

# MOUNT VERNON

*Discover the Real George Washington*

**Embargoed until March 30, 2007 at 12:00 p.m.**

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## **Cheers to George Washington! Mount Vernon “Uncorks” Whiskey Distillery with Grand Opening Ceremony**

*Mount Vernon, VA* – After ten years of research, excavation, and reconstruction, George Washington’s Distillery is back in business. Mount Vernon today fired up the stills – 210 years after Washington began distilling corn and rye whiskey. A “spirited” grand opening ceremony with demonstrations and a program featuring “George Washington” served as the kick-off to a weekend of public events.

“Mount Vernon is now the only site in the country that shows how whiskey was made in the 18th century,” said Jim Rees, executive director of Mount Vernon. “But more importantly, the Distillery is a colorful, interesting way for visitors to learn about George Washington as farmer and entrepreneur.”

George Washington had the largest whiskey distillery in early America, with five copper stills, a large boiler, and multiple mash tubs. One of the most successful economic components of Mount Vernon, the distillery at peak production in 1799 produced 11,000 gallons of whiskey valued at \$7,500. Washington was the only founding father to commercially operate a distillery, and his desire to pursue the most innovative farming practices of the day is demonstrated by his commitment to building such a large structure.

“There could be no better role model for the spirits industry than George Washington,” said Distilled Spirits Council President Peter Cressy, whose organization with the support of the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America have been the major donors for

the \$2.1 million project to excavate and reconstruct the historic distillery. “Washington was the most successful whiskey distiller in Early America and a strong proponent of moderation. We are proud to play a role in preserving the unique legacy of Washington the distiller.”

Master Distillers representing America’s best known liquor brands paid homage to their forefather by joining Mount Vernon distillers in making the inaugural batch of whiskey, using George Washington’s recipe. Master Distillers who participated in the event were: Gerald Webb of I.W. Harper and George Dickel; John Lunn of George Dickel; Chris Morris of Woodford Reserve and Jack Daniel’s; Jerry Dalton of Jim Beam; David Pickerell of Maker’s Mark; Ken Pierce of Very Old Barton; Joe Dangler of Virginia Gentleman; and Jimmy Russell of Wild Turkey.

The whiskey was distilled in five copper pot stills crafted by Vendome Copper and Brass Works Company of Louisville, KY.

The Distillery is the gateway to the American Whiskey Trail, a cultural heritage and tourism initiative of the Distilled Spirits Council in cooperation with Historic Mount Vernon. (<http://www.americanwhiskeytrail.com>)

On a daily basis, April through October, costumed distillers demonstrate the distillation process in the two-story building, which also features a storage cellar, office, and two bedrooms where the site manager and assistant would have lived. On the second floor, a History Channel video called “George Washington’s Liquid Gold” and a museum exhibit, “Spirits of Independence: George Washington and the Beginnings of the American Whiskey Industry,” tell the story of whiskey at Mount Vernon and its history in America.

The Distillery is adjacent to George Washington’s Gristmill, a water-powered mill. At the Gristmill, costumed millers operate four floors of machinery to show visitors how Washington’s complex farming operation expanded to include a commercial gristmill which produced flour that was exported around the world.

George Washington's Distillery & Gristmill is located three miles from the main Mount Vernon Estate. Admission to the site is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children ages 6-11, and free for children 5 and under. When combined with admission to Mount Vernon, tickets are \$2 for adults, \$1.50 for children ages 6-11, and free for children 5 and under. Tickets can be purchased at Mount Vernon's Ford Orientation Center or at the Gristmill Shop on site. Open daily from April through October, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Visit [MountVernon.org](http://MountVernon.org) for more information.

**Public Information: 703-780-2000; 703-799-8697 (TDD); [www.mountvernon.org](http://www.mountvernon.org)**

Since 1860, over 80 million visitors have made George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens the most popular historic home in America. Through thought-provoking tours, entertaining events, and stimulating educational programs on the Estate and in classrooms across the nation, Mount Vernon strives to preserve George Washington's place in history as "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen." Mount Vernon is owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, America's oldest national preservation organization, founded in 1853. A picturesque drive to the southern end of the scenic George Washington Memorial Parkway, Mount Vernon is located just 16 miles from the nation's capital.

Hours of operation: April-August, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; March, September, October, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; November – February, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Regular admission rates: adults, \$13.00; senior citizens, \$12.00; children age 6-11, when accompanied by an adult, \$6.00; and children under age 5, FREE. Admission fees, restaurant and retail proceeds, along with private donations, support the operation and restoration of Mount Vernon.