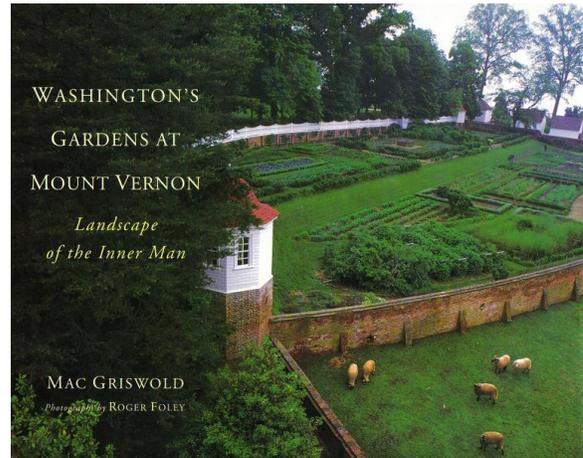


Book & Garden Review
George Washington's Mount Vernon
Debbie Moore Clark

As I sit to write this review, the date is February 20, 2012, Presidents' Day—a fitting day to review a favorite book, *Washington's Gardens at Mount Vernon*, and equally favorite historic landmark, George Washington's Mount Vernon.

Among my favorite books, *Washington's Gardens at Mount Vernon: Landscape of the Inner Man*, offers its readers a rare look into the man of George Washington—the landscape designer, farmer and gardener of Mount Vernon. In this delightful tome, author Mac Griswold reveals “a domestic Washington, a man who gathers seed and sows it, transplants, propagates, grafts and prunes trees himself, and notes down his successes and failures” (fly cover). Not unlike the presidents that followed him in office, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, Washington was at heart a farmer. His correspondence, memos, directives, diaries, plans and plant lists document his meticulous care of his Mount Vernon estate, but also reveal the heart of the man who also served our country as an esteemed military commander and as its beloved first president.



Roger Foley's stunning color photographs illustrate this useful, yet coffee-table-quality hardcover book. Augmenting Foley's 150 photographs are numerous historical drawings and sketches from Mount Vernon's archives, which also bring Griswold's readable text to life.

Reading this enjoyable book will certainly entice you to visit or revisit Mount Vernon. For a virtual tour and detailed information on the museum, estate and gardens at Mount Vernon, visit www.mountvernon.org. Allow a full day for your visit. Begin with the introductory film in the Ford Orientation Center. Beyond the museum

with its artifacts and displays, plan to linger in the museum's educational center, which details George Washington's life through interesting displays, entertaining and informational short films and fascinating wax figures. You will want to hear, see, and read every word!

A visit through the Mount Vernon mansion is incredibly interesting—and like me, you may be surprised to learn about the construction of the home, which faces the Potomac River, positioned 16 miles downriver from Washington, DC. Interestingly, by 1759 Washington decided the river side of the house was the new back door and the west entrance, facing the New World, was the front door.

Flanking the bowling green on the west side of the house, the Upper and Lower Gardens are enjoyable to traverse. The formal Upper Garden displays flowers and perennials, while the functional Lower Gardener reveals a plethora of vegetables and herbs growing in line with those that once fed the estate.

A short walk from the mansion, the family crypt is also worth a visit. These are only some of the highlights of

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the estate, which also encompasses slave quarters and functional historic outbuildings like the kitchen, blacksmith and more.

The visitor center houses two incredible shopping opportunities as well as dining in the style of historic Mount Vernon. (Put your name in the queue early and allow a couple of hours for the restaurant as lines can be long and service sometimes slow when crowds are large.)

***Washington's Gardens at
Mount Vernon: Landscape of
the Inner Man***

Mac Griswold

Photographs by Roger Foley

*New York: Houghton Mifflin
Company, 1999*

192 pages

ISBN 0-395-92970-9

***Mount Vernon: Museum,
Estate and Gardens***

www.mountvernon.org

In the past five years, I've made three visits to Mount Vernon, first rediscovering for myself the wonders of this magnificent museum and estate; and then a year later, taking a friend. Each visit was as interesting as the time before. If you visited Mount Vernon years ago, as I did as a youth, plan to revisit and take advantage of the incredible efforts preservationists have made through the addition of the new visitor's center, museum and educational center. You will be amazed! *DMC*



**Mount Vernon Mansion, October 6, 2008.
Taken by Debbie Moore Clark.
Used with permission.**



Debbie Moore Clark is an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer in Mecklenburg County, NC. She and her husband enjoy visiting historic gardens.

Debbie Moore Clark with George, Martha and the children at Mount Vernon, October 5, 2008. Used with permission.