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Talk to the Pittsburgh Dames
(NSCDA/PA/Allegheny County Committee)

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Thank you for such a nice introduction. What an honor it is to be invited to speak to all of you today.

I was thrilled to find a connection between the, Garden Club of America, the English Speaking Union and Sulgrave Manor.



In 1929 Invited by the ESU, GCA President, Mrs. Lockwood led a two week English Pilgrimage of 90 delegates to England. Here they are at Sulgrave manor. It is fun to see hats, fur and umbrellas. Note the topiary Taxus peacocks in front of the Manor. They were given by the Garden Club of America sometime before the 1029 visit.



Here they are now!



This is my favorite photo of Sulgrave Manor because it embodies everything that Sulgrave Manor is all about. The

photo shows the Manor under two flags, thus a literal example of Anglo American relations. It shows 125 Colonial Dames and their friends and family at the Centenary celebration two years ago. Many of you may have friends or actually be in this photo. It was taken by Julie Milone's' husband, Michael.

You can see the fields beyond the Manor that Lawrence Washington owned. The Washington coat of arms is above the original front door. The original wing of the manor is on the right housing the great hall. You can even see the topiary peacocks behind the group. The peacocks were given by the GCA sometime before the 1929 trip.

Of course you all remember the Treaty of Ghent from your history class! It was the treaty that ended the War of 1812 in 1814, the last battle being fought in 1815. It was signed on December 24th, 1814. Can you imagine these days, anyone getting together on Christmas Eve to sign a treaty? Now we can celebrate **two** hundred years of peace between Great Britain and America.



I thought that two hundred years must be some sort of record, but when I did some research, I was surprised to find otherwise. This is not the longest treaty still enforced between two nations. In 1386 a treaty was signed between England and Portugal, called the Treaty of Windsor.

Here is John of Gaunt dining with John I of Portugal.

It was this treaty that got England into the Napoleonic wars defending Portugal against the French.

Sulgrave Manor was purchased in 1914 by public subscription to celebrate the aforementioned Treaty of Ghent. In the beginning the British raised most of the money for the restoration. American participation was not great which was embarrassing to some. The goal was to promote Anglo American relations, and they still do, but along the way Americans, more specifically the Dames discovered the connection with George Washington.



The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America heard about the purchase and became involved right away, immediately raising \$1,000 and sending it over. They also commissioned a copy of the Charles Wilson Peale portrait of GW to hang in the manor house, which with WWI intervening, was not delivered for several more years..

An aside: We recently sent this painting to be restored, only to find that the copyist, copied with license the aged original, which is hanging at Washington and Lee University and she included the yellow varnish! Therefore it could not be cleaned. The colors in the copy were original to the painting, not the added layers of age and smoke.

The frame was created after a design of Paul Revere's. Note the cartouches at the top of the frame with the Washington and American coats of arms.

Sulgrave Manor is one of the Washington ancestral homes in England. There is also Washington Old Hall in the north. Our Sulgrave Manor was built 500 years ago by George Washington's fifth great grandfather, Lawrence Washington, who made his very successful living in the wool trade. He also

married well. Lawrence's first wife, Elizabeth Gough, was the widow of a Northamptonshire wool trader. As was true in those days, since your wife was your possession, so were all of her possessions. She died childless. Lawrence kept her land. He then married another rich widow Amy Pargiter, who brought him even more wealth and together they had eleven children.



It was she who had the lease for Sulgrave Village and many other properties. After the dissolution, Lawrence was able to buy the land outright, from Henry VIII.

“Here lyeth burried the bodies of Lawrence Washington, Gent & Amee his wyf by whom he had issue IIII sons & VII daughts. Lawrence dyed y day of jan 15 & Amee deceased the VI day of October amdm 1564”

This marrying well was part of a Washington tradition both before and after Lawrence, culminating with George Washington who married the richest widow in Virginia. Some think that George was born on a white horse, chopped down a cherry tree, galloped off to Bunker Hill, and then became our Nation's first President. Some biographers say that George didn't know much about his ancestors. I wonder because but he did use the family coat of arms. Go to Mount Vernon and you will see it everywhere.

The Washington's in England fell on hard times because they were loyalists and lost to the Parliamentarians. So George's great grandfather John Washington, sailed to Virginia with a cargo to be traded for tobacco. As his ship was leaving Virginia, the ship ran aground on a reef, and the cargo was lost. A trial ensued and guess what, John married the very wealthy judge's daughter. They were given 700 acres to start their married life together.



Now, more about the Tudor Manor House. Do you remember the first picture that I showed to you of the house?

Now, let's talk about the Manor. Please note all of the tiny windows. They were in serious need of repair. More on this later....

Above the entrance, the white square is the Washington coat of arms, with three red stars and the two red stripes.



1. Do you see a resemblance to our flag? Actually in heraldry what we see as stars are actually spurs, and the red stripes are rivers of blood. The crest was won on the field of battle. A former Grenadier Guard, told me that the family was given it at the battle of Crecy, but I am unable to find any evidence of this.



Above the crest are the heads of two sheep. Wool was the big business of the day, and the Washington interest is proudly displayed here.



2. Now If you stand back a little and look off to your right you will still see extensive fields. They now have cattle grazing in them, but in Lawrence's day they would have been full of sheep. Meat was a luxury, but wool was a necessity. The Manor still owns about 60 acres of land including this view, and most of it is in fields.



3. Next go into the Manor and turn right into the great Hall. You will see the long refectory table, an original Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington, and the huge fireplace beyond. Note that it has an inglenook big enough to sit in, and a small shelf to put your mug on. Here is one of the few places in the Manor where one could get warm. On the right side of the fireplace out of sight is a grate which leads into the salt cupboard on the right. This grate keeps the cupboard warm and dry for the salt. Remember that salt was a very expensive commodity. You have all heard the expressions, "He's worth his Salt. He sat either above or below the salt. He is the Salt of the earth." I am sure that you can think of others.

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See the small door on the right of the screen? ...



4. This is obviously an original part of the house as it has Lawrence Washington's initials LW carved into the wooden door. He would also have kept other important things in this cupboard such as farm papers to keep them dry. England is famous for its cold damp houses. In the manors archives there are the original deeds to the Manor with enormous wax seals. This is where they would have been stored.



5. On another wall are replicas of the original stained glass bearing the family's coat of arms. The originals are in the Corning Glass museum in upstate New York.



6. Down the Hall is a kitchen display, a treasure at Sulgrave of a comprehensive collection of eighteenth century fixtures and fittings acquired, in its entirety, from its original home in Weston Corbet, Hampshire. It is correct for the period, but not original to the Manor. It is a wonderful teaching tool for the children. I love trying to figure out how all of the tools would have been used. I feel sorry for the poor child whose job it was to sit in front of the fire and turn the spit. He would not have been from the Washington family, but a poor neighbor's child who was happy for him to live at the Manor and be fed. The problem with this job was that it was very hot work, and there were always sparks from the fire! The large iron hoop above the fireplace was for the fire screen. The screen would have been pulled across to prevent sparks from flying out and burning down the house. Today, we also have fireplace screens for the same reason.



7. Now go upstairs and find the big old Elizabethan bed with embroidered bed hangings. The reason that I love this bed is because I love embroidery. These hangings are a handmade reproduction created about fifteen years ago.



8. Just a close up of the fine work. Each piece was stitched separately, and then they were all applied onto the velvet. When they were first starting to do this project, I volunteered to do a piece, but wasn't allowed to, as I didn't live close enough for them to check my work.



9. Can you guess what this is? ... It is a door pull... You can see what centuries of people's fingernails have done to

the \$100,000 necessary for their repair.

24. ..and the work has just been completed. No longer can you poke your finger into the open space between the glass and the frame. One of the teachers said to me that the wind no longer blows through the building. She realized how much better things were inside when she wasn't wrapping her shawl tight around her shoulders, and is grateful that she is no longer mopping up huge puddles.



What an exciting day last spring when the last window was reinstalled. It must have been fun to have been there.

25. 26.



Earlier I said that most of the Manor's sixty acres was mostly in fields, but also there are cottages. This one is known as the "thatched cottage" but there is not much thatching left. The Parish Council has been after the Trust to repair these roofs.



25. Last year one of the cottage walls was in great danger of collapsing. As part of the repair, they had to remove what thatching was left, to fix the wall underneath. I find the framework for the roof fascinating. Now that we have made the repairs, this view will no longer be seen.



Now the thatching is underway. I can't wait to see the completed

thatching when I am at the Manor in June. The villagers should be happy too.



26. Many years ago the Dames worked hard to raise money to repair the roof. I thought that it was all done, but alas no, only about two thirds was repaired. The last third has yet to be done. I thought this was not on the emergency list as it is not yet leaking. At the January board meeting I asked for a prioritized list of needed repairs. The roof has now gone to the top of the list. These windows, not yet repaired when I took the photo, are covered with Plexiglas to keep out the elements. Fortunately that is no longer the case. We are slowly repairing the envelope. Then we can start on the inside.

The reason that so much needs to be done is that for many years nothing was repaired. The board met twice a year and assumed that the employees were handling everything. They did but only on an emergency level. When something broke the staff tried to find the money to make the needed repairs. Five years ago the Sulgrave Manor Board became the Sulgrave Manor Trust and with the name change came new leadership. This resulted in a top to bottom survey of the manor and its out buildings. As a result everyone from the Trust to the Friends of Sulgrave Manor took their jobs much more seriously. We the Dames have been raising much more money and have been able to commit to giving them a steady allowance which they can count on, instead of sending emergency hunks when they were desperate. We the Friends have been very successful thanks to all of your efforts and donations, and have therefore been able to send them extra beyond their

allowance when needs are identified. They too have a much better understanding of their cash flow. At one of my first board meetings before the fresh wind blew through, I was surprised to learn that the bank would not extend any more overdrafts to the Manor. Now they have budgets and are no longer in any debt. /thanks to you Dames, they have the ability to go forward.



27. Of course there are dreams of the future and the long range plan for the Manor. One of the questions being asked is how appropriate is it to have so much George Washington memorabilia in a 16th century Tudor Manor House? Here is a small part of the collection in what is known as “The Washington Room”. See GW’s saddle bags hanging on the wall. By the way a few years ago the Dames paid to have them restored.



28. The Manor even has a building called the brew house. Originally the building was used to brew beer. Now it is used for education but could easily be converted into a Washington Museum. Right now there is GW material in the loft. See the stairs on the left going up.

29.



Wouldn't this be a much better setting for the original Gilbert Stuart portrait of GW which is now in the Tudor Great Hall?



30. or Archibald Robertson's portrait of him in the uniform of a Colonial Provincial in the British Armed Forces.



I have already talked about the third portrait of GW, a copy of one painted by Charles Wilson Peale. The Dames had this copy made one hundred years ago and given to the Manor. The frame was carved after a design of Paul Revere. Note the cartouches at the top displaying both the Washington and the United States coat of arms.



32. Wouldn't it be better to house these three portraits in a museum dedicated to GW rather than in an original Tudor Great Hall? The wonderful bust of GW given by the eponymous University could be relocated in the courtyard in front of the museum.



35. Where should we put George Washington's coat? It too needs a climate controlled room with a custom made manikin. Those are not sparkles on his coat, but dreaded mold. We tried to have DNA testing done on it. But it became obvious that many people had worn it on various occasions for dress up. Didn't you try on your grandfather's old jacket or grandmas beautiful dress? However the measurements are that of GW, and he was an unusually tall man for his time. It looks like the coat in the Gilbert Stuart portrait. Thanks to a generous Dame we just received a grant from the Pillsbury Marketing Foundation to have the coat repaired and cleaned. There was a wonderful surprise in store.

When the coat was taken off its half manikin, we discovered that we had the whole coat twice that which had been displayed. That certainly will make a much more impressive display. I hope that it will be ready in time for the Dames trip to Sulgrave Manor next June.



Last year the DAR gave us a matching grant of \$10,000 to restore our three paintings of GW, as well as some other painted things. The condition of the grant was that the Dames had to match the \$10,000 which we did and then we were pleased to be able to give more for further investigation and restoration. There were lots of questions about our Gilbert Stuart. As you probably know Gilbert Stuart made lots of copies of his famous portrait of GW. Was ours one of those? If so where did it belong in the line of many copies? Was our portrait even by Gilbert Stuart? With the DAR grant we were able to find out. Not only was it an original, but the restorer, Valentine Walsh has spent a great deal of time researching it, as well as talking to Stuart experts in the US. It is now thought to be one of the very early ones which is very exciting. However the money that we were given was enough to clean it, but not properly finish the job. When it was removed from the frame it was found that some of the painting had been wrapped around the stretcher. Did some owner along the line find a frame that was desirable and make the portrait smaller to fit? There are still many questions such as this that still need to be answered. In order to meet the term of the DAR grant, we had to say that the project was finished and the portrait rehung back in the Great Hall. That has been done and approved. Now it is back at the restorers for the rest of the work. It is so exciting to find that an object in your collection is much better than you thought possible.



34. And now for my last slide. A vanity. At the Dames Day celebratory centenary luncheon, I had the privilege of sitting next to Princess Di's brother, Charles Earl Spencer.

This is not an inappropriate photo, because the Spencer's and the Washingtons lived near each other and were friends. In fact when the Washingtons fell on hard times, the then Earl Spencer gave them housing and jobs at Althorp. The current Earls great grandfather was instrumental on the Peace Committee which purchased the Manor for a museum.

38. As you can see, Sulgrave Manor, like many old houses needs money to make the necessary repairs. The restoration of our art work has started, we put two thirds of its hat on, and the windows have been repaired. Now we need a way to heat the building enough to keep the mold away. Another part of this, for which it is terribly difficult to raise money, is the drains. As one friend of mine said when digging a new cesspool, you dig a deep hole, throw in your diamond tiara, cover it over and what have you got to show for it? One can boast about the windows being repaired, but who boasts about the toilets flushing, and the gutters carrying the water away from the building? This is all a necessary part of preserving the Manor. And of course, that is why my hand is always out looking for donations.

Thank you for coming today and I hope that you will all make a pilgrimage to the United Kingdom and thence to the Village of Sulgrave to see our wonderful Tudor house, Sulgrave Manor.

