

Which Grace? Analysis of Historical Records

Background Information

The rich textural and material evidence that has long supported research and writing about the lives of George and Martha Washington also includes a wealth of information about the enslaved men, women, and children of their Mount Vernon plantation. Because of proximity to the most famous American of his time, the lives of the enslaved people at Mount Vernon can be glimpsed in greater detail than any comparable group of slaves in eighteenth-century America. Indeed, it can be said that George Washington wrote the biographies of Mount Vernon's enslaved people.

Thousands of references in his voluminous papers make it possible to trace the experiences of specific individuals through time and follow family lineages through multiple generations. Visitor descriptions, public records, oral histories, and archaeology fill in some of the blanks. The resulting level of personal history is unparalleled, contrasting with the isolated references and faceless statistics that are all we have to illuminate the lives of the vast majority of eighteenth-century enslaved Americans.

Even with these rich resources, many questions remain without definitive answers. By looking carefully at small amounts of data, new narratives begin to take shape. We want to learn more about any enslaved individuals named Grace, Isaac, and Suckey using the evidence we have where those names are listed in George Washington's records.

For more about George Washington and Slavery:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/slavery/>

For more about the lives of those enslaved at Mount Vernon:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/digital-encyclopedia/subject/slavery-and-enslaved-community/>

Lives Bound Together: Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon exhibit video (7:19):

<https://vimeo.com/185798426>

Mount Vernon's Slavery Database:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/slavery/slavery-database/>

