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From the Collection

Finding America in Its First Political Textile

John R. Monsky

Often attributed to renowned colonial printer and patriot John Hewson, and generally reported as commissioned by Martha Washington, Winterthur's kerchief with George Washington on horseback, circa 1776–77, is widely reproduced as a symbol of the American Revolution. A review of its text and imagery and an investigation of the evidence related to Martha Washington's involvement in its production provide a fascinating look at the early development of George Washington into a national icon and the influence of classical republicanism in the shaping of that role. The Kerchief may well be one of the earliest examples, if not the earliest, of Washington's emerging title of "founder," or "father of his country."

HISTORIANS HAVE OFTEN looked to the images of George Washington in American material culture as a reflection of his place in the American mind at various times in history. Early illustrations, from the period prior to Washington's appointment as president of the United States, are of particular interest to historians because they offer an opportunity to see the first developments of Washington's image and the evolution of his status to that of an American icon. Early examples, however, are relatively limited. Wendy Wick, in her comprehensive work, *George Washington: An American Icon,* groups these works into the category of "Commander in Chief" as most of the renderings show Washington in that role. Within that category we have only a handful of representations that can truly be considered "early images," or ones that generally depict Washington at the start of the Revolutionary War.

One example, in the collection at Winterthur, is a thirty-inch-by-thirty-three-inch textile handkerchief (referred to in this article as the Kerchief) showing Washington on horseback (fig. 1). Handkerchiefs were not merely popular as items of clothing in colonial times. They were often printed with significant information, such as maps that could be folded into one's pocket or charts containing tabular information such as London cab fares for certain distances. They were also printed, as the Kerchief appears to have been, as records of events and political items or both that could be worn or displayed. If the printer of this Kerchief was trying to leave a record of George Washington's appointment as commander in chief, she or he succeeded. The Kerchief, which has taken on a life of its own, is widely reproduced as a symbol of the American Revolution. So much so, that it even graced the inside cover of *American Heritage*'s June 1976 issue devoted, in part, to the eve of the two hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. As a mark of its distinction, the image is identified chronologically as "No. 1" out of fifteen hundred textiles that address American subjects in the classic work *Threads of History* by Herbert Collins. It is so important as a piece of material culture that no serious work on American textiles omits a discussion of it.[1]

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[1] Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, *Talkative Textiles* (San Francisco: Transamerica Corporation, 1992), pp. 3–5; Mary Schoeser, *Printed Handkerchiefs* (London: Museum of London, 1988), pp. 1–14. Florence H. Pettit, *America's Printed and Painted Fabrics, 1600–*

Fig. 1. Kerchief, depicting Washington on horseback, ca. 1776. Linen; H. 30½″, W. 33″. (Winterthur.)

The picture on the Kerchief presents a vigorously dramatic image and has a distinctively American feel in its crude but bold portrayal of a mounted Washington surrounded by flags, cannons, and munitions, all framed by a floral border pattern. The circular legend around Washington's image in the center reads, "George Washington, Esq. Foundator and Protector of America's Liberty and Jndependency."

The Kerchief, however, cannot claim artistic uniqueness. The image of Washington on horseback was clearly copied, down to the last detail, from a September 1775 English print published by "C. Shepherd." The Shepherd print pictures Washington on horseback with a battle scene in the background and was titled "George Washington, Esqr. General and Commander in Chief of the Continental Army." The rest of the complex illustration in the Kerchief, however, is wholly the

1900 (New York: Hastings House, 1970); Florence M. Montgomery, *Printed Textiles: English and American Cottons and Linens, 1700–1850* (New York: Viking Press, 1970); Herbert Ridgeway Collins, *Threads of History: Americana Recorded on Cloth, 1775 to the Present* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979); Hillary Weiss, *The American Bandanna: Culture on Cloth from George Washington to Elvis* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990). To my knowledge, there are 4 surviving copies of the Kerchief. Two are in the Winterthur collection, one is in the New-York Historical Society collection, and the fourth is in the author's collection.

invention of its designer (or designers). Collins dates the Kerchief to circa 1775–78 and states that "tradition has it" that renowned American textile printer John Hewson printed the Kerchief at the request of Martha Washington when she visited his shop in 1775. Hewson, an English emigrant, was a patriot in his own right who fought in the Revolutionary War. Respected historians have placed him in the company of Paul Revere, both for the masterful quality of his work and for his service to his newly adopted country.[2]

The Kerchief stands out from other early images of Washington, the majority of which reflect him primarily as commander in chief, because it looks to the future and projects the development of a new national standard—a flag for the incipient nation and a national father in the figure of Washington. The Kerchief does more than simply identify Washington as a national icon, however. In order to more fully appreciate its specific messages—political messages related to the emerging power of the thirteen colonies as a united force and Washington's role as a leader of a new republic—it is necessary to understand how the contemporary colonial viewer would have interpreted each of the four flags detailed in the Kerchief and the language on the Kerchief itself. That effort is undertaken in the pages that follow.

As for the Kerchief's printer, and the patron who may have commissioned it, it seems clear that there are more than apocryphal stories and mere "tradition" that connect it to Martha Washington and Hewson. As discussed below, there is a substantial body of evidence that suggests that this was an early work of Hewson and was possibly intended as a centerpiece for a quilt. Also, there is additional evidence that suggests Martha Washington herself ordered the production of the work.

The Shepherd Original

There can be no doubt that the central figure on the Kerchief is taken from one of the earliest prints ever issued of Washington. In June 1775, just a little more than a year before the Declaration of Independence was drafted, Congress appointed Washington as commander in chief of the Continental army. Washington immediately went to Boston, where the Continental "army," a collection of militias from several states, had been laying siege to the British army. A stalemate ensued as Washington had the high ground around Boston but not enough gunpowder or cannon to attack. With the help of Col. Henry Knox, who supervised the transportation of mortars and heavy guns from Fort Ticonderoga, Washington placed the artillery on Dorchester Heights overlooking Boston Harbor. The British knew their fleet was about to be bombarded by a large contingent of heavy guns and negotiated an unimpeded withdrawal from Boston in March of 1776 in return for not burning the city.

Saving Boston without the loss of life or great destruction to the city and then forcing the British to retreat to Halifax were victories that made Washington a hero and an instant sensation. British printmakers apparently rushed forward with fictitious images of Washington, not bothering to wait for actual drawings of Washington from real life. The Shepherd print was one of the earliest prints produced. In addition to the title the print contained the following notations: "Done from an original Drawn from the Life by Alexr. Campbell, of Williamsburgh in Virginia. Published as the Act directs, 9 Septr. 1775, by C. Shepherd" (fig. 2). A second "Shepherd" print with the same notation, showing Washington in a standing three-quarter pose, was also printed in 1775.[3]

The works, clearly not done from life (even Washington, who was shown a copy of one of the prints, said so), were made by a fictitious artist and presented fictitious images. The Shepherd print showing Washington on horseback appears to have had an influential impact. For example, the horseback image also appears on Liverpool pottery (fig. 3). While not directly copied, the influence of the Shepherd horseback image is also seen in other works. Wick, for example, points to an English handkerchief produced in 1783, which she believes was influenced by the Shepherd print (fig. 4).[4]

The Kerchief and the 1783 handkerchief in turn had their own impact on additional works. One such work is an engraving shown as the

[2] Montgomery, *Printed Textiles*, p. 98.

[3] Wendy C. Wick, *George Washington: An American Icon* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), pp. 18–21. See also *The Hampton L. Carson Collection of Engraved Portraits of Gen. George Washington*, auction catalogue (Philadelphia: Privately printed, 1904), p. 20, lot 120; Charles Henry Hart, *Catalogue of Engraved Portraits of Washington* (New York: Grolier Club, 1904), p. 305, Hart #721. On the second Shepherd print, see Wick, *George Washington*, p. 19, fig. 5.

[4] *MastroNet Auction Catalog* (Oak Brook, Ill.) (April 23, 2003), p. 129, lot 356. Wick, *George Washington*, pp. 22–23. See also John Jay Ide, *The Portraits of John Jay (1745–1829), First Chief Justice of the United States, Governor of the State of New York* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1938), foldout ill.

Fig. 2. Alexander Campbell, "George Washington, Esqr. General and Commander in Chief of the Continental Army in America," September 9, 1775. Mezzotint. (Yale University Art Gallery, John Hill Morgan Collection.)

Fig. 3. Washington bowl. From *MastroNet Auction Catalog* (Oak Brook, Ill.) (April 23, 2003), p. 129, lot 356.

frontispiece of Carl W. Drepperd's *Early American Prints*, which has long puzzled print experts (fig. 5). Probably produced between 1785 and 1789, its maker and exact date are unknown. Wick dates it between 1785 and 1800, but it would appear to have been designed before 1789 because it refers to Washington as a general, not president. Wick believes that the 1783 handkerchief influenced the engraving, but it could be equally argued that the Kerchief may have had an influence on the engraving as well, as the particular language surrounding Washington and the reeling horse are derivative of the Kerchief, not the 1783 handkerchief. The legend around Washington in the engraving reads: "His Excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON Esqr. Commander in chief of the AMERICAN ARMIES. The Protector of his COUNTRY. The Supporter of LIBERTY. And the Benefactor of Mankind. May his name never be forgotten."[5]

There is one last specific result to be noted in this chain of influences. The 1785–89 engraving appears to have had, in turn, an influence on Amos Dolittle's famous and widely reproduced work entitled "A Display of the United States of America" (fig. 6). Although the images in the Dolittle print and the 1785–89 engraving are completely different, the language in the legends, including the use of capitalization, are very close. The Dolittle print reads: "GEORGE WASHINGTON. President of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA. The Protector of his COUNTRY and the Supporter of the rights of MANKIND."[6]

Washington: From General to Symbol

The first images of Washington pictured him almost exclusively as commander in chief. Images similar to the two Shepherd prints (showing Washington standing and on horseback) appeared on the Continent with French and German inscriptions. They were, for the most part, limited in their simple message—"Here is the new American general, George Washington."[7]

Although most American images followed the European pattern of presenting Washington simply as the general of the American forces, some American portrayals, especially the more crudely

[5] Wick, *George Washington*, pp. 22, 164. Hart, *Catalogue*, p. 307, Hart #725.

[6] Wick, *George Washington*, pp. 34–35.

[7] Wick, *George Washington*, pp. 7–33.

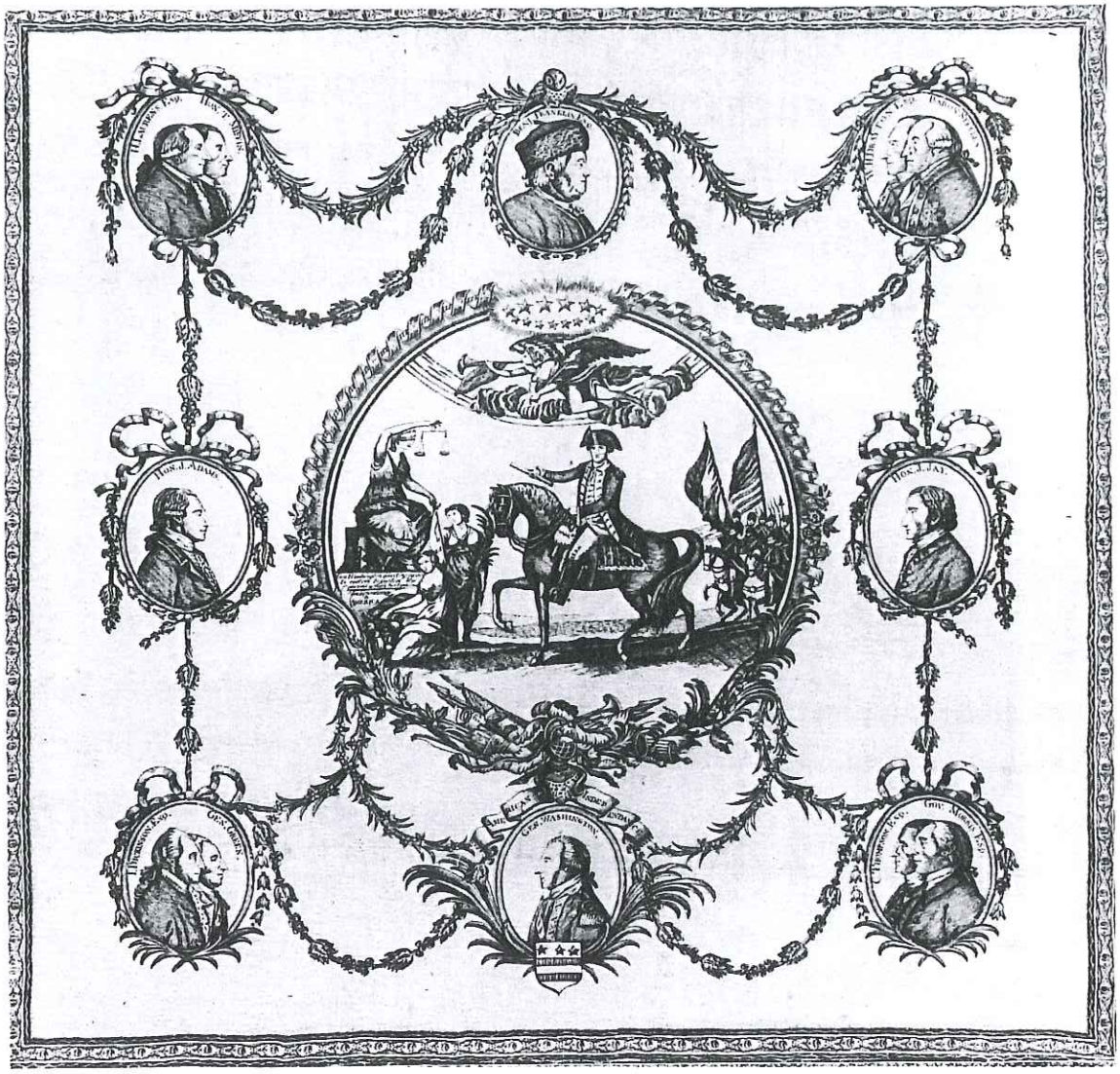

Fig. 4. "Gen. Washington directing peace to restore to justice the sword which had gained Independence to America," England, ca. 1783. Linen kerchief; H. 25″, W. 24″. (Winterthur, gift of Henry Francis du Pont.)

drawn representations, were more expansive in their descriptions and imagery. A 1777 print shows "His Excellency George Washington" with the smoke and flames of Charlestown in the background. *Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack, for the Year of Our Redemption, 1778* shows the "Glorious Washington and Gates" in a coarse relief cut. A 1779 Pennsylvania German almanac has an unrefined portrait of Washington's face, mixed in with symbolic images of the Old World and the New World, and refers to Washington as *Des Landes Vater* (the father of his country). In 1779 John Norman engraved a one-page broadside that shows Washington on the masthead flanked by twin figures of Fame, the seal of Pennsylvania, a shield and a rattlesnake (clearly a symbol of the rebellion), garlands, cartouches, and military elements. As Wick puts it, Norman was "the first printmaker to explore, through a series of images, a symbolic and allegorical context for the Washington portrait." By 1780 European printmakers were also exploring allegorical images in Washington prints. Of particular note is a 1780 engraving by William Sharp that shows Washington amidst the "Don't Tread on Me" slogan, a rattlesnake, and the Stars and Stripes (presented

Fig. 5. George Washington on horseback, ca. 1783. Engraving; Diam. 11⅝". (Old Print Shop, New York.)

in the form of two flags—one with stars and one with stripes). The work gives Washington his usual "Commander in Chief" title, however.[8]

Foreshadowing these later works, or at least in the company of them if it was printed later, the Kerchief is conspicuous in its broader presentation of Washington. The text itself is expansive in its reach, declaring Washington "Foundator and Protector of America's Liberty and Jndependency." And the Kerchief goes a step further in its imagery by blending (perhaps for the first time) Washington's image with emerging "national" symbols, which included important flags from the period 1775–77. Although many textile historians have examined the Kerchief, none has looked at the flags in detail. They are generally described in a cursory manner as "flags of local militia" or are ignored altogether. For the American viewer of that time, the flags held great significance. A closer study of the history of these flags shows that they represented a collection of the most important symbols of the growing independence of America. By surrounding Washington with these flags, the designer has, in effect,

[8] Wick, *George Washington,* pp. 77–81; "His Excellency George Washington," p. 78; "Glorious Washington and Gates," p. 77; "Des Landes Vater," p. 79; Norman engraving, p. 81. Wick, *George Washington,* p. 16. Sharp engraving is reproduced in Wick, *George Washington,* p. 29; and Hart, *Catalogue,* p. 47, Hart #92.

Fig. 6. Amos Dolittle, "A Display of the United States of America," October 1, 1791. Engraving; H. 19½", W. 23⅝". (Winterthur.)

"nationalized" him and transformed him into a genuine American icon.

The Flags

There are four flags displayed in the Kerchief. The striped flag, which has thirteen red stripes on a white background, stands out as a symbol of Revolutionary unity, not simply a banner of one militia troop (fig. 7). Although no single flag was settled upon until Congress adopted the Stars and Stripes on June 14, 1777, the thirteen-striped flag was widely recognized in engravings, including cartoons. By December 1775, Washington appears to have been using the Grand Union Flag that pictured the British Union Jack in the canton on a field of thirteen stripes (probably seven red and six white). At the time, the merging of the two symbols was appropriate for the new navy and army—the flag represented the hope that the colonies would remain British after the issues of colonial rights were resolved. Almost immediately the Grand Union Flag caused problems. When Washington first raised it outside Boston on January 1, 1776, the British mistook it—because of the Union Jack—as a sign of surrender. Once independence was declared (and possibly earlier, particularly in light of the confusion that Washington faced in January), the British Union Jack canton was dropped, and the flag was reduced to a standard of stripes, often rendered as seven red and six white stripes.[9] Regardless of the exact timing, the important point is that the artist of the Kerchief has not pictured a banner of a local militia but one reflecting the union of all the colonies.

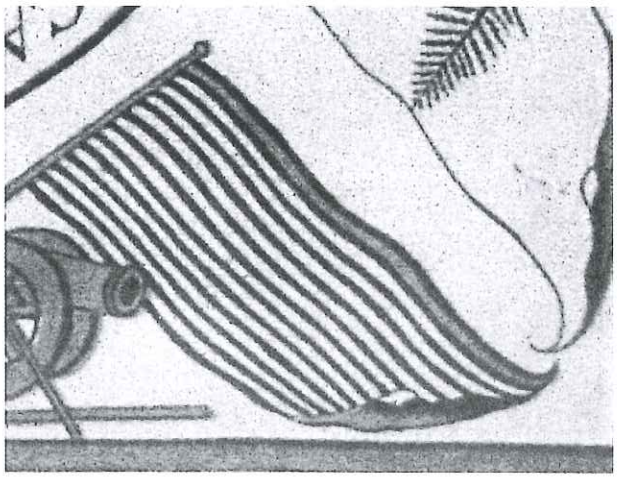

Fig. 7. Detail (striped flag), fig. 1.

The Pine Tree Flag, also pictured in the Kerchief, was widely associated with the New England colonies (particularly Massachusetts Bay) before the Revolution and emerged as one of the dominant flags during the years 1775 and 1776. The pine tree had a special meaning for Americans, as it was the focus of an important industry and a sign of wealth, commerce, and power. Among other uses, the tall white pines of New England were key elements of the King's Navy as a unique source of tall, durable masts. Jonathan Trumbell, who was an eyewitness to the battle of Bunker Hill, shows the Pine Tree Flag (a green tree in a white canton on a red field) being flown by the Americans in his 1785 painting of the battle. The Massachusetts council adopted the Pine Tree Flag in April 1776 as the official flag for its developing

[9] Edward W. Richardson, *Standards and Colors of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), pp. 17–19; Whitney Smith, "The Flags of the George Washington Bandana" (author's collection, March 5, 2002, unpublished paper), p. 3.

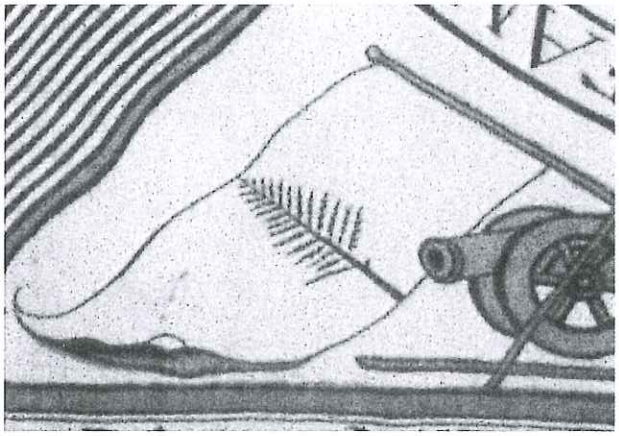

Fig. 8. Detail (Pine Tree Flag), fig. 1.

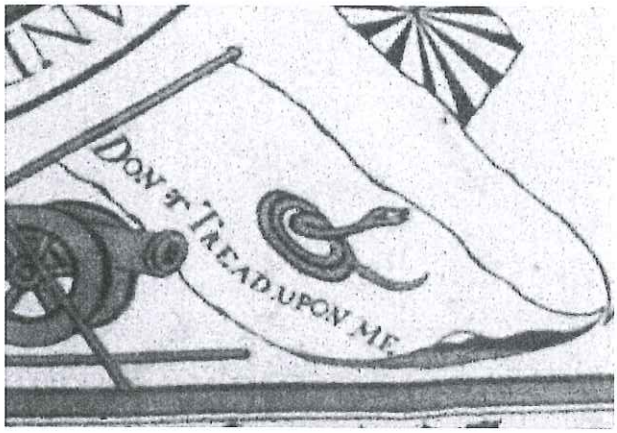

Fig. 9. Detail (Rattlesnake Flag), fig. 1.

navy. Washington apparently used it for his quickly organized fleet of six schooners as well.[10]

The Pine Tree Flag as presented in the Kerchief lacks a motto (fig. 8). In many prints and drawings, especially after the initial years of the war, the flag was drawn with the motto: "An Appeal to Heaven." There are numerous records of the flag being used in the Revolutionary War without a motto, however. (For example, Trumbell's Pine Tree Flag lacks a motto.) While it is generally thought that the motto was used on the ships in Washington's navy, there are records of both forms.[11]

The third flag pictured on the Kerchief is the Rattlesnake Flag, with the motto "Don't Tread. Upon Me" (fig. 9). Perhaps no emblem represented the rebellion better, especially during the 1775–77 period, than the Rattlesnake Flag. The predecessor to this image, the segmented "Join or Die" rattlesnake, came into use with the first colonial protests. It was published as early as 1754 to urge the colonists to unite and fight in the French and Indian War. It became ubiquitous during the Stamp Act protests in 1765 and gained widespread use again in June of 1774 in response to the Intolerable Acts and, in particular, the Boston Port Bill. During 1774 it appeared regularly on the masthead of the *New-York Journal, The Massachusetts Spy,* and *The Pennsylvania Journal.* By 1775, as the colonists became organized, the image of the snake lost its segmentation, and the "Join or Die" motto was replaced with others, among them "Don't Tread Upon Me."[12]

The rattlesnake appealed as a colonial symbol because it was indigenous only to the New World. It also symbolized the colonists' view of themselves—like the rattlesnake, the colonists were not looking for trouble, but if stepped upon, like the rattlesnake, they would defend themselves. The rattlesnake was also used to refute charges of weakness in comparing the colonies to the unsurpassed power of the British army and navy. Despite these favorable aspects, the rattlesnake raised issues for many because of its biblical associations with the evil serpent, and, accordingly, it had a limited life as America's national symbol. By 1782 the eagle would replace it as a more acceptable symbol of republican values. In 1775, however, to colonists who saw themselves in a struggle for liberty against the most powerful empire in the world, the traits of the rattlesnake were justified in such a struggle.[13]

In 1775 and 1776, the Rattlesnake Flag emerged as one of the dominant banners used by the American armies and navies; it was seen in South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Georgia. All the flags pictured the rattlesnake ready to strike on a background of white, crimson, or yellow (sometimes with an additional image in the canton, such as the Union Jack) with the "Don't Tread Upon Me" or "Don't Tread On Me" motto, except for two of the navy flags that showed the snake undulating against a background of white and red stripes. The image and

[10] Lester C. Olson, *Emblems of American Community in the Revolutionary Era: A Study in Rhetorical Iconology* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), p. 51. Richardson, *Standards and Colors,* pp. 91, 93–94, 109.

[11] Richardson, *Standards and Colors,* pp. 90–93.

[12] Olson, *Emblems,* pp. 24, 25, 32.

[13] Olson, *Emblems,* pp. 47, 73.

motto were used on equipment, such as drums, and the snake appeared on currency from 1775 to 1778 throughout the colonies.[14]

The Rattlesnake Flag shown on the Kerchief has some distinctive characteristics. First, it uses the formulation "Don't Tread. Upon Me" (seen only in contemporary flags) rather than "Don't Tread On Me" (seen in contemporary flags and on modern versions of the flag); second, the snake's head is pointed to the right; and third, its rattles are visible. These details suggest that the designer did indeed have access to, or specific knowledge of, other contemporary Rattlesnake Flags. One of the few, if not the only, actual surviving rattlesnake flags is the flag for John Proctor's Pennsylvania militia, which reads "Don't.Tread.On.Me.," with the head of the snake looking to the right (fig. 10). The unmistakable rendering of the rattles shows the snake in its most aggressive form. Paul Revere was one of the first artists to depict the rattlesnake in this form in 1774, when he drew a snake in the "Join or Die" format attacking a dragon (representing England) and added to its tail a barbed stinger. In 1775 and 1776, others followed and included visible rattles.[15] The rattlesnake presented in the Kerchief is also showing its rattles, and while it is very hard to make out the number of rattles, it appears that the artist may have been trying to show thirteen on this snake's tail as a symbol of the thirteen colonies.

While all these flags—the "Rebel Stripes," the Pine Tree Flag, and the Rattlesnake Flag—were symbols of the rebellion, they did not attain the status of the one single flag that could officially represent the new nation. As noted above, the Grand Union Flag, which placed the English Union Jack in the canton, represented continued allegiance to England and had a short-lived service. By the spring of 1776, it did not serve the impending move toward true independence. Thus the designer of the Kerchief, like many Americans, seemed to struggle with the need for a national flag—one to accompany Washington, who is presented not simply as a general but as a national image. So the designer included a *fourth* flag (fig. 11). At first glance, it looks like a flag that John Paul Jones had on his coat of arms, showing the British Grand Union canton on a plain red field.[16] It is a radical departure and uniquely American in its design, however. The canton has thirteen spokes radiating from the center, representing nothing other than the thirteen colonies in a new design on a new flag.

If the striped flag, the Pine Tree Flag, and the Rattlesnake Flag were not enough, no eighteenth-century American viewer would have missed the significance of this fourth flag with its thirteen spokes supplanting the Grand Union Flag canton. Numerous designs showing thirteen items together—symbolizing one union—appeared after 1775, particularly on colonial currency. They included a thirteen-stringed harp, a thirteen-step pyramid, thirteen bees around a hive, thirteen arrows bound together, and thirteen interlocking rings (later used in the Dolittle design).[17] This "spoke" flag could only have been interpreted as a national banner. For the contemporary American viewer, the Kerchief was not merely representating a new general. Washington is melded with a series of emblems—recognized national images—into a symbol of his emerging country. Hidden in the overall result, among other images of union, is a rough draft for a new national flag. The political message projecting the emerging power of the united thirteen colonies is as strong as the statement about Washington.

The significance of the flags in the Kerchief relay the designer's political message. It is just as important, however, to understand how a contemporary revolutionary viewer would have interpreted the terms used in its text, in particular *Foundator, Protector, and Jndependency.*

Foundator

In 1939 Edwin Lefèvre declared that the Kerchief could not have possibly been produced during the Revolutionary War, as "nobody living in America or in England during the war would have referred to Washington as the Foundator or even Founder and Protector of America's Liberty and Jndependency."[18] In Lefèvre's opinion, it seemed impossible that as early as 1776 Americans were

[14] Olson, *Emblems,* pp. 44, 45, 50–51.

[15] For Proctor's flag, see www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/us-pawc.html (June 2003). See also Charles Peale's 1782 rendering of the rattlesnake flag for the 2nd Pennsylvania Regiment—the motto cannot be made out, but the positioning of the snake is very similar to the positioning in the Kerchief; Richardson, *Standards and Colors,* p. 119. For Revere's drawing, see Olson, *Emblems,* pp. 33, 45.

[16] Richardson, *Standards and Colors,* pp. 200–201.

[17] Olson, *Emblems,* p. 9.

[18] Edwin Lefèvre, "Washington Historical Kerchiefs," *The Magazine Antiques* (July 1939): 15.

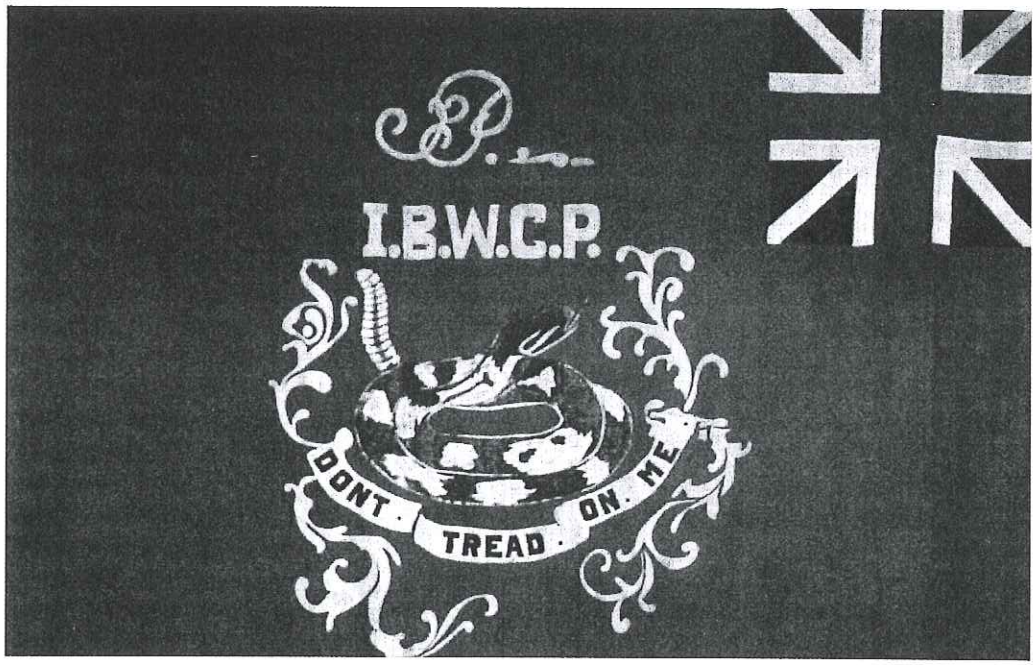

Fig. 10. "Don't Tread On Me" Flag, John Proctor's 1st Battalion, Westmoreland County, Pa., ca. 1775. Silk; H. 70″, W. 76″. (Westmoreland County Historical Society.)

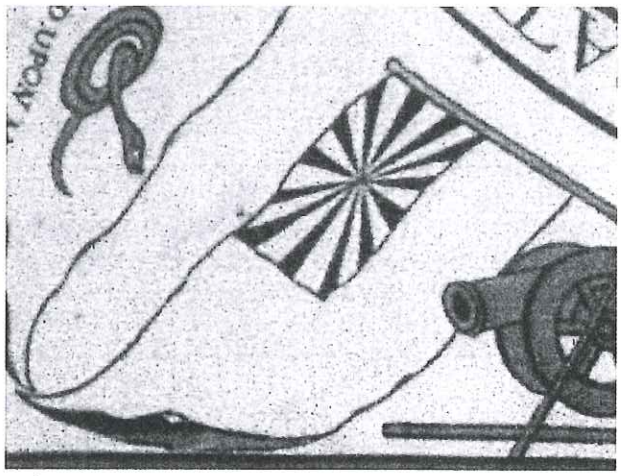

Fig. 11. Detail (thirteen spokes flag), fig. 1.

envisioning Washington as the father or even the founder of his country.

If at one time we believed Washington earned the title of "founder" or "father" of his country only after he fought an eight-year war and served two terms as president, Paul Longmore and Richard Brookhiser have clearly demonstrated that such a notion is wrong. In a relatively short period, sometime between the summer of 1775, when he took command of the Continental army, and 1778, when he was first referred to in an almanac as "father of his country," Washington's reputation rose to the point that this exalted status was clearly his.[19]

While members of Congress (later, the "Founding Fathers") were still maneuvering for their place in history, the "populace" immediately recognized Washington's leadership. After all, here was one of the wealthiest men in America risking his honor, fortune, and life for American liberty. The response from the public in 1775 was overwhelming admiration and recognition. Newspaper stories applauded his appointment. Washington's valor in the French and Indian War rapidly became the stuff of new legend. In March 1776, when Washington had finally forced the British out of Boston, the onrushing adulation became a waterfall. The Massachusetts legislature printed addresses praising him; Harvard gave him an honorary degree; and Congress, as its highest accolade for distinguished achieve-

[19] Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), pp. 171–201; Richard Brookhiser, *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington* (New York: Free Press, 1997), pp. 159–68.

ment, struck a gold medal. A new practice spread that summer and fall among leading families in Boston, Dorchester, Andover, Williamsburg, Newcastle, and elsewhere of baptizing male offspring with the name George Washington. The naming of children was quickly followed by the naming of towns, starting in March 1776 and accelerating throughout the rest of that year.

Thus, as Longmore and Brookhiser demonstrate, Washington's "father" or "founder" role was emerging very early on, almost instantly. Longmore, in fact, points to a private letter, written in 1776, referring to Washington as "our political Father." The earliest public expression of that title that Longmore can find is the 1779 Pennsylvania German almanac.[20] The Kerchief stands out as another important early example. It is consistent with the growing movement toward identifying Washington as the "father of our country."

The specific use of the term *Foundator* dramatically emphasizes the act of founding with respect to Washington. The significance of the term *founder,* or *foundator,* is particularly important with respect to the classical republican notions Washington ascribed to himself and attempted to foster at every opportunity. It was a message that Congress and the colonists also understood and received. As historian Garry Wills has asserted, "Washington in his deepest role, as founder, as father of his country, lived up to this classical pattern."[21]

In the classical republican tradition—a tradition that the colonists relied upon in conceiving their new nation—founders "give power to the law by divesting themselves of it in person." As an example of this widespread ideal, Wills points to Plutarch's widely read work in colonial times, *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans,* which describes Theseus who surrendered his kingship to give order to the commonwealth; Lycurgus, a great lawgiver who began his task with abdication; Solon, who left Athens after his legislation was in place; and Romulus, who was removed from Rome for the state's good.[22]

It is this notion—the classical notion of a founder, not a ruler—that Washington adopted from the first acceptance speech of his command, to his acceptance of honors from Congress after his victory in Boston, and later into his resignation of command and then resignation of the presidency. It was a position that Washington established early and publicly. In his widely reported acceptance speech (clearly given before the Kerchief was produced), he declared that his appointment was a "sacred trust" and acknowledged that his power was temporary, granted by Congress and to be withdrawn by Congress in the future. When he achieved success in Boston, the New York Provincial Congress, in a published statement, expressed its "Assurances" (or rather hope) that "Whenever this important Contest shall be decide. . . . You will cheerfully resign the important Deposit committed into Your Hands, and reassume the Character of our worthiest Citizen." In response, Washington again, in a widely published statement, acknowledged his temporary grant of authority as the new Cincinnatus: "When we assumed the Soldier, we did not lay aside the Citizen, & we shall most sincerely rejoice with you in that happy Hour, when the Establishment of American Liberty . . . shall enable us to return to our private Stations." The pattern and language, of course, repeat through the rest of Washington's career. As Wills states, Washington "was a virtuoso of resignations. He perfected the art of getting power by giving it away."[23]

Lefèvre feels that it is not enough to declare that the word *Foundator,* or *founder,* is out of place for Washington in 1776–77; he also attacks the use of the word *foundator* because, in his view, it is foreign and not American or English. "The word foundator is in the dictionary, but an American or English printer would have used the word founder." But that is a hard claim to prove. Clearly the word *foundator* stands out in its distinctiveness, but it would not have been impossible for an English or American printer to use, as it appears in one of the most widely read plays of the English language, *Everyman.* There the term refers to the ultimate lawgiver, God. This is not a work of someone, as Lefèvre suggests, "not well acquainted with our language and politics in 1776."[24] The opposite is true. Washington is projected as a foundator, and that role is consistent

[20] Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* pp. 197–98, 204.

[21] Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), p. 167.

[22] Wills, *Cincinnatus,* pp. 165–67.

[23] Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* pp. 178, 179. Wills, *Cincinnatus,* p. 3.

[24] Lefèvre, "Washington Historical Kerchiefs," p. 15. G. A. Lester, ed., *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1981), p. 88. Lefèvre, "Washington Historical Kerchiefs," p. 15.

with both his popular status as acknowledged by the spring of 1776 and the American notions, wrapped in classical republicanism, that permeated the time and Washington's entire political conception of his leadership.

Protector

Lefèvre is equally off the mark when he suggests that no one would have referred to Washington as the "Protector" of America's Liberty and Independency in 1776. While Lefèvre was not focusing particularly on the word *Protector,* it is important to do so to understand the Kerchief within the context of its time. To do that one has to understand the significance of Oliver Cromwell in America during this period.

In a 1774 pamphlet, *The American Chronicle of the Times,* Cromwell is pictured on the cover in black armor. The pamphlet tells of Cromwell returning to life and liberating Boston from British troops. Only a year later, Washington would fulfill that prophecy. If John Locke and the Scottish philosophers captured the mind of Thomas Jefferson and those of the other members of Congress in writing the Declaration of Independence, Cromwell's moment in English history captured the minds of the people in the street. His victories reminded Americans that they could win, despite the awesome army and navy they sought to challenge.[25]

The connection was philosophical as well as military. Expressing a connection with the English Civil War, the Americans labeled themselves Whigs and branded the loyalists Tories. Cromwell, of course, was inseparable from the entire conception. Even in 1786, when Jefferson and John Adams, while acting as representatives of their new nation, took a tour of the English countryside, Cromwell (or at least the ideals he fought for) was not to be forgotten. David McCullough relates the story best in his biography of Adams. When Adams and Jefferson reached Edgehill, the place of Cromwell's victory over Charles II, Adams wrote in his diary that this was "where freemen had fought for their rights." Emotionally moved by the site, Adams stopped to give a lecture to some of the locals (who apparently were not as up on their history as Adams) on its historical importance. "'And do Englishmen so forget the ground where liberty was fought for?' he asked. 'Tell your neighbors and your children that this is holy ground. . . . All England should come in pilgrimage to this hill once a year.'"[26]

In portraying Washington as the "Protector of America's Liberty," the Kerchief references the philosophical ideals of Cromwell's revolution. Cromwell chose the term *Lord Protector* because he rejected the crown and, at least in theory, wished to hold fast to the notion of a republic. He was, in concept, the protector of the republic until it would be able to stand on its own feet—just as a protector, in the classic sense of the word, ruled as regent until a child king would be able to do so on his own. In this way the term is consistent with Washington's conception of his own role. When he took power in 1775, he told Congress that he took the power "in trust," and when he relinquished it eight years later, he told Congress that he was returning that power that he held "in trust." However, "To Americans and the Englishmen, George Washington was Oliver Cromwell reborn. It was incomprehensible that he would willingly set aside his sword and relinquish power."[27] Nevertheless, he did relinquish power. Like Cromwell, Washington too was a protector in the classic sense of the word, except in this case, he was not the protector (or father) of a child king, but of a child republic.

The Kerchief does not name Cromwell himself, and for good reason, since Cromwell became a dictator. It is Cromwell's politics and his military success, not Cromwell personally, that are evoked in the Kerchief. The distinction, a fine line indeed, is nonetheless important. Cromwell's history, the story of an English general who led the fight to establish a republic but then lost his place in history by refusing to relinquish power, was well known to the colonists. It was part of their English history. In a popular poem, published in 1787 in numerous papers throughout the colonies, the author wrote "Had not great Cromwell aim'd to gain a crown, / Unsullied tales would hand his mem'ry down." The counterpoint to these opening lines is the poem's hero, "Great

[25] Kevin P. Phillips, *The Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 107–8.

[26] Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), p. 58; Willard Sterne Randall, *George Washington: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997) p. 260. David G. McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p. 359.

[27] Randall, *George Washington,* pp. 284, 293–94, 408, 402.

Washington''—''Thy unambitious steps will paint thy name / To future ages thro' historic fame.''[28]

The Kerchief's ''Protector'' title for Washington, recalling Cromwell's republican role as well as his power, almost survived into Washington's presidency. The Washingtons, Martha and George, were busy during their first year in the president's house establishing protocol where none existed. How to address the president was debated not only in the Washington household but also in the Senate. After rejecting His Elective Highness, Majesty, or His Exalted High Mightiness, the Senate settled on ''The President of the United States,'' and Washington followed suit declaring that he would be addressed as Mr. President. An alternative title that was Vice President John Adams's choice for Washington's position did receive some consideration in the Senate (and generated controversy for smacking of a noble title, which is expressly prohibited by the Constitution). Times had changed; with the British army removed from American soil, there was no longer a need to exalt Washington's power, and any comparison to Cromwell, acceptable in 1775, would not have then been in vogue. Out of touch with the shifting sands, Adams supported a Senate committee recommendation for, ''His Highness the President of the United States and Protector of the Rights of Same.''[29] Needless to say, his choice was defeated.

America's Liberty and Jndependency

Today, with so many notions of the meaning of the Revolutionary War, it is easy to glance over the terms ''America's Liberty and Jndependency'' as mere rhetoric. In the period when the Kerchief was printed, however, there was a more specific importance attached to these terms, and it is not surprising that they were used together.

While the phrase ''America's Liberty'' seems generic to us now, it did have specific significance in the summer of 1775 and early 1776. Prior to 1774, the colonists were focused on protecting their rights as Englishmen. By 1775, as the Second Continental Congress organized the thirteen states into one body, the goal focused on collective liberty and in particular ''America's Liberty.'' Washington's appointment as commander in chief, widely reported in the newspapers, called for ''a general be appointed to command all the continental forces raised or to be raised for the defense of American liberty.'' Repeating the point, Washington, in his published General Orders on July 4, 1775, specifically tells his troops that they have been raised ''for the support and defense of the Liberties of America'' and that ''they are now the Troops of the United Provinces of North America; and it is hoped that all Distinctions of Colonies will be laid aside; so that one and the same spirit may animate the whole.''[30]

The use of the term *Jndependency* (notwithstanding the spelling quirks of the day) in the legend around Washington stands out with distinction; today one would expect to see the term *Independence* not *Independency*. However, the term (which dates from the religious Independent movement in seventeenth-century England when Puritans and Congregationalists demanded independence from the Church of England) was in common usage, as reflected in the writings of Adams and numerous others in 1775 and 1776—so much so that Adams wrote on his ''to do'' list in February 1776, ''a Declaration of Independency.'' After the widespread publication of the ''Declaration,'' which was referred to in some newspapers as ''a Declaration of Independence'' and in others as ''the Declaration of Independency,'' the term *Independence* would replace and eventually surpass *Independency* in usage.[31] By July 3, 1778, Washington was calling for the celebration of the [second] anniversary of the ''Declaration of Independence'' in his general orders.

Although no historian has commented on the usage of *Jndependency* as opposed to Independence in the Kerchief, the particular spelling used has been noted. Lefèvre suggested that a Dutch manufacturer or a person who recently immigrated to America from Holland may have pro-

[28] *Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia), April 9, 1787, republished in John Kaminski and Jill McCaughan, eds., *A Great and Good Man: George Washington in the Eyes of His Contemporaries* (Madison, Wis.: Madison House, 1989), p. 81.

[29] Randall, *George Washington,* p. 453.

[30] Edmund Sears Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763–89,* rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 42–76. Randall, *George Washington,* p. 283. John Rhodehamel, ed., *Writings: George Washington* (New York: Library of America, 1997), p. 175.

[31] McCullough, *John Adams,* p. 89, further references to ''independency'' are on pp. 127, 157. Charles S. Desbler, ''How the Declaration Was Received in the Old Thirteen,'' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 85 (July 1822): 178–79, 186–87.

duced the Kerchief, as use of the word *Foundator* and the substitution of the "J" for the "I" in *Jndependency* seem to represent the influence of a Dutch background. The idea of foreign manufacture is almost certainly wrong. In comparing the Kerchief to known Dutch prints of American leaders from the American Revolution printed during the same time period, it appears unlikely that the Kerchief would have been printed by a Dutch manufacturer. Those works, which printed the leader's name in English, printed the remaining text in Dutch. Even if the Kerchief had its Dutch language removed for the American market, it still does not have the style of a foreign-manufactured work, as noted by Collins, Montgomery, and flag expert Whitney Smith. One could make a case for a Pennsylvania German influence, given that the use of the "J" for an "I" survived longer in Germany, not Holland, and that the word *Foundator* may represent a German influence, but it is hard to make much of those points given the overall "American" context of the Kerchief.[32]

The use of the terms *America's Liberty* and *Jndependency* would have been breathtaking to the contemporary viewer of the Kerchief, as expressions of collective action and independence constituted treason against the Crown. Politically, the use of the terms completes the notion of what Washington was doing. He was foundator and protector of something, and that something was not territory. He was not a king protecting a land or even a country. He was protecting classical republican principles. The notion of "America's Liberty" clearly invokes the notions of English civil liberties that the colonists felt were theirs by right. The notion of "Independency," was not simply independence for the sake of territorial control, but independence in terms of political freedom and personal freedom. *Independency* invoked a broad republican notion of independence from economic and political domination.[33]

While Mrs. Washington Tarried

John Hewson, now recognized as one of the greatest early American printmakers, emigrated from England to Philadelphia in 1773. He had his print works in operation by June of 1774, when he advertised the sale of, among other things, handkerchiefs of his own manufacture. Sarah Hewson Alcock, one of Hewson's daughters, printed the most well-known story associated with the Kerchief. In her 1843 work entitled *A Brief History of the Revolution with a Sketch of the Life of Captain John Hewson,* she retells the story of Martha Washington's visit to her father's print works in 1775.[34]

After briefly recounting how Benjamin Franklin helped establish Hewson in America, Alcock states that both Martha and George were in Philadelphia when he received his command in June of 1775 but that General Washington immediately left the city for Boston, leaving Martha behind. While Mrs. Washington "tarried" for two weeks in Philadelphia, she visited Hewson. According to Alcock, the Washingtons had heard of Captain Hewson's calico printing—"it being a new thing in America it elicited their curiosity to see the same." At the request of Mrs. Washington, "who inquired of Captain Hewson whether a representation of the General on horseback could be made so as to occupy the centre of a handkerchief," her father produced the scarf. A number of the handkerchiefs were delivered to Mount Vernon and the remainder took "a great run," until the British occupied Philadelphia in 1777 and the print works were destroyed (figs. 12–14, see also fig. 1; these are the four surviving copies of the Kerchief).[35]

Franklin did indeed help establish Hewson in America. Franklin wrote to Richard Bache in July of 1773:

> This will be delivered to you by Messrs. John Hewson and Nathaniel Norgrove, who are recommended to me as sober industrious young Men, and very ingenious in their Business of Calico or Linen Printing; I wish they may meet with Encouragement to carry it on among us, as there is a great deal of Linen worn in our Country, and a great deal of printed goes from hence. I therefore recommend them to your Civilities and Advice, as they will be quite Strangers there. I imagine some of the neighboring Villages will suit best for them

[32] Lefèvre, "Washington Historical Kerchiefs," p. 15; Collins, *Threads of History,* p. 48; Montgomery, *Printed Textiles,* p. 182; Dr. Whitney Smith of the Flag Research Center, Winchester, Mass., interview with author, November 1, 2002.

[33] Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* p. 4.

[34] Montgomery, *Printed Textiles,* p. 182. R. Ball Dodson, "Captain John Hewson," *Pennsylvania Magazine* 37 (1913): 119.

[35] Sarah Hewson Alcock, *A Brief History of the Revolution with a Sketch of the Life of Captain John Hewson* (Philadelphia: Published by the author, 1843), p. 9.

Fig. 12. Kerchief, depicting Washington on horseback, ca. 1776. Linen H. 30¾", W. 32½". (Author's collection.)

to work in, perhaps Germantown, or Derby. I am, Your affectionate Father.[36]

Mrs. Washington did indeed visit Philadelphia in the fall of 1775. While George fretted over the safety of Martha, he could not stop her effort to join him in Massachusetts. Her arrival in Philadelphia as she traveled northward created a good deal of news and excitement in the city, and the visit was not entirely without incident. She was greeted with great respect, including an escort by a troop of the Philadelphia Light Horse that led her into the city, but much to the consternation of the leaders of the town, a ball in her honor had to be cancelled for fear of disruption by Loyalists. She stayed for almost two weeks before continuing northward, escorted out of the city again by a troop of the Philadelphia Light Horse.[37]

Alcock describes the kerchief Hewson created

[36] William B. Willcox, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 320–21.

[37] E. Harrison Clark, *All Cloudless Glory: The Life of George Washington* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1995), p. 243; Christopher Marshall, *Passages from the Remembrancer of Christopher Marshall* (Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1839), pp. 58–60; Montgomery, *Printed Textiles,* pp. 93, 182–85.

Fig. 13. Kerchief, depicting Washington on horseback, ca. 1776. Linen; H. 30¼", W. 32¾". (Collection of The New-York Historical Society, 1952.63.)

as showing Washington on horseback, but her account places a "truncheon" in Washington's left hand, while the Kerchief shows a sword in his right. While Alcock reports that a miniature portrait was left with Hewson for his use in producing the image of Washington, in fact, it is clear that the maker of the Kerchief used the Shepherd print for the image of Washington. As to the source of the image of Washington, Hewson may have been reluctant to tell her (or anyone else) that he borrowed the image from the Shepherd print. It is not entirely unreasonable that family memory faded as to the hand that held the sword, as it appears that all of Hewson's copies of his kerchief, as well as the wood blocks used to make it, may have been lost when the British destroyed his print works. Alcock was six years old when these events occurred, and she was clearly writing from oral family history, so possible errors are to some extent understandable.[38]

There is correspondence between Washington and one of his aides that appears to support Alcock's story. Martha's hosts in Philadelphia were George's trusted aide, Joseph Reed, and his wife, Esther. Most Washington biographers ac-

[38] Wick, *George Washington,* p. 22. I thank William Reese of William Reese Co., New Haven, Conn., for his help in this area. Montgomery, *Printed Textiles,* p. 93. Dodson, "Captain John Hewson," p. 118.

Fig. 14. Kerchief, depicting Washington on horseback, ca. 1776. Cotton; H. 30¼", W. 33". (Winterthur.)

knowledge that Reed was, at the time, a surrogate son to Washington (fig. 15). Reed had accompanied Washington to Boston in the summer of 1775 as one of his two primary aides, but he had returned to Philadelphia to arrange his affairs. Washington throughout that autumn wrote, begged, and pleaded with Reed to return to Boston, and during Martha's visit he relied on Reed as her host, protector, and guide. He wrote Reed urging him to look after Martha, thanking him and his wife repeatedly on behalf of Martha and himself for being her kind hosts.[39]

Shortly after Martha's two-week visit to Philadelphia, Reed forwarded to her a copy of the Shepherd print (supposedly drawn by Alexander Campbell). Washington wrote to Reed, noting Martha's appreciation at having received the print and his own approval of it. Washington notes, "Mrs. Washington desires I will thank you for the picture sent her. Mr. Campbell, whom I never saw to my knowledge, has made a very formidable figure of the Commander in Chief, giving him a sufficient portion of terror in his countenance. Mrs. Washington also desires her compliments to Mrs. Reed, &c., as I do."[40]

[39] James Flexner, *George Washington: The Forge of Experience, 1732–1775* (Boston: Little Brown, 1965), p. 270. William B. Reed, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed, Volume 1* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1847), pp. 134, 137, 145, 149. Rhodehamel, *Writings,* pp. 193, 200, 205, 207, 216.

[40] Rhodehamel, *Writings,* p. 207. Unfortunately, there is no record of the transmittal letter that accompanied the copy of the Shepherd print. Reed, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed,* p. 149.

Fig. 15. Pierre Du Simitiere, "General Reed," 1783. Engraving. (Courtesy of William Reese Company.)

Washington quite rightly identifies that Campbell, the purported artist, did not paint him from life, but his pleasure with the print was sufficient for him to allow the possibility that Campbell had actually seen him. In fact, as noted, Campbell was probably a fictitious name because English printmakers rushed to produce their prints of Washington before they had any life portraits to work from.[41] For Reed, however, the important point is that Washington, on his own behalf and Martha's and perhaps with some hint of self-deprecating humor, approved of the print.

This correspondence, taken together with Alcock's story, strongly suggests that Reed had forwarded the print to Martha in order to secure her approval to use the image in the Kerchief. A series of occurrences point to this conclusion: first, the Reeds had clearly been Martha's recent hosts in Philadelphia; second, a Shepherd print was sent soon after Martha's visit to Philadelphia; third, it was sent to Martha specifically, not to Washington himself; fourth, the Kerchief reprints a Shepherd print with Washington on horseback; fifth, Alcock's story, in general, fits with this time line.

Looking at the Borders

Although the reproduction of a Shepherd print, Washington's letter, and Alcock's story all fit together, the more general elements of the Kerchief, beyond the reproduction of the Shepherd print, are consistent for the most part with the notion that this work may have indeed been printed by John Hewson around the time of the Declaration of Independence.

It is not particularly difficult to date the Kerchief. As for the latest date of its production, one would expect that it was printed, or at least engraved, before June of 1777. The Congressional flag resolution adopting the Stars and Stripes as the national emblem was passed in July of 1777. Despite some variations in the design, the Stars and Stripes were quickly adopted.[42] If the Kerchief had been printed after the date of the flag resolution, we would expect to see the Stars and Stripes, in at least some form, among the other flags in this print since the Stars and Stripes appeared in prints and drawings quite rapidly after the resolution. Regarding the earliest date of production, as discussed previously, the language in the Kerchief would suggest that it was printed after the British evacuation of Boston in March of 1776, when Washington became a national hero and a great deal of material was issued with his image on it. Additionally, it was likely to have been issued after the Declaration of Independence, because of the reference to America's "Jndependency." Either date fits into the general story, as Washington's "approval" letter is dated January 31, 1776, and probably did not reach Reed until some weeks, or longer, after that date.

The use of the term *Foundator* and the "J" in *Jndependency*, which *may* reflect a Pennsylvania German influence, do not rule out Hewson as the producer of this work. Hewson employed many workers and took in various partners at his print works, so there was plenty of opportunity for outside influences to impact his work. Because it was not uncommon for calico printers to work closely with an engraver in the production of their works, Hewson would have been subjected to local influences even at the most artistic level. Could that influence have been Dutch or German? It

[41] Wick, *George Washington*, p. 20.

[42] Richardson, *Standards and Colors*, p. 22

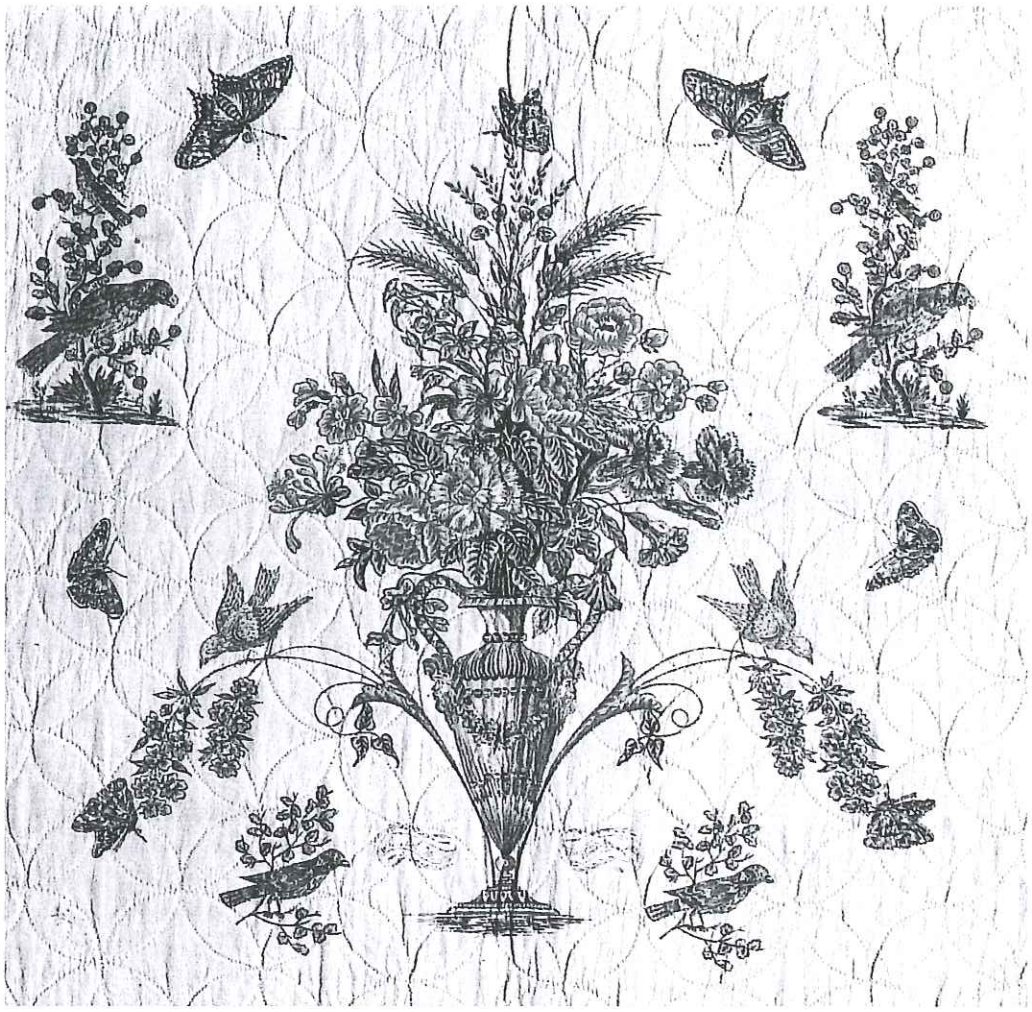

Fig. 16. Detail, Elizabeth Hart, Eight Point Star with Hewson Square, 1848. Cotton, chintz. (Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas: William Bridges Thayer Memorial.)

should come as no surprise given that Hewson lived in Kensington, which had a very large German population.[43]

Hewson is best known for the centerpieces he created for quilts. The dimensions of the Kerchief, approximately thirty inches by thirty inches, are consistent with his known centerpieces. He printed a series of floral center-blocks for quilts, all of which had similar dimensions and scale. More than ten of these major works have survived (figs. 16–18). At least one edition of the Kerchief (now in the Winterthur collection and pictured in *Threads of History*) is applied to a padded, quilted material (see fig. 14) that is similar to the material in a recently discovered Hewson quilt (see fig. 16).[44] This seems to suggest that Hewson (or whoever the printer was) may have considered the Kerchief to be a possible center-block print for a quilt.

The floral border in the Kerchief is dominated by flowers resembling roses and carnations, a combination that appears consistently in Hewson's later works. This combination of flowers is not surprising, given Hewson's training at Bromley Hall in Middlesex, England, and the type of work that was produced by the firm Ollive &

[43] Willcox, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, p. 321; Montgomery, *Printed Textiles*, p. 93; Dodson, "Captain John Hewson," p. 119. Rich Remer, "Old Kensington," *Pennsylvania Legacies* (November 2002): 11. I thank local historian Ken Milano for his helpful insights with respect to the history of Kensington.

[44] Patsy Orlofsky and Myron Orlofsky, *Quilts in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), pp. 25, 44, 46–47. Roderick Kiracofe, *The American Quilt: A History of Cloth and Comfort, 1750–1950* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1993), pp. 15, 54, 56.

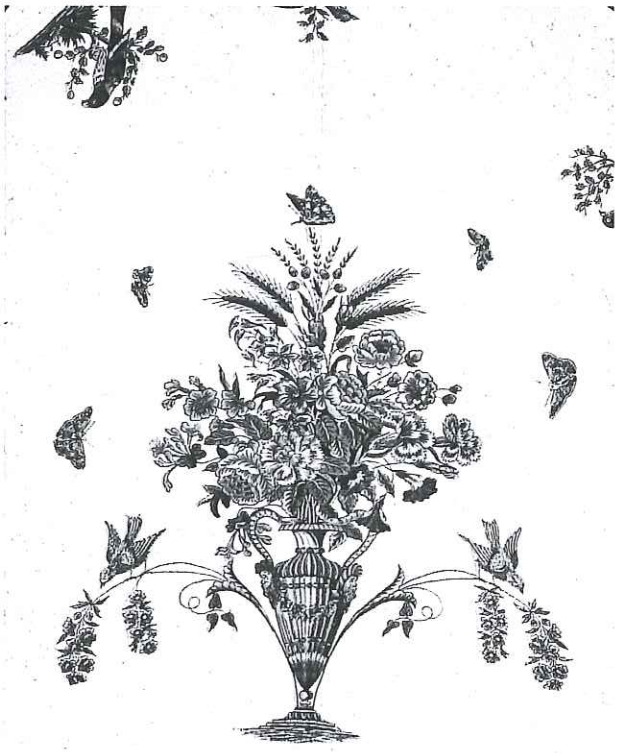

Fig. 17. Detail, probably Mary Gorsuch Jessop, appliqued quilt top, ca. 1800. Cotton, chintz; H. 63¼", W. 63½". (National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.)

Fig. 18. John Hewson, bedspread. Cotton; H. 103¼", W. 106¼". (Winterthur, museum purchase.)

Talwin, where he was employed during this period. The patterns bear a resemblance; note the "buttercupped"-rose type of flower and the rough-edged carnation (or possibly Hawkweed flower) in figures 16 and 17 that also appear in the border of the Kerchief.[45]

The overall detail in the floral border of the Kerchief is not as fine as Hewson's later work, and it is important to note that it would have been produced early in Hewson's career in America. For this reason, despite the more "American" folk art character of the Kerchief in comparison to his later works, Montgomery still believes that the floral border of the Kerchief could be the work of Hewson.[46] Indeed, the objective of the print was apparently political; its primary purpose was not to make a detailed floral print.

There is one last general connection between the Kerchief and Hewson's other works. While textile historians have generally focused on the known Hewson quilts and two surviving handkerchiefs (each with floral borders), they have overlooked two small textiles printed for children, each approximately twelve inches by twelve inches. These textiles memorialize a subject not captured in the other known Hewson floral quilts and handkerchiefs—their subject is George Washington.[47]

In about 1806, only a few years before he retired from full-time activity in his print works, Hewson and his son (who took over the print works after Hewson's retirement) issued a final tribute to Washington. The Hewsons created two juvenile kerchiefs on glazed cotton. One, entitled "The Effect of Principle . . . Behold the Man," quotes Washington's resignation from the presidency, and the second, entitled "Love of Truth . . . Mark the Boy," quotes the famous cherry tree story. These children's kerchiefs, particularly the first one, have much in common with the Kerchief (fig. 19). The central picture of Washington in the first one is taken from a print, a pirated version of the famous Landsdowne engraving by John Heath. In the lower border there is a British flag (recalling the flags in the Kerchief) and an American eagle (which takes the

[45] Kiracofe, *American Quilt,* pp. 15, 54, 56. Wendy Hefford, *The Victoria & Albert Museum's Textile Collection: Design for Printed Textiles in England from 1750 to 1850* (1992; reprint, London: V & A Publications, 1999), pp. 43, 46–47, 56–57, 60–61. I thank Kimberly Wulfert, Ph.D., for pointing out this source.

[46] Montgomery, *Printed Textiles,* p. 185.

[47] Collins, *Threads of History,* p. 63.

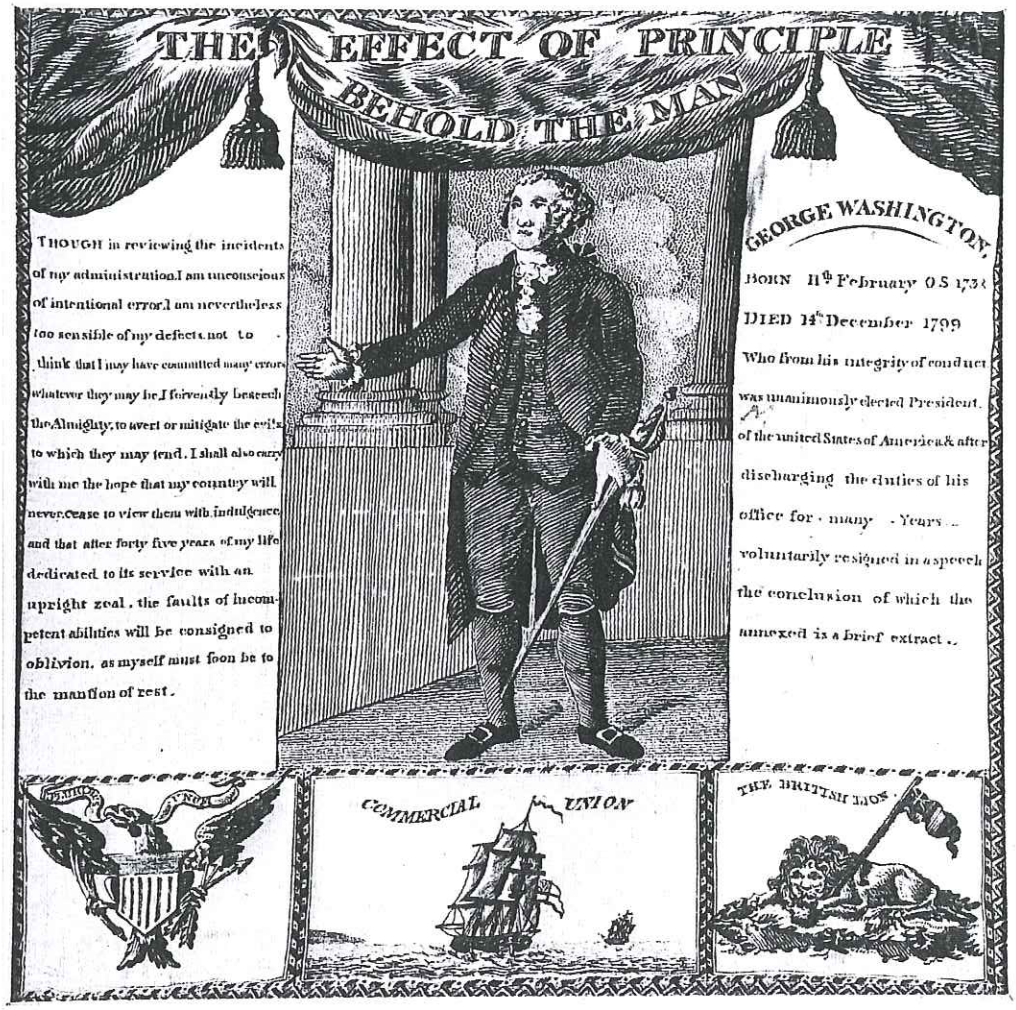

Fig. 19. John Hewson, "The Effect of Principle: Behold the Man," ca. 1806. Linen; H. 12¼", W. 12¼". (Winterthur.)

place, in one sense, of an American flag as the symbol for the United States). There is also punctuation—the use of a period instead of commas—that is similar to that in the Kerchief.[48] If, indeed, the Kerchief is properly attributed to Hewson, then it and the two children's textiles act as bookends to Hewson's career—he started and ended with Washington.

Hewson

While looking for signs of consistency in composition between Hewson's early and later works, it is probably also fair to ask if the principles set forth in the work itself would have been consistent with Hewson's attitudes and mindset in 1776. Would this man, recently arrived from England, have produced such a rebellious and inflammatory work? a work that would have been considered by any loyal subject an act of treason? Even more amazingly, would he have been daring enough to evoke the image of Cromwell and devoted enough to think of Washington as the "Foundator" of his new country? Even if he employed an engraver to cut the image of Washington, Hewson, as the textile printer, would have been the one to approve the final overall design.

The well-known story about Hewson's first activities in the colonies suggests that he certainly would have sided with the American cause in body and spirit. The Kerchief was a product of a new style of printing called calico printing. Very

[48] See the punctuation and style in the letters of Hewson in James Minor Lincoln, *The Papers of Captain Rufus Lincoln* (Privately printed, 1904), pp. 225–26.

little calico printing, if any, was being done in America before Hewson arrived in 1773. Also, the British government was doing what it could to ensure that the situation remained that way. The exportation of "any blocks, plates, engines, tools, or utensils used in, or which are proper for the preparing or finishing of the calico, cotton, muslin, or linen printing manufactures, or any part thereof" was prohibited by English law—even to British colonies.[49]

None of this seems to have deterred Hewson. Even before he arrived in America, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported on his plans to break the law. "We learn that a person who has for many years been a master in several large manufactories for linen, cotton, and Calico printing . . . intends sometime this month to leave England for America with six journeymen and all machinery for carrying on the same business, which unknown to the English manufacturers, has been shipped." By the summer of 1774, Hewson's works were up and running. He boldly advertised in July of 1774: "A Calicoe Printing Manufactory and Bleach-Yard is just opened, near the Glass-House, at the upper end of Kensington, about one mile from the city of Philadelphia; JOHN HEWSON, The proprietor thereof begs leave to inform the public, that he has, at a considerable expense, imported prints from London, and completed works sufficient for carrying on the above business . . . his present set of prints consists of patterns for printing calicoes and linens for gowns, &c. coverlids, handkerchiefs, nankeens, janes, and velverets." Hewson could not have more demonstratively declared his independence from the British imperialist mercantile system.[50]

Hewson enlisted at the outset of the war, organizing a group of men from his factory to fight with him. In 1777 he named his newborn daughter Catherine Washington. Hewson was taken prisoner on April 1, 1778, in Philadelphia and was marched to New York; in September of 1778 he escaped from a prison on Long Island and returned to Philadelphia.[51]

What is often overlooked by historians is Hewson's English family history. That history clearly suggested that Hewson had every reason to see Washington in terms of Cromwell. Hewson, the son of a woolen draper in London, descended from, and was probably named after, Col. John Hewson, who served under Cromwell and was a member of Cromwell's House of Peers. Colonel Hewson, the "regicide," was one of King Charles's judges and signed his death warrant. Although Colonel Hewson, a shoemaker turned soldier, supported Cromwell, he also strongly opposed the appointment of the title of "king" to Cromwell, which Parliament wanted to bestow on him. Because he had made enemies on both sides during the English Civil War, Colonel Hewson left England and moved to Amsterdam. He died there sometime around 1662.[52]

Hewson's past was part of his present and his future. According his great-grandson, Richard Ball Dodson, John Hewson (the printer) left England because of "the extreme political views of his celebrated ancestor and was a source of considerable anxiety to his family who strongly recommended his migration to the colonies." When the Revolutionary War broke out, Hewson acted on his principles. As he would write later in life, "The war commencing brought me into a great strait, my Wigish principles too which I brought with me from England, took fire and I volantarily went to a Magistrate & took the Oath of Allegiance & fidelity to the states, renouncing all other subjection to any powers on earth."[53] A similar spirit may have lifted him to produce the Kerchief.

George Washington

Since Washington did indeed write a letter to Reed "approving" a Shepherd print, one questions how Washington fits into the story, if at all. Would Washington have had the slightest interest in the production of this work? Would anyone have asked for his opinion or thought that he might care? If so, why is there not a more extensive record of his involvement? Although the evidence is far from conclusive, I suggest that, taken in context of other records (including those related to a poem by Phillis Wheatley), Washington may have indirectly encouraged the production of the Kerchief as an early attempt at "image

[49] Montgomery, *Printed Textiles,* p. 83.

[50] Pettit, *America's Printed and Painted Fabrics,* pp. 161, 162.

[51] Dodson, "Captain John Hewson," p. 119; Reed, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed,* p. 230; Hewson's Bible, unpublished manuscript, Winterthur Library, 1176.2.

[52] Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell, the Lord Protector* (New York: Grove Press, 1973), p. 609; *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921–22), pp. 762–63.

[53] Dodson, "Captain John Hewson," p. 118; Alcock, *A Brief History of the Revolution,* pp. 7–8. Lincoln, *Papers of Captain Rufus Lincoln,* p. 216.

management." This possibility fits with recent biographies of Washington, in particular Paul Longmore's *Invention of George Washington,* which is recognized as one of the best contemporary studies of Washington's life through 1775. Longmore focuses extensively on the numerous cases of Washington's efforts to manage his political and popular image. For example, Washington would never have directly associated himself with the publication of the Kerchief; it would have appeared too vain. On the other hand, if others did as he secretly wished, he would have no complaints.

Especially in the early years of the war, Washington would have had no objection to the production of such a Kerchief and indeed would have welcomed it. In promoting his reputation, especially at the outset of the war, Washington never failed to take into account his appearance and symbols of his authority. As chief of Virginia's defenses against the French and Indians from 1755 to 1758, he personally designed the uniforms of his regimental officers. The blue coat was faced and cuffed with scarlet and trimmed with silver, and the waistcoat was of scarlet trimmed with silver. "The dress even of common soldiers drew his attention: what effect would their outfits have on allied and enemy Indians?" On one important official outing, "His entourage included two aides and two servants; the latter were dressed in livery of the Washington colors and riding horses bedecked with the Washington coat of arms."[54]

Symbols of support and power also became important to Washington during the early days of the revolution. On the way home from the First Continental Congress, he stopped to purchase a "sword chain and ordered a sash, gorget, and epaulettes." Throughout his attendance at the Second Continental Congress, he wore his uniform even though no decision to raise an army had yet been reached. After assuming command of the Continental army, Washington set out for Boston, determined to demonstrate that he was in command. As he departed Philadelphia mounted on a charger, the Philadelphia Light Horse Troop, a band, and members of Congress escorted him out of the city limits. Once beyond the city, he dismounted and road in his carriage, drawn, of course, by two white horses. When he entered New York City, he put on a plumed hat and a purple sash. He knew that he was one of the most skilled horsemen of his generation, so "again he mounted a horse to ride in the enthusiastic parade that ushered him into the city."[55]

Although Washington would have encouraged the production of the Kerchief, he would have left as little record of his involvement as possible. A fundamental tenant of his image management was to avoid giving the appearance of seeking an appointment or honor.[56] This pattern repeated itself throughout his life, most notably when he accepted command of the Continental army and the office of the presidency. This approach to political action made it difficult for him to mount any sort of publicity campaign, even though he desperately cared about what others were writing and saying to one another about him.

One example of this image management appears quite similar to the situation that may have emerged around the production of the Kerchief. A copy of a poem by Phillis Wheatley arrived by letter addressed to Washington in October 1775. It was a remarkable work by a slave who had been raised as part of the Wheatley family. It exalted the general's character and leadership and referred to him as an almost divine image. It was just the kind of work that Washington, still trying to cement his command and leadership, wished to have out before the public. Washington wrote Wheatley, in February 1776, "I thank you most sincerely for your polite notice of me, in the elegant Lines you enclosed; and however undeserving I may be of such encomium and panegyrick, the style and manner exhibit a striking proof of your great poetical Talents. . . . I would have published the Poem, had I not been apprehensive, that, while I only meant to give the World this new instance of your genius, I might have incurred the imputation of Vanity."[57]

The matter, however, did not end there. Washington sent a copy of the poem to Reed in February. He noted at the end of letter (after reporting on war-related matters), "I recollect nothing else worth giving you the trouble of, unless you can be amused by reading a Letter and Poem addressed to me by Mrs or Miss Phyllis Wheatley—In searching over a parcel of Papers the other day, in order to destroy such as were useless, I brought it to light again—at first With a view to doing justice to her great poetical Ge-

[54] Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* pp. 36, 37.

[55] Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* pp. 146, 178, 182. Randall, *George Washington,* pp. 292, 464–65.

[56] Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* pp. 172–73.

[57] Rhodehamel, *Writings,* p. 216.

nius, I had a great Mind to publish the Poem, but not knowing whether it might not be considered rather as a mark of my own vanity than as a Compliment to her, I laid it aside till I came across it again in the manner just mentioned." The letter to Reed was written on February 10, 1776. On March 20, 1776, the poem was published by an unknown person in the *Virginia Gazette.* The general view is that Reed was that "unknown" person.[58]

Martha Washington

While looking at Washington's role (or nonrole) in the production of the Kerchief, one should not overlook Martha Washington's involvement. Because Martha destroyed the copies of nearly all of her letters (as well as George's) it is hard to document this. We can, however, say this much: It should come as no surprise to any Washington biographer that Martha would make a special effort to see Hewson's print works and might actually have ordered the production of the Kerchief.

One might see her attention as purely an interest in fine cloth, including handkerchiefs made in the calico fashion. Certainly, a fine handkerchief was something the Washingtons would not have objected to. Despite their belief in domestic manufacture, they still felt it necessary to have the finest clothes of foreign manufacture for the right occasions. They indulged in more than one shopping spree, ordering the finest linens and clothing from abroad. Those orders for goods almost always included handkerchiefs. In 1771, when Virginia curtailed its nonimportation pact after withdrawal of the Townsend duties, George rushed to order the luxury goods from abroad that he had avoided buying. His order included eight pairs of shoes and boots, a "Man's very best" bear-skin hat, a topaz or some other handsome stone with the Washington coat of arms neatly engraved on it, a man's very best riding saddle, and one dozen of the of "the best" cambric handkerchiefs with purple borders. Handkerchiefs were not mere afterthoughts in colonial times, and for Washington, only the "best" would do.[59]

The Washingtons' interest in Hewson's print works surely would have been stronger from the perspective of their commitment to support domestic manufacture. In 1764 Washington began an effort on his plantation to diversify from tobacco into wheat—an enterprise that developed quite successfully. In 1769 he created a profitable enterprise catching shad and herring in the Potomac. At the same time, he made every effort to reduce his dependency on British goods. He set his blacksmiths to fashioning ironware. He had his spinners and weavers make cloth to outfit hundreds of slaves. By 1770 he had a small factory producing a variety of fabrics for sale. In all of this, Martha played a central role. "She also supervised the spinning of yarn, the weaving of homespun, and the tailoring of the clothing for the family and upward of 160 Mount Vernon slaves. . . . Other artisans and slaves followed her directions at the looms, at the reels and flax-brakes. In 1768, her team of one white male weaver and four slave girls produced 815 yards of linen, 365 yards of woolens, 144 yards of homespun linsey-woolsey, and 40 yards of cotton cloth."[60] At times, there were as many as sixteen spinning wheels operating simultaneously in the spinning house.

In light of this, and in particular Washington's political leadership in boycotts of English goods, John Hewson and others like him were of no small matter to the Washingtons' world. The mere fact that Washington had a fabric business would have been enough to trigger his and Martha's interest in Hewson's work. The fact that Hewson was actually bringing British manufacturing techniques to the colonies would have made that interest even greater. Washington never abandoned his thirst for the development of domestic manufacturing and attended to it (particularly with respect to the production of textiles in New England) even into his presidency.[61]

This common ground with Hewson seems to have borne itself out in a continuing relationship between the Hewsons and the Washingtons. One of Hewson's daughters, Esther, married Joseph

[58] Rhodehamel, *Writings,* p. 215. Vincent Carretta, ed., *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), pp. 67–71; Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1976), p. 284; Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 39.

[59] Randall, *George Washington,* pp. 401, 430. Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* p. 99; Alice Morse Earle, *Costume of Colonial Times* (New York: Empire State Book Co., 1924), pp. 123–25.

[60] Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* p. 68. Randall, *George Washington,* p. 228.

[61] Randall, *George Washington,* p. 478.

Ball, "nephew and heir of William Ball," who may have been related to Mary Ball, Washington's mother. According to Esther and Joseph's grandson, Richard Ball Dodson, "Captain Hewson was a great favorite of General Washington who was a frequent visitor at his house, and Mrs. Esther [Hewson] Ball, who died in 1863, and who was some twelve years of age [in 1791] when the General last dined with her father, had a fund of personal reminiscences of them, which she used to relate with considerable gusto." In 1793 Hewson wrote to Washington as a "citizen" asking that Martha use some of his chintz patterns in one of her dresses to demonstrate support for American manufacturing. We have no record as to whether Martha accepted, although there is a tantalizing (but not supported) statement in Frances Little's *Early American Textiles* that "Washington pointed with pride to Hewson Calicoes worn by Mrs. Washington."[62]

Esther Reed and Joseph Reed

Because Martha Washington stayed with the Reeds during her two-week stay in Philadelphia on her way to Boston in the fall of 1775, one must question the potential involvement of the Reeds with the Kerchief. Joseph Reed was in his early thirties when he rode off to Boston with Washington as his aide-de-camp. He was highly trained, raised in New Jersey with a strong education, attended Princeton, studied law in London for two years at the Inns of Court, Middle Temple, and returned to Philadelphia. There his talents were recognized, and he developed a successful law practice. As noted, Washington quickly grew dependent upon the young man's skill as his chief secretary, letter writer, and aide-de-camp. As one historian states, "Reed's judgment in military matters was consistently good and his advice to Washington excellent."[63]

In October of 1775, Reed returned to Philadelphia to put his affairs in order and at the same time continued to carry out responsibilities for Washington. As Reed delayed his return, Washington did what he could to try to speed it up. He wrote Richard Lee, noting "that Colo. Reed is clever in his business and useful to me, is too apparent to mention; I should do equal injustice, therefore, to his abilities and merit, were I not to add that his Services here are too important to be lost."[64] Washington's efforts failed to secure Reed's speedy return, and because Reed was still in Philadelphia when Martha Washington arrived in November of 1775, it was only natural that he and his young wife would serve as her hosts.

Reed seems to have excelled in helping Washington on the public relations front. Part of that help was in simply measuring where Washington stood. Washington wrote to Reed in December of 1775, for example, noting, "The Acct [account] which you have givn of the Sentiments of the People respecting my conduct is extremely flattering—pray God I may continue to deserve them." Reed, however, was also proactive in public relations. He apparently also acted indirectly through matters such as the publication of the Wheatley poem. Additionally, he acted directly by attending to the development of a flag for Washington's navy. In a letter, he suggested the Pine Tree Flag and noted that possibly the "Appeal to Heaven" motto could be used. When Admiral Howe sought to open peace negotiations with Washington in July of 1776, he tried to communicate a letter to Washington addressed to him as an ordinary citizen. Reed rejected it. As a military to military communication, the title had to recognize Washington's military status. Only when the letter was addressed to Washington as "His Excellency" did Reed accept it.[65]

Esther, Joseph's beautiful wife and co-host to Martha's visit to Philadelphia, is equally likely to have started the endeavor with respect to the Kerchief. Reed met Esther De Bredt while in law school in London. Despite her father's misgivings, she married Reed and came to America around 1770. Although they had originally planned to return to England, Esther, like her husband, caught the Revolutionary fever. As early as 1775, she wrote her brother declaring that if current petitions to the king were not accepted, then America would, as it should, declare "Independence." She became a leading patriot of the women of Philadelphia, organizing more than

[62] Dodson, "Captain John Hewson," p. 119. Joseph E. Fields, *Worthy Partner: The Papers of Martha Washington* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 245–46. Frances Little, *Early American Textiles* (New York: Century Co., 1931), p. 196.

[63] Arthur S. Lefkowitz, *George Washington's Indispensable Men: The 32 Aides-de-Camp Who Helped Win American Independence* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2003), p. 21; Flexner, *George Washington,* p. 270. Richard M. Ketchum, "XVII Men of the Revolution," *American Heritage* (June 1976): 65.

[64] Lefkowitz, *George Washington's Indispensable Men,* p. 32.

[65] Rhodehamel, *Writings,* p. 194. Clark, *All Cloudless Glory,* pp. 268–69. Longmore, *Invention of George Washington,* p. 199.

thirty women to knock on doors and raise money for Washington's troops. Risking her life if she was identified, Esther published a broadside, "The Sentiments of American Women," urging other women to join her efforts. This was nothing short of a woman's version of the Declaration of Independence, complete with references to the actions of women in the cause of liberty throughout history.[66]

Did Esther ever visit Hewson's shop? Would it have been on the list of places for Martha to visit when she came to Philadelphia? We will probably never know by definitive documentation, but it is interesting to note that Esther had an apparent friendship (at least by 1780 and probably earlier) with Sarah Franklin Bache, daughter of Benjamin Franklin.[67] We know by Franklin's own letter that the Bache family (at least Richard Bache) appears to have been well aware of Hewson's business of calico printing.

A Picture of America's Birth

The Kerchief stands as an important item in American material culture. While it might be a part of an interesting set of influences that went into the famous Dolittle print, it is most important for the specific messages in its text and symbols. Close attention to the flags surrounding Washington's image show that they are not an odd collection of militia flags randomly added to the picture; rather they are the closest thing the artist could muster with respect to images of a national status, not just portrayals of state or regional stature. As the artist struggled to find such images, he even went so far as to create a draft of a national banner. Here is a very early example of the melding of Washington's images with national images, and, in turn, the shaping of Washington as a national icon. Close attention to the text in the Kerchief also yields interesting information. For one thing, it appears the Kerchief represents one of the earliest examples of Washington's future place in the American mind—as father of his country. More important, the language is a reflection of a conception of Washington that he himself advanced—one grounded on classical republican principles. He is a "Foundator" and "Protector," a temporary holder of power for the sole purpose of establishing a new republic.

The text and the flags selected complement each other in the sense that they are all "transitional." Just as the thirteen-spoke flag is a draft for a national standard, the text is a draft for the proper description of Washington. *Foundator* is a first attempt at a description of the role in which we now think of Washington. The term *Jndependency,* which would shift into the more common expression of "Independence" once it was won, also seems transitional in character and reflective of the early date of the production of the Kerchief.

The use of the term *Protector,* with its reference to Cromwell, seems to be particularly consistent with the use of the Rattlesnake Flag. In the early years of the rebellion, outmatched by the greatest army and navy in the world, the colonists had no problem invoking the image of the rattlesnake, despite associations with the evil of serpents in the Bible. By the same token, the references to Cromwell, who did indeed defeat and behead a king but also became a dictator, were used as well. Later, the uses of both the rattlesnake image and references to Cromwell would fade away as the new country would look for more squarely republican images. Nevertheless, in the early days of the Revolution, these were symbols that the colonists needed to inspire them and give them the confidence that they could prevail. The Kerchief reflects that moment in American history.

A review of the facts related to Martha Washington's involvement and Hewson's role as the printer clearly shows that more than mere "tradition" connects them to the Kerchief. Independent facts confirm key elements of Alcock's story, and there is much in the Kerchief to suggest Hewson's involvement. Certainly the biographical elements of the interrelation of the lives of Hewson, the Reeds, and the Washingtons also support the story, but only indirectly.

Overall, the known facts, while circumstantial, lead one to the conclusion that this textile is Hewson's work and that it was commissioned by Martha Washington. Unfortunately, however, there is no single definitive document on which to base these conclusions. It is a combination of records that we must rely on. Maybe the explanation for this lies in the fact that the man who could not tell a lie, George Washington, was very careful to make sure that he was not seen in history as a self-promoter either.

[66] William B. Reed, *The Life of Esther De Bredt* (Philadelphia: Privately printed, 1853), p. 234. Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 178.

[67] Norton, *Liberty's Daughters,* p. 182.