

**GEORGE WASHINGTON:
AN HISTORICAL
BIOGRAPHY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649286171

George Washington: an historical biography by Horace E. Scudder

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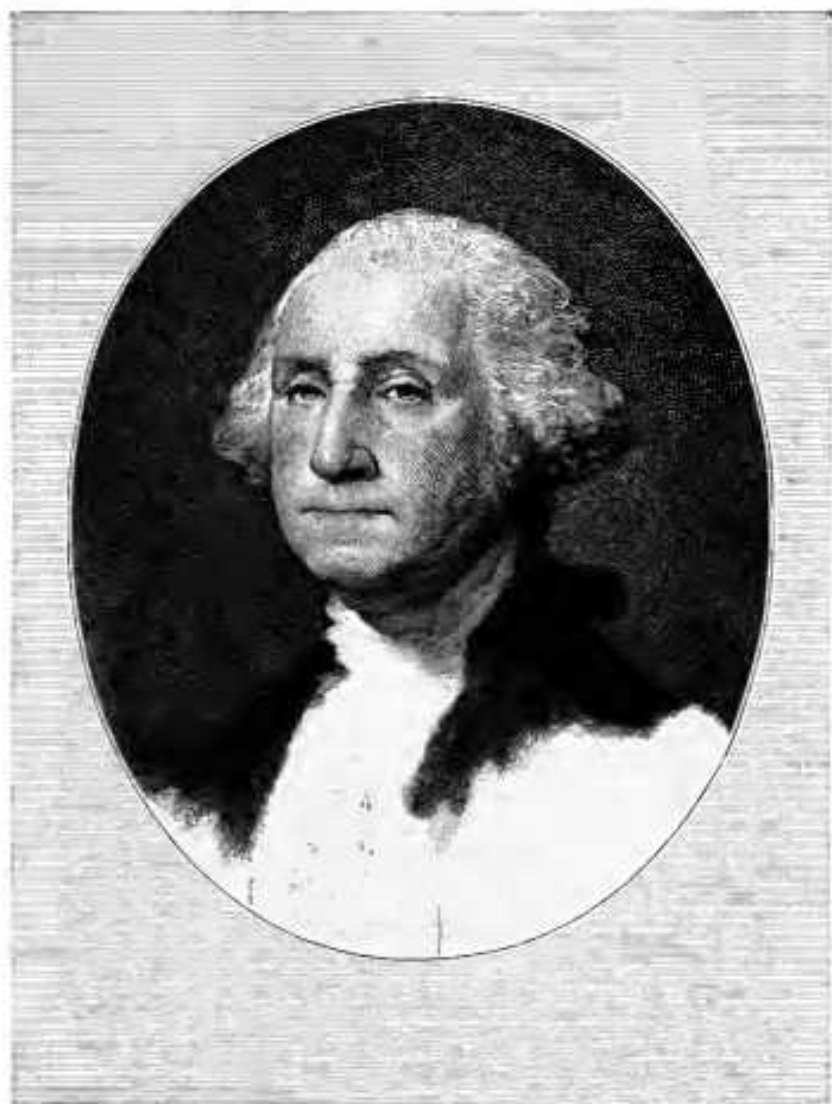
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HORACE E. SCUDDER

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George Washington

The Riverside Literature Series

GEORGE WASHINGTON

AN HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY

BY

HORACE E. SCUDDER



HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY

Boston: 4 Park Street; New York: 85 Fifth Avenue

Chicago: 378-388 Wabash Avenue

The Riverside Press, Cambridge

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CHAPTER I.

OLD VIRGINIA.

IN 1732, when people spoke of Virginia, they meant commonly so much of the present State as lies between Chesapeake Bay and the Blue Ridge Mountains. In the valley of the Shenandoah River, just beyond the first range of mountains, there were a few families, chiefly Irish and German, who had made their way southward from Pennsylvania; the governor of Virginia, too, was at this time engaged in planting a colony of Germans in the valley. Still farther to the westward were a few bold pioneers, who built their log-cabins in the wilderness and lived by hunting and fishing. No one knew how far Virginia stretched; the old charters from the king had talked vaguely about the South Sea, meaning by that the Pacific Ocean; but the country beyond the mountains had never been surveyed, and scarcely even explored. The people who called themselves

Virginians looked upon those who lived beyond the Blue Ridge very much as nowadays persons on the Atlantic coast look upon those who settle in Dakota or Montana.

Down from these mountains came the streams which swelled into rivers, — the Potomac, the Rappahannock, the York, and the James, with their countless branches and runs and creeks. Look at any map of eastern Virginia and see what a long coast line it has, what arms of the sea stretch inland, what rivers come down to meet the sea, and what a net-work of water-ways spreads over the whole country. You would say that the people living there must be skillful fishermen and sailors, that thriving seaport towns would be scattered along the coast and rivers, and that there would be great shipyards for the building of all kinds of vessels.

But in 1732 there were no large towns in Virginia — there were scarcely any towns at all. Each county had a county seat, where were a court-house and a prison, and an inn for the convenience of those who had business in court; usually there was a church, and sometimes a small country store; but there were no other houses, and often the place was in the middle of the woods. The capital of Virginia — Williamsburg — had less than two hundred houses; and Norfolk, the largest town, at the head of a noble harbor, had a population of five thousand or so. A few fish