

*See for history of the road
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While Washington may not have trod much of the ground on which the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway is being constructed and which is to be dedicated to him in 1932, he was thoroughly familiar with the greater portion of the waterfront along which it will stretch. For it was his custom to travel by boat from Mount Vernon to Alexandria for supplies and to Abingdon House, halfway between Washington and Alexandria, to visit the Stuarts. He knew a great portion of the river front to be marshy lowland, inundated by several inlets. He knew other portions to be gently rolling country with occasional high points. On such a point the Mansion House stands, and on another Abingdon House, for the purchase of which Washington conducted the negotiations for Martha's son, John Parke Custis, when he married the much desired Eleanor Calvert.

When traveling by horseback or carriage from Mount Vernon to Georgetown, Washington used the road, known as the King's Highway to Alexandria, and then the old Georgetown road, ferrying across the Potomac near Mason's now Annapolis Island. Or he ferried the Potomac near Mount Vernon and traveled in Maryland through Bladensburg to Georgetown.

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The Memorial Highway, which the Bureau of Public Roads is constructing under Congressional authority, starts at the John Adams Memorial Bridge on Columbia Island and follows the Potomac River for fifteen miles to Mount Vernon. It is part of a beautiful scenic drive from the Maryland State line through Rock Creek Park and through Potomac Park and along the Potomac, passing through historic Alexandria. It will be opened to travel in time for the bi-centennial celebration of the birth of Washington.

The right-of-way for the highway will have a minimum width of 200 feet for practically the entire distance, and is designed with long easy curves. The grades rise and fall with the natural roll of the hills. To provide for easy acceleration and uninterrupted flow of traffic, gracefully designed grade separation structures with liberal approach connections have been planned. Grade crossings have been eliminated at practically all important intersecting thoroughfares, except through the built-up sections of Washington street in Alexandria where all cross streets will be made "full-stop" boulevard intersections. At minor access connections, flared or wide roadways have been introduced. Considerable area of land is being acquired between the highway and the river which can be developed into park reservations for recreation and enjoyment of the public.

The highway crosses five estuaries on hydraulic fills and bridges. At intersecting roads there are three underpasses and two overpasses. These bridges are simple and dignified in design. All are reinforced concrete arches, faced with native stone, laid in random bond.

At Mount Vernon, provision has been made for parking 350 passenger cars and 60 busses in formal arrangement at one time, and for additional parking space for overflows on peak days.

The Memorial Highway begins at the Memorial Bridge on Columbia Island from which a fine view is obtained of the bridge, and of Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument across the Potomac. To the West is Arlington cemetery with the old home of Lee, the amphitheater and the grave of the Unknown Soldier within its confines. Crossing Columbia Island and Boundary Channel Bridge, the highway passes under a new bridge structure south of the Highway Bridge which structure is one of the most attractive grade separation units ever designed. The bridge has four ramps, permitting an easy and continuous flow of traffic in four directions, and eliminating all left-hand turns.

Continuing under the Railroad Bridge, whose abutments rest on ground known as Alexander's Island in Washington's day, but which has long since been joined to the mainland by a fill, the route rounds Gravelly Point, crosses Roaches Run and follows the

rolling ground of Virginia, passing through the front yard of Abingdon, the birthplace of Nellie Custis, the adopted daughter of Martha and George, and the home of the Stuarts. Just beyond is Four Mile Run, spanned by a fill and bridge. It was at Four Mile Run that Washington purchased ground in 1775 and surveyed it in 1785.

At the north end of Alexandria, the highway follows the canal bed of the old Alexandria Canal, engineered and constructed by Washington. It follows Washington street through Alexandria, a town replete with memories of the first President. Beyond Alexandria, the road crosses Hunting Creek on a fill and bridge, and continues on to Wellington, Virginia, where lived Tobias Lear, Washington's secretary. It continues to follow the Potomac through Fort Hunt, and on to Little Hunting Creek. Just before reaching the Creek it enters what was originally a section of Washington's estate, the part he called the Neck. Along Hunting Creek Washington hunted fox with such cronies as Lord and Colonel Fairfax, Phil and Robert Alexander, Humphrey Peake, John Manley, Lund Washington, Colonel Bassett, Captain Posey and others. Here he also shot mallards, bald faces and the blue wing teal. Along the shores of the Potomac he fished all the way from Fort Hunt to the Mansion House.

Across Hunting Creek is the Mansion House farm on whose high point the house in which Washington lived from 1747 to 1779 still stands and where the Memorial Highway ends.

The first contract for work on the highway was for riprap foundation walls for hydraulic fills between Columbia Island and the Railroad Bridge and was let about the middle of September, 1929. This work has been completed as well as the cofferdam for the new abutment to the Highway Bridge.

Two hydraulic dredges, owned by the War Department and operated under the direct supervision of the District Office of the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, are now pumping sand and gravel into the fills at Four Mile Run, and between Columbia Island and the Railroad Bridge. The hydraulic work is about twenty per cent completed.

Bids for the grading, drainage and incidental construction have been received by the Bureau. Bids for bridge work will be received on February 20.