



Friends of Sulgrave Manor

Fall 2016

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Dear Dames,

Dames Day at Sulgrave Manor and our Friends trip to England gave all of us who participated a chance to discuss not only George Washington but the history of the early beginnings of our great country, significantly, our first election. The events leading up to the first presidential election in 1789 were not always agreeable to everyone, but the leaders were united in their selection of the individual who would be at the head of the national government.



“George Washington” by Gilbert Stuart owned by Sulgrave Manor and recently restored.

George Washington had led a revolutionary army to victory, but he then refused to seize power as nearly every other successful revolutionary leader had done before him and after him. After the war, Washington handed his commission back to Congress and went home to Mt. Vernon.

When approached by Alexander Hamilton about the possibility of his accepting the presidency, he replied “For you know me well enough, my good Sir, to be persuaded that I am not guilty of affectation when I tell you it is my great and sole desire to live and die, in peace and retirement, on my own farm.” At the thought of being president, Washington said that when the subject came up he “always felt a kind of gloom” settle upon his mind and that if he became president “the acceptance would be attended with more diffidence and reluctance than ever I experienced before in my life.”

By rejecting the crown at the end of the war, and his defining the powers of the presidency within a framework of republican presumptions, he demonstrated his immunity to all such ambitions. George III famously said, “If he will do that, then he will be the greatest figure of the age.” Washington did it, and he was the greatest figure of the age.

Victoria Bradshaw
Senior Representative to the Sulgrave Manor Board

Sulgrave Manor Tour “Over the Top”

Colonial Dames who joined the Friends of Sulgrave Manor’s June tour were rewarded with a week of visits to some of England’s most important (and in several cases, very private) cultural treasures.

The 2016 tour celebrated Anglo-American Friendship, symbolized by Sulgrave, home of George Washington’s ancestors, which the NSCDA has supported for 102 years.

In that spirit, the trip commemorated the life and work of the late British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Spencer Churchill (son of an American mother and distant relative of George Washington and Princess Diana) who famously expounded: “In days to come, the British and American peoples, for their own safety and the good of all will walk together in majesty, in justice, and in peace.”

June 1 arriving Dames were immediately swept up in that spirit at the Chesterfield Hotel, located next door to Dartmouth House, headquarters of the international educational charity, The English-Speaking Union where a festive dinner for the group was held the following evening.

Sophisticated British guides Mo Anderson and Daphne Young smoothly facilitated all visits and our entire trip.



Touring started at the recently refurbished Wallace Collection in Manchester Square, described by the British newspaper *The Guardian* as “One of the most jaw-dropping collections of old master paintings anywhere in the world.” A must-see Wallace treasure, amidst many, is

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Franz Hal's 17th Century painting of a wary Dutch political operative, *The Laughing Cavalier*.



A curiosity from the Wallace collection.

Dames were then conveyed safely through London's traffic snarls to St. Paul's Cathedral for a behind-the-scenes private tour, including a visit to its attic archives, filled with priceless volumes, including the historic Tyndale Bible, the first printed in English, which launched the Christian Reformation in England. Next, the Sulgrave Friends were carried south first to visit Chartwell, the private home of Sir Winston and Lady

Clementine Churchill, delightfully family-scaled and surrounded by an historic garden and landscape, followed by Sissinghurst, the extraordinary 1930s horticultural creation of Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson.

The following day's destination was a 21st Century private extravaganza, Wormsley Park – the 2,500-acre estate of the Getty family. It features a private professional cricket field, a newly constructed outdoor opera stage, home of the Garsington Opera, and a modern temple to art and learning, built of ancient flint stones, housing one of the world's most magnificent private libraries – lovingly displayed for the Dames by the Getty family's archive staff.

The second part of the tour was based in Oxford – a city of the past, present and future, where Dames were welcomed at gracious and lively dinner parties given by groups of local Sulgrave Manor supporters.

Sunday, June 5th was "Dames Day," beginning with a prayer service at the Sulgrave village church of St. James the Less, giving thanks for the 200 years of peace between Britain and the United States, symbolized in the shared effort to preserve and interpret Sulgrave Manor. A number of other NSCDA visitors in England were also on hand, including President Marcy Moody, who gave a gracious welcome to the luncheon celebration. She was followed by remarks from noted British publisher Norman Hudson, OBE, acting chair of the Sulgrave Manor Trust.

Vicky Bradshaw, NSCDA Senior Representative to the Sulgrave Trust and President of the Friends of Sulgrave Manor, presided over the traditional flag ceremony, conducted by the Honor Guard of the 501 Combat Support Wing of the United States Air Force, based at nearby Royal Air Force Base Croughton.

The tour's final two days included some of the world's most famous landscapes and



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one of its greatest “treasure houses” – Blenheim Palace – birthplace of Winston Churchill and home of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. That extravagant baroque structure and landscaping was saved from ruin with the 9th Duke’s 1896 marriage to American heiress Consuelo Vanderbilt. One of her descendants, Lady Henrietta Spencer Churchill, met with the touring Dames over lunch, explaining how her family operates the palace today, not only as a home but also as a multi-purpose event venue, open to the public and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Two smaller privately managed gardens of great design and historic significance were also visited: 18th Century Rousham, which is among the earliest examples of English landscape design, and the other, developed in recent years by Australian-born Marylyn Abbott, who stages a summer outdoor opera season at West Green Garden which she leases from the National Trust.

The Sulgrave tour’s route also included one of the most famous private gardens on the planet, Highgrove, home of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales and Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall. One gains admittance there only by surrendering all cellphones, cameras, recorders and telescopic gear, then presenting photo identifications that match a carefully

compiled list provided well in advance.



West Green Garden: Our last day

Highgrove is dedicated to pesticide-free, organic gardening and farming techniques. As the Dames’ coach delivered the group to the entrance, there was a brief unexpected sighting of Charles and Camilla, riding in their Land Rover, as they passed on the narrow road in the opposite direction.

All proceeds from Highgrove admissions, its gracious restaurant where the Dames enjoyed luncheon, and the elegant garden shop, support the Prince’s charitable work aiding agricultural education and horticulture.

The Friends of Sulgrave Manor certainly organized this fascinating adventure to raise financial support and appreciation for that ancient English building and grounds, a symbol of America’s cultural origins. But this journey also provided a life-changing learning experience for those able to participate, made more meaningful by traveling with those who share the NSCDA’s heritage of historic preservation and education.

Barbara Spaeth
National Historian



What a Contrast

Between the early 1920’s and the advent of World War II, members of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America made regular “pilgrimages” to Sulgrave Manor on a regular basis. In 1961, a group of members, led by Mrs. Stanton Brown of Waco, Texas, chartered a BOAC plane and left from New York for the first “Dames Day” at Sulgrave Manor. Mrs. Brown had hoped to have Claridges cater tea at the manor; however, as the date coincided with a holiday in England (and Claridges probably didn’t want to come that far from London), it was not possible. Never to be daunted, Mrs. Brown packed her fine silver service and tea cakes, cookies and petit fours in a trunk and took them as luggage to Sulgrave Manor, and celebrated “Dames Day”.



On the tarmac in front of their BOAC charter, in the days when you could walk right out to your airplane, and most left from New York.

FIRST LADY FOR A DAY" AT SULGRAVE MANOR

This spring, my husband and I began our six-week holiday in Scotland by flying into London Heathrow instead of Edinburgh, so that a visit to Sulgrave Manor could be the first stop on a leisurely drive north to the Highlands. I made this pilgrimage in loving memory of my Dames heritage: my grandmother, Mary Baird Cunningham, and my mother, Susan Cunningham Williams (who served as a Michigan President). May 9, the only day that worked for our schedule, was a Monday, on which the Manor is not usually open except to large groups, but because of the NSCDA connection, I was assured a private tour could certainly be arranged.

Easy to find, Sulgrave is a lovely little town north-east of Banbury, about 30 miles north of Oxford and only 90 minutes from London. It was glorious and windy as we arrived for our 2:00 pm ap-



The 275 year old Sulgrave Manor Spinet.

pointment, and I was immediately made welcome by the friendly volunteers. But imagine my surprise when two well-dressed gentlemen who had been walking through the courtyard came over to introduce themselves -- Sulgrave CEO Michael Rooney, who just happened to be on site, showing the property to new Trustee, Nick Way!

Because it was only my husband and myself, we were treated by our docent Joyce to an extra-long, two-hour tour of the Manor, the grounds, and the herb and kitchen garden. Every historical anecdote was fascinating, and we especially enjoyed the way each room gave the appearance of just waiting for a Washington family member to stroll in. My husband sat inside the Tudor Great Hall's enormous fireplace pretending to raise a tankard out of the handy wall niche, and in the Oak Parlour, I was given the incredible, and incredibly rare, opportunity to actually play a key on Sulgrave's 275-year-old spinet. (I made sure to purchase the CD available in the gift shop titled "Sweet Sounds of Music," a wonderful compilation of 18th century pieces recorded on that very instrument and in the Great Hall.)

All in all, we enjoyed Sulgrave Manor just as much as another famous ancestral home, Windsor Castle -- more, because of its personal significance to us Dames.

So . . . when are you planning your visit?

Lucy Chase Williams

SULGRAVE MANOR.

EFFECTIVE RESTORATION WORK.

From "The Times", May 4, 1928
MANY AMERICAN VISITORS.

Visitors this year to Sulgrave Manor, the Early English home of the ancestors of George Washington, will find that a wing to the west of the centre porch, which is known to have been pulled down in the 18th century, has been reconstructed. The addition marks a further step in the restoration of the old house to its original condition.

Sulgrave Manor has become for patriotic Americans a shrine to be visited when they are in England. The house carries the history of the Washingtons back to the days of Henry VIII., and is older by two centuries than Mount Vernon, George Washington's home in Virginia. Laurence Washington, who was twice Mayor of Northampton, bought the property in 1539 on the dissolution of the smaller religious houses, and he and his descendants lived there until 1659. The south gable carries the Royal arms of the Tudors, and in the right spandrel of the arch of the main doorway are the Washington arms—three mullets and two bars—which were the inspiration of the Stars and Stripes.

When the Manor was bought in 1914 by the British Committee for the celebration of the Hundred Years Peace between Great Britain and the United States, the 16th-century building was not only in a poor state of repair, but archaeologists saw that parts of the property had at some time been demolished. Under the supervision of the Board of Governors of the Sulgrave Institution a partial restoration had been carried through by 1921, which made the Manor worthy of its special traditions, and provided a suitable setting for the many gifts which had been sent for its furnishing. The need for providing residential accommodation for a caretaker, however, limited the number of rooms to which the public could have access, and the house, lacking a wing, gave an impression of being architecturally incomplete.

MISSING WING REBUILT.

It was decided last year that the missing wing should be rebuilt, and the duty of carrying through the scheme in scrupulous harmony with so much of the old Manor as remained was entrusted to Sir Reginald Blomfield, R.A. The architect, in preparing his plans, sought to visualize the building as it was left by the Washington family when they went to America. Externally the addition is so completely in keeping with the opposite wing of the house that the appearance is given of sturdy old age. The stone was obtained in the neighbourhood of Sulgrave, and wherever possible that selected for use was weather-worn. Joints between the stones have been "raked out." The roof is of stone slates, which have the dulled colour of age. There are irregular patches of plaster on the old wing, but these have not been copied, as the effect already obtained with stone could not be bettered, and the foliage of creeping plants will quickly neutralize the trifling difference between the two walls.

An interesting piece of history of the Manor's restoration.

London Times
May 4th 1928-

The charm of the restored Manor can be realized from an orchard, given by Mr and Mrs. Sherrard in memory of their son which lies behind the delightful south garden of the house. Standing among the apple trees one looks across a yew hedge and a smooth green lawn to a border of spring flowers and perennials which will bloom before June is here. From this bed the home of the Washingtons rises up in plain and dignified outline. Everything around seems to belong to an England of the past. A modern blue slated barn erected about 1850 which spoiled the illusion a few weeks ago has been pulled down. East Sulgrave, a few hundred yards away, is a quiet Northamptonshire village without a railway station, and its population of 500 only occasionally sees a motor-omnibus.

It is intended that the new block shall be used by the resident caretaker, and the rooms have been planned for domestic occupation. The transfer will set free several other rooms in the old part of the house which the caretaker formerly had for himself, and it is proposed that as soon as is possible these shall be furnished in the style of the period followed in the arrangement of the rooms which are now shown to visitors. The accommodation available for what may be regarded as a Washington Museum will in this way be substantially enlarged.

A PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE.

The popularity of Sulgrave Manor as a place of pilgrimage increases steadily. More than 10,000 persons, of whom a majority were Americans, visited the house and village last year. The visitors are most numerous in the late spring and summer months, but even in winter as many as ten people from the United States will sign the book in a single day.

The property, consisting of the manor house and its contents, is vested in three international trustees—the American Ambassador in London, the British Ambassador in Washington, and the Regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union. The sole authority for the control and maintenance of the manor house is the Sulgrave Manor Board, the headquarters of which are at the Central Buildings, Westminster, and which is a body quite distinct from the American George Washington Sulgrave Institution. Funds are still required for the suitable equipment of the rooms which have now become available. The annual cost of the upkeep of the manor house is defrayed mainly from the endowment of 100,000 dollars provided by the National Society of Colonial Dames in America, supplemented by the admission fees to the Manor. The expense of the restoration of the west wing has been met by subscriptions collected by individual members of the Society of Colonial Dames, and it is hoped that from the same source sufficient funds will remain to complete the restoration of the 17th-century rooms previously used by the caretaker.

THE WASHINGTONS
of
SULGRAVE MANOR
Immigrants to the New World



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Left: At last the cottages have been rethatched. For too long, they were covered by tarpaulins. Below: The Sulgrave Rose.



Students in the 2006 Sandford Award for Heritage Education Program at Sulgrave Manor





OUR ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

Washington Crest, above Sulgrave Manor's door.



Victoria Bradshaw and Norman Hudson, receiving the two flags at the closing ceremony of Dames Day.



Old friends, Margaret Brown, former Sr. Representative to the Sulgrave Manor Board, and Baroness Jill Knight of Collingtree, past Chairman of the Sulgrave Manor Board, in the Church of St.



Flags in the village church of St. James the Less.



The fate of former Presidents.



Created by the Franklin Mint for The Friends of Sulgrave Manor, the ancestral home of George Washington. Sponsored by The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America

Celebrating 100 years of the preservation and maintenance of George Washington's ancestral home in Northamptonshire and held in trust for the people of the United Kingdom and the United States.

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