 December 1778.

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Amendment to the House of Delegates bill to prohibit the distillation of spirits from corn, wheat, rye..., [15 December 1778].

Box 2

Folder 7

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for ascertaining the loss and requiring the retribution to the citizens of this commonwealth for the depredations of the enemy of private property (Half amendment on a slip in clerk's hand), 19 May 1779.

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Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for discouraging extensive credits, and repealing the act prescribing the method of proving Book-Debts, 10 June 1779.

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Bill introduced in the House of Delegates declaring and asserting the rights of the commonwealth concerning purchasing land from native Indians (Also filed with this bill is a Miscellaneous Petition, 19 October 1791 "Memorial of the Proprietors and shareholders of a tract of land call Indiana," 15 June 1779.

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Bill introduced in House of Delegates for settling the rate of exchange and mode of judgment on foreign debts, 15 June 1779.

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Folder 2

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates to provide a Great Seal for the Commonwealth, and directing the lesser seal of the Commonwealth to be affixed to all grants for lands, and to commissions civil and military, 18 October 1779.

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Folder 3

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for discouraging extensive credit, and repealing the act prescribing the method of proving Book debts (Page of amendments in clerk's hand), 18 October 1779.

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Folder 4

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Bill introduced in the House of Delegates to amend the act entitled an act for regulating ordinaries and restraint of tippling houses (page 1 and part of page 2 in Mason's hand), 19 October 1779.

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Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for regulating the importation of salt and laying an embargo thereon (page one in Mason's hand), 25 October 1779.

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Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for marking and opening a road over the Cumberland mountains into the County of Kentucky, 27 October 1779.

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Folder 7

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for more effectually securing to the officers and soldiers of the Virginia line the land reserved to them; for discouraging present settlements on the northwest side of the Ohio River, and for punishing persons attempting to prevent the execution of Land Office Warrants (one page of amendments marked A in Mason's hand), 2 November 1779.

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Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates to repeal so much of the act "for the support of the clergy and for regular collecting and paying levies" as relates to the payment of salaries heretofore given to the clergy of the Church of England, 18 November 1779.

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Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for ascertaining the loss and requiring retribution for the depredations of the enemy on private property, 18 November 1779.

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Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for the saving the property of the church heretofore by law established to the members of the church forever, 27 November 1779.

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Folder 11

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for settling the rate of exchange and mode of judgments on foreign debts, 27 November 1779.

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Folder 12

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for raising a supply of money for the service of the United States (one page of amendments and some interlineations in the bill are in Mason's hand), 17 December 1779.

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Folder 1

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for establishing a fund for the purpose of borrowing money for the use of the United States and other purposes (endorsement only in Mason's hand; he introduced the bill and probably drafted it), 20 December 1779.

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Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for confirming the titles of purchasers of escheated and forfeited estates, [20 December] 1779.

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Folder 2

Digital Archival Object

Petition to the House of Delegates by sundry freeholders and inhabitants of Fairfax County complaining of the power of the justices of the county courts, and protesting against a proposed change of location of the county court from Alexandria, 8 June 1782.

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Digital Archival Object

Petition to the House of Delegates by William Allison and Thomson Mason, Jr. stating they have erected a water mill for manufacturing tobacco snuff; they fear combinations of importers will ruin them unless an importation duty of one shilling a pound is laid on foreign tobacco snuff, 19 May 1783.

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Digital Archival Object

Petition to the House of Delegates by sundry freeholders and inhabitants of Fairfax County stating they are informed application has been or will be made to confirm payments made by British debtors into the public treasury not at the real but at nominal value; to exonerate them from their creditors; to burden the public with the difference and to levy it by taxes on the people. This is unjust and iniquitous and the petitions pray that such payments be reduced by the scale of depreciation and repaid with interest to several individuals who paid in the same, 18 June 1783.

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Digital Archival Object

Petition to the House of Delegates by sundry inhabitants of Fairfax County stating they are informed that petitions will be offered to repeal the act "to prevent extensive credits," which they feel was founded and good policy and productive of the happiest effects to the community. Pray act not be repealed., 18 June 1783.

Box 5

Folder 6

Digital Archival Object

Letter, George Mason and A. Henderson, Mount Vernon, to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, 28 March 1785.

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Folder 3

Digital Archival Object

Copy of a letter from the Commissioners of Virginia and Maryland to the Honorable, The President of the Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 28 March 1785.

Box 4

Folder 4

Digital Archival Object

George Mason's account against the commonwealth (Accompanying are two orders by Governor Edmund Randolph on the auditor), 30 March 1785-28 September 1787.

Box 4

Folder 5

Digital Archival Object

"Compact with Maryland respecting navigation of Potomack" (The Mount Vernon Convention. Contains also the signatures of Alex. Henderson, Dan. of St. Thomas Jenifer, W. Stone, and Samuel Chase), 28 March 1785.

Box 5

Folder 7

Digital Archival Object

Letter, George Mason, Gunston Hall, to Benjamin Harrison, Speaker of the House of Delegates, 8 December 1785.

Box 4

Folder 6

Digital Archival Object

Philadelphia Bill of Exchange for One Hundred Pounds, 11 August 1787.

Box 4

Folder 7

Digital Archival Object

Philadelphia Bill of Exchange for Fifty Pounds, 17 September 1787.

Box 4

Folder 8

Digital Archival Object

Amendments proposed to the House of Delegates bill to amend two acts of assembly the one entitled "An act for keeping certain roads in repair" the other entitled "An act for opening and straightening certain public roads", 13-17 December 1787.

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Folder 9

Digital Archival Object

Bill introduced in the House of Delegates for regulating the rights of cities, towns, and boroughs and the jurisdiction of corporation courts, 24 December 1787.

Box 4

Folder 10

Digital Archival Object

Amendments proposed to the bill to remedy abuses in the manner of selling lands for the payment of public taxes, 27 December 1787.

Box 5

Folder 8

Digital Archival Object

Petition to the House of Delegates by various inhabitants of Fairfax County stating that since the year 1778 they had brought sundry slaves from Maryland and had failed to make proper affidavits. Ask additional time for this purpose, 20 October 1789.

Box 5

Folder 9

Digital Archival Object