

ARCHAEOLOGY EXPEDITION: Monday, March 30–Friday, April 3. James Madison’s Montpelier, 11395 Constitution Highway, Montpelier Station. Work with trained professional archaeologists as they excavate the recently discovered Madison-era North Kitchen. Reservations required. 540/672-2728, ext. 160.

TOWN & COUNTY FREDERICKSBURG, VA. SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2009 THE FREE LANCE–STAR

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MARY: Mining company, remarriage change Augustine’s life

FROM PAGE 6

the beginning of new industrial opportunities for landowners in the colony of Virginia.

By the early 18th century, mining was being allowed in the colonies because of England’s need for iron.

Across the Rappahannock River, Gov. Alexander Spotswood had been maneuvering since 1713 to begin his vast mining enterprise and connect it to his wharves on Massaponax Creek.

And in the Proprietary, Robert Carter was issuing land patents as the agent for Lord Fairfax.

In England, also, newly formed companies were seeking a source of ore. A group of merchants from Bristol had acquired land near Augustine’s home place to convert an old gristmill into a mine.

The region was becoming “mine-mad,” as William Byrd commented.

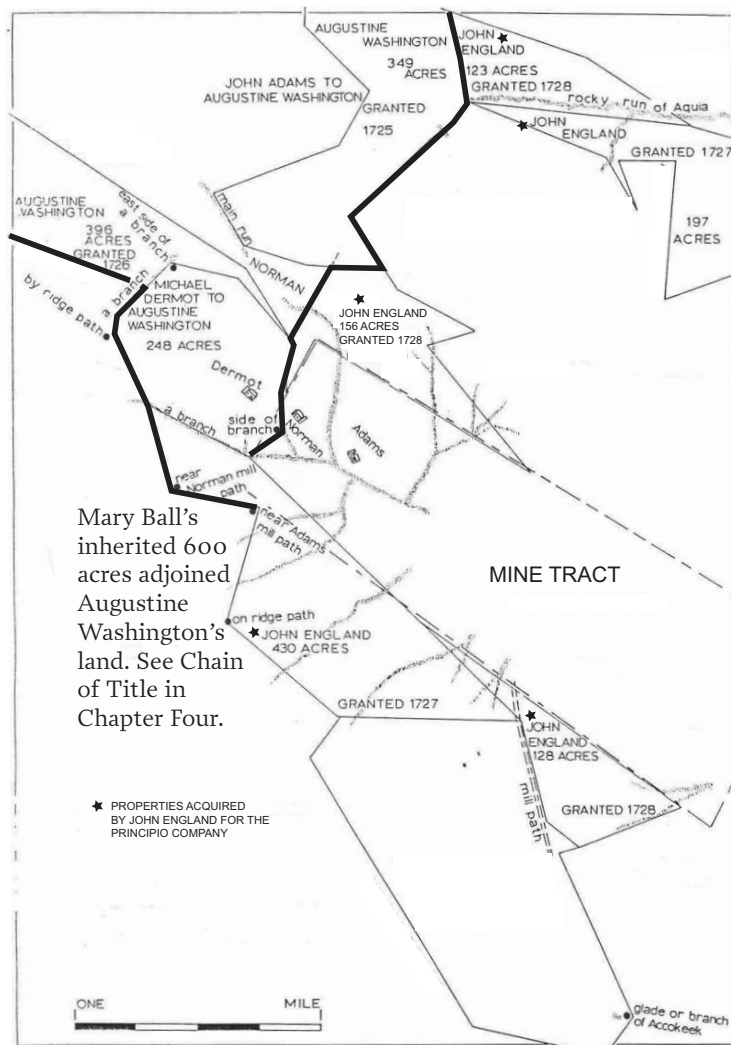
THE PRINCIPIO VENTURE IN STAFFORD COUNTY

In 1723, the partners of the Principio Company of Bristol sent their most experienced hand, John England, to evaluate the potential in Stafford County.

The lands along Accokeek Run were exceptionally rich. Young Augustine Washington had seen the potential for himself, and began acquiring tracts in that area in 1725.

By 1726, he was committed to John England to build and manage a blast furnace for the Principio Company on Accokeek Run.

He also purchased his sister Mildred’s 2,500-acre inheritance on Little Hunting Creek in Prince William County in 1726, evidently planning to relocate his fam-



Augustine Washington acquired much valuable land in his own name near Accokeek Run between 1725 and 1728.

ily from Westmoreland County.

Then he sailed for England in the fall of 1729 to negotiate a contract with the Principio owners, taking his son Lawrence with him to place him in his old school, Appleby. (Augustine Jr. followed in 1732, according to the school’s registers.)

In England, Augustine concluded an agreement with the Principio Company that he was supposed to execute as soon as he reached Virginia. He was to be in charge of raising the ore

and transporting the output of the furnace to the wharves on Aquia Creek.

TRAGEDY AND RECOVERY

But when he arrived home in the spring of 1730, he learned with great shock that he had become widowed—his wife, Jane, had died shortly after his departure for England.

Her death affected Augustine profoundly, apparently immobilizing him for a time, to the consternation of the Principio executives in England. “I think this is treating

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us neither kindly nor honorably to leave us in so great a state of uncertainty,” wrote John Wightwick to John England on Oct. 2.

By the fall of 1730, Augustine had resumed some of his former activities in Westmoreland County, no doubt at the urging of his brother-in-law, George Eskridge. He rejoined the court in November without loss of rank. But once again, his participation abruptly ceased, and after 1732 he was evidently not involved in Westmoreland County affairs.

As was the custom, however, he had soon remarried, taking as his second wife in the spring of 1731 the 23-

year-old Mary Ball.

Mary brought to the marriage her valuable 600 acres near Accokeek Run in Stafford County, which she had inherited from her half brother John Johnson in 1720 and which greatly enhanced Augustine’s prospects.

There can be little doubt that Eskridge arranged the marriage of Mary Ball to Augustine Washington. It was to the benefit of both, but especially to Augustine. In 1735 he relocated the family—with children George, Betty and Samuel—from Westmoreland County to Little Hunting Creek, which had been part of his

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