

## **MARTHA WASHINGTON**

### **1731-1802**

Born in New Kent County, Va., she was the eldest of eight children in a typical middle-gentry family. Her education consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, music, dance, domestic arts, and household management. She was an accomplished equestrienne. In May 1750 she married Daniel Parke Custis, a wealthy Virginia planter. He died in July 1757, leaving an estate of over £23,000 (more than 17,500 acres and 300 slaves). Martha had four children, two of whom survived. She married George Washington on January 6, 1759. She was five foot tall; he six foot three inches. Martha ran the household staff at Mount Vernon, which consisted of eleven slaves—two cooks, two waiters, two laundresses, one seamstress, and a personal servant for each family member. She had control over the mansion house, the kitchen, the smokehouse, the spinning house, and the wash house. Her daughter Patsy died at the age of seventeen in 1773 and her son John Parke, somewhat indolent and lacking ambition, died in 1781. Two of his children were raised at Mount Vernon by Martha and George. Unlike Abigail Adams, Martha Washington avoided politics, but always served as the perfect hostess for the frequent visitors to Mount Vernon and to the President's Mansion in New York City and then in Philadelphia. When Washington died, Martha destroyed their correspondence. In Washington's will, he provided for the emancipation of all of their slaves when Martha died. She freed the slaves in 1801.