

Mount Vernon Journal Entry – August 25th, 2023
By Anna Leman

The fall WHIP semester of 2023 kicked off with a day trip to George Washington's Virginian home, Mount Vernon.

After a thirty-minute drive in various Uber lifts, the group arrived on Washington's magnificent estate. The first stop was the on-site museum dedicated to Washington's life. Exhibits, artifacts, quotes, and interactive displays shared the history of Washington's career as a young surveyor, a British officer in the French and Indian War, America's commander-in-chief, the first president, and finally, a citizen farmer. Among these exhibits was the famous 4-D effect theatre where all sat in wonder as snow fell, lights flashed, and chairs shook. This dramatic retelling of the Battles of Trenton, Princeton, and Yorktown highlighted the tactical brilliance and inspiring leadership of Washington.

A tour of the mansion followed the museum. The tour guide Anette walked the group through the twenty-one-room house, explaining the wealthy design, original furniture, and remarkable history of the Washington family home. Arguably the coolest piece within the home was the Key to the Bastille. Gifted to him by Marquis de' Lafayette in 1790, Washington encased this symbol of liberty in glass and hung it in his front foyer. It remains in its original case to this day. Another remarkable feature of the main house was the stunning view of the Potomac River from Washington's back porch. No wonder he retired there.

The most meaningful part of the day was the reverent placing of a boxwood wreath inside Washington's crypt. The group gathered in respectful silence as students Elizabeth Williams and Anna Leman recited the Pledge of Allegiance and Washington's prayer over the nation. At that moment, the words of the Pledge came to life. There before his tomb, this small group of Hillsdale students stood together with Washington and pledged themselves to continue his legacy, to be devoted to America, her republic, and her principles of liberty, justice, and equality. The wreath was then ceremonially walked into the crypt and respects were paid.