

NEWS RELEASE

DISCUS is the trade association representing producers and marketers of distilled spirits sold in the United States.

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DISTILLED SPIRITS COUNCIL ACQUIRES RARE WASHINGTON DISTILLERY LETTER FOR MOUNT VERNON IN HONOR OF JULY 4th HOLIDAY

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 3, 2001 – The distilled spirits industry today kicked-off the July 4th holiday by presenting Mount Vernon officials with a rare, 18th century letter penned by the country's most famous distiller, George Washington.

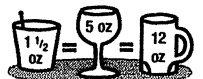
The letter, in which Washington describes his successful distillery operation, was acquired recently by the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) at Christie's, the New York auction house. The letter sold for \$18,800 including buyer's premium.

"As the country celebrates Independence Day, the distilled spirits industry is pleased to be able to celebrate and preserve a piece of its own rich, cultural heritage," said DISCUS President Dr. Peter H. Cressy as he handed over the letter to Mount Vernon officials during today's press conference at DISCUS headquarters. "We are entrusting this rare distillery letter to Mount Vernon to help shine new light on George Washington's role as a distiller in early America."

Just prior to his death in 1799, Washington wrote the letter to his nephew, Colonel William A. Washington, a noted cavalry commander during the Revolution. In the letter, Washington described the "demand" for his whiskey in the region as "brisk" and requested his nephew's assistance in procuring additional grain for the distillery.

The letter, which will be on permanent loan to Mount Vernon, is one of only a few pieces of correspondence known in existence that discusses Washington's distillery.

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"We are so honored to be receiving this rare document," said Mount Vernon's Executive Director James Rees. "Through history books and school lessons the public is widely aware of George Washington, the statesman and soldier. This letter will help us to educate Mount Vernon visitors about George Washington, the successful distiller, businessman and entrepreneur."

At the time of its construction in 1797, the distillery was considered one of the largest whiskey distilleries in America. In 1799, Washington produced 11,000 gallons of whiskey, yielding a profit of \$7,500.

"George Washington valued spirits and believed that beverage alcohol should be enjoyed responsibly and in moderation," said Cressy. "This is a marvelous opportunity for us to demonstrate the role of spirits in our nation's history and the part which our founding father played in that great tradition."

The distilled spirits industry, through a \$1.2 million grant, is partnering with Mount Vernon to reconstruct Washington's distillery on its original foundation. As part of the reconstruction effort, the Smithsonian plans to loan one of George Washington's original copper stills to Mount Vernon.

The distillers' donation will also be used to develop educational exhibits and programs for tourists including a new George Washington Education Center where visitors will learn about Washington's entrepreneurial spirit as a successful farmer and distiller through demonstrations and hands-on activities.

Located near Washington's gristmill on Dogue Creek, the distillery site is approximately two miles from his Mount Vernon mansion. The site is currently open to the public during the summer and fall months as archaeologists dig to expose the distillery's original foundation. The entire project is expected to be completed in the next few years.

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