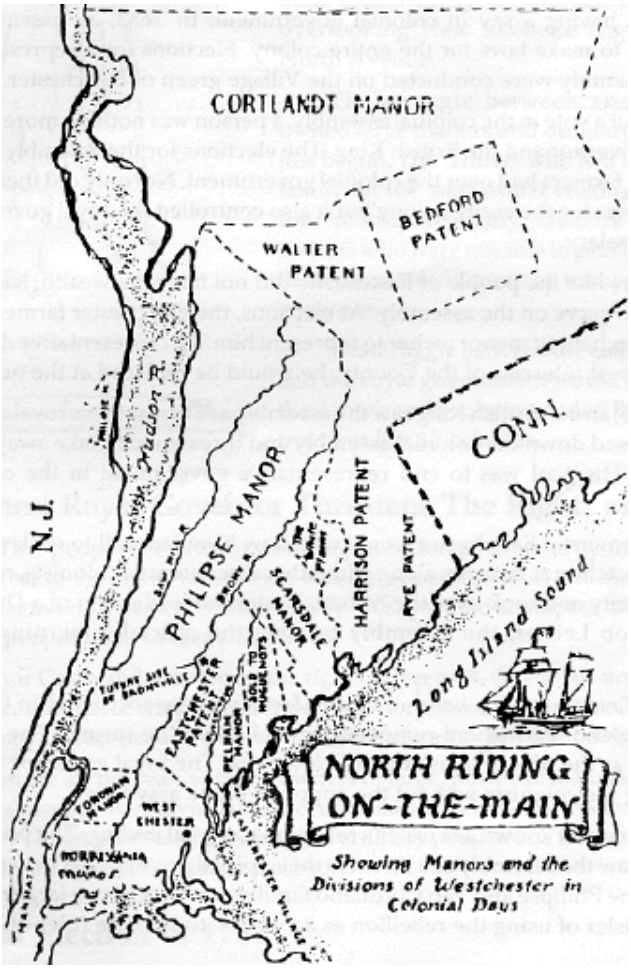
Coming of age in America

A town in Westchester County, New York from colonial settlement to the arrival of President Washington

An elementary school curriculum guide

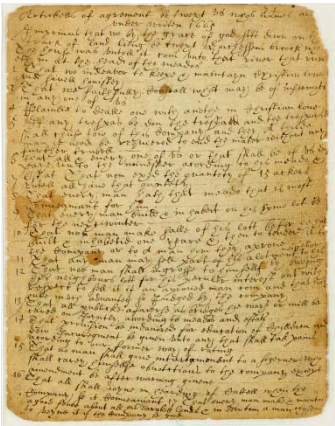
Dear students:

Welcome to life in a Colonial village of the 17th and 18th centuries located outside of New York City. Originally the town was called Eastchester, and today it is Mount Vernon, New York, the home of St. Paul's Church National Historic Site. You'll be exploring the lives of the people who founded this settlement and lived there. You'll see how it grew, what happened here during the War for Independence, and the changes after the war was over. All of this will come through historic letters, pictures, gravestones, seating charts, maps, and part of a diary of one of the most famous men in history. There will also be paragraphs introducing each lesson. Use both the paragraphs and the historic materials in each lesson to find the answers to the questions. So explore the town's early days -- and have fun!



Place an X on the Eastchester Patent on this map. Is it east or west of Connecticut?

Creating a town



Imagine you are a young member of one of the ten families who left their homes in Fairfield, Connecticut in 1664. Your parents were allowed to buy land in an unsettled area of New York that had been owned by an important man named Thomas Pell. There were no other people there except the local Indians. This settlement was first called The Ten Farms, and they soon changed the name to Eastchester. The families farmed there, and built their houses and later their church.

This group, called Puritans, had separated from the Church of England to worship in its own way; they were also known as dissenters. Later, they were joined by 16 other families, and altogether they drew up their own rules which everyone promised to obey. These rules were called the Articles of Agreement. Above you can see a reproduction of the actual Articles, and below are some of them written out. (See the difference in the spelling of Colonial times.) Use these articles to answer the questions.

1. "That we indeavor (endeavor) to keepe (keep) and maintain (maintain) Christian love and sivell (civil) honesty."

17. "That every man make and maintain a good fenc (fence) about all his arabell (arable) land, and in due tim (time) a man chosen to veyn (view) if the company be good. (if the property be in good care)"

19. " That we give some encouragement to Mr. Bruwster eatch (each) other weeke (week) to give us a word of exortation and that when we are setteled (settled) we mete (meet) together etch (each) other weeke (week) one hour to talke (talk) of the best things."

22. "That one day, every spring, be improved for the destroying of rattlesnakes. "

Rattlesnake

QUESTIONS

1. How many families came to begin a new settlement?

2. What people were already living in the area when the settlers arrived?

3. How would the families change the land so that they could farm?

4. Why was it important to kill the rattlesnakes in article 21, and what does it tell you about this village?

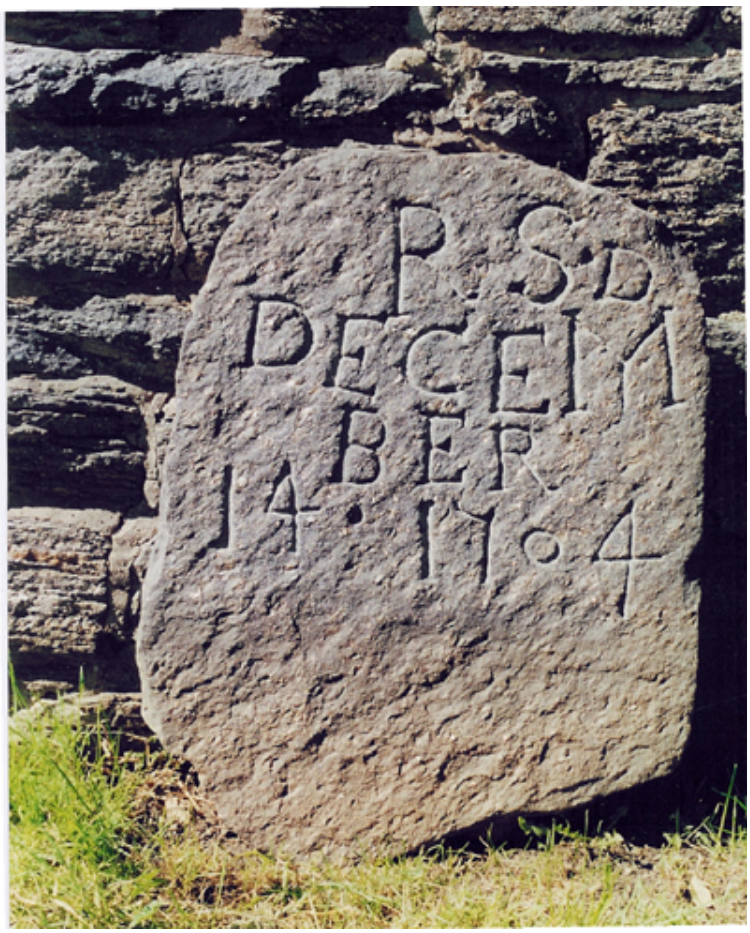
5. How would the settlers have shown "love and … honesty" to each other? (2)

6. What was so important about a "good fence"? (17)

7. Who do you think "Mr. Bruwster" was, and what did they mean by "the best things"? (19)

8. There was irregular spelling in the writing because there was no standard dictionary yet. Here are three words spelled as they were in the 17th century. Can you spell them correctly as we would today: **don, chuse, weeke**

An Early Settler of the town



When you and your family had settled in Eastchester – first called Ten Farms – you would have known Richard Shute. He was one of the first ten landowners and farmers in the village, and was respected by everyone. Born in 1640 in Fairfield, Connecticut, he moved with the other nine families, and became the owner of 41 acres of farmland. Soon after, he became a leader in the church and community, and held almost every responsible position for 27 years. He was even village treasurer and secretary, though people joked about his "horrible handwriting." Richard Shute died at the age of 64. His gravestone, chiseled by the village blacksmith, is the oldest legible marker in St. Paul's Church cemetery. Here is an image of his grave marker.

QUESTIONS:

1. In what year did Richard Shute die? _____. How many years ago was that? ____.
2. What do the letters "R S" stand for on top of the grave marker? _____.
   What did "D" stand for? _____
3. Why do you think his full name was not there?

4. Why do you think people have gravestones?

5. What important things were written on a gravestone in the 18th century?

6. What was one thing the Shute did not do very well? How important would that be today?

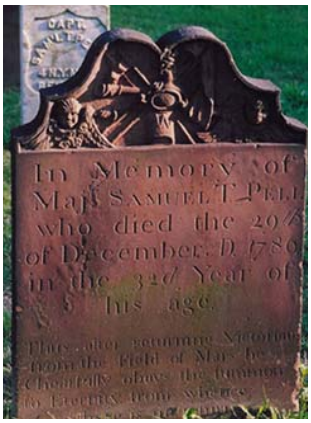
7. Why was Richard Shute an important citizen in his town?

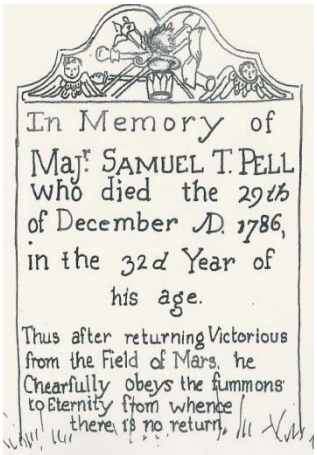
8. If you were going to write a short sentence about Richard Shute on his gravestone, what would you say?

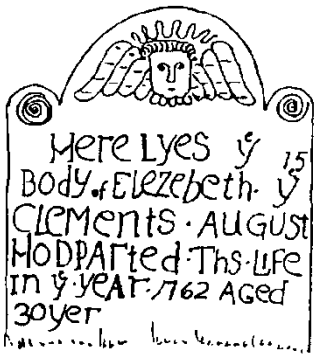
9. Underline the crop that Shute would not have grown in New York State: **apples, pumpkins, cotton.** Tell why you made the choice you did.

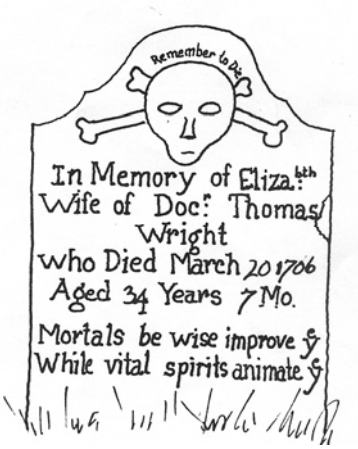
The old Graveyard of St. Paul's Church

Besides John Shute, who else is buried in St. Paul's Cemetery? There is no one famous: only the people and the descendents of those who first came here in 1665; the ones who built the church, and the families whose names are on the doors of the pews inside. Their stones show the names, ages, dates of deaths and sometimes dates of births. Some also, like later markers, have a line or more of verse, and even a symbol. Here, too, are the gravestones of enslaved African Americans and their descendents, and soldiers who fought on both sides in the Revolutionary War. Here are photos of three headstones and sketches directly below the gravestones:









QUESTIONS:

1. In what year did Elizabeth Clements die? _____
2. Which of the people indicated on these gravestones ~ Samuel T. Pell, Elizabeth Clements, and Elizabeth Wright ~ died at the oldest age? _____.
3. How many years did that person live? _____. What does that tell us about how long people lived in the 1700s?

4. Only one of these people would have died an American. Which was it? _____. What country would the other two people part of when they died? _____
5. The skull and crossbones on Elizabeth Wright stone are a symbol of _____.
6. Samuel Pell was an officer who fought in the Revolutionary War. His gravestone is carved with what is called a "Trophy of Arms", showing weapons of war. Name a symbol of war that you see on his gravestone. _____
7. Did Samuel T. Pell, an officer in the American army, die during the Revolutionary War, or did he live through the war and die later from another cause? Hint: The Revolutionary War ended in 1783. _____
8. The name for the Roman God of War is mentioned in the epitaph (a saying or poem about a person's life) on Samuel T. Pell's gravestone. What is the name of that Roman God of War? Hint: It's one of the planets in our solar system. _____
9. Which of these gravestones do you find the most interesting, and why?

Choosing Their Leaders

Painting of the Eastchester election of 1733.

What do you think is happening in this picture? You might be surprised to know that it shows politics in Eastchester in 1733. This is an important election for a representative in the colonial legislature. But it was very different from the way elections are held today. The picture is showing a crowd gathered at noon on the village green by the church. They are registering and declaring that they own enough land to be allowed to vote. But they will not be going indoors – the election will be held outside on the Green – and no one will use a voting booth, or even paper and pencil. Instead, everyone will say out loud which candidate they prefer. And everyone else in town will know for whom he voted.

QUESTIONS:

1. Where is the election being held?

2. How are the people voting?

3. Which people who lived in a colonial town are not there to vote, and why do you thing that is so?

4. Look at the voters' clothing. Many of the men have gold braids, buttons and shoe buckles made of silver. What does that tell you about them?

5. A man is holding up a book. What book do you think it is, and what is it used for?

6. What do you think the man holding the pole with the red flag is shouting?

7. Where do Americans vote now in the 21st century?

8. How is voting different now from the way they voted in the picture?

9. Who votes in today's elections, and who cannot vote?

The Two Churches of Eastchester

By 1700 there were about 300 people in the village, and they had built a meetinghouse, or church, all of wooden shingles – even the roof. Interestingly, people were reminded about church service by the beating of a drum. Each side of the meeting house was 28 feet long and 18 feet high. In 1758, a bronze bell was suspended on the roof, and now the ringing of that bell summoned people to church. Then, in 1763, the people began building a much larger church, measuring 35 feet wide and 70 feet long. It was made of fieldstones and brick. The church was completed after the Revolutionary War, in 1788, and it still stands. Here are the two structures ~ meetinghouse and church.

Eastchester meeting house

St. Paul's Church

QUESTIONS:

1. Which building ~ meeting house or church ~ held more people?

2. What was the shape of the floor in the meetinghouse, if each side was the same length? What was the shape of the church?

3. In what way were the two buildings the same?

4. List how the two buildings looked different.

5. Give reasons why you think the first church was built of wood and the second one was built out of stone and brick.

6. Why do you think a drum was used to call people to church in the early days of the village, and why was it discontinued?

7. Why did the people of Eastchester decide to build a second church?

The Battle of Pell's Point

If you lived in Eastchester during the War for Independence against Britain, you would have heard the cannon fire during the Battle of Pell's Point on October 18, 1776. General George Washington was trying to move his troops from Manhattan to White Plains, but he knew that British ships could land nearby at Pell's Point. Then they and their allies, the Hessians (who came from Germany) could intercept his weaker army. So Washington sent Colonel John Glover and about 800 soldiers to St. Paul's Church. Glover thought of a plan that would put his men in a strong defensive position against the 4,000 man force advancing down the road. Here is an excerpt from the exciting letter that Glover wrote after the battle that slowed down the enemy, and gave Washington's troops the time they needed to safety move up to White Plains.

Colonel John Glover

Stone walls at the Pell's Point battlefield.

"The enemy gave a shout and advanced; Colonel Reed's (men) laying under the cover of a stone wall undiscovered till they came within thirty yards, then rose up and gave them the whole charge; the enemy broke, and retreated for the main body to come up. In this situation we remained for about an hour and a half, when they appeared about four thousand, with seven pieces of artillery; they now advance, keeping up a constant fire of artillery; we kept our post under cover the stone wall before mentioned till they came within fifty yards of us, rose up and gave them the whole charge of the battalion; they halted and returned fire with showers of musketry and cannon balls.

"We exchanged seven rounds at this post, retreated, and formed in the rear of Colonel Shepherd and on his left; they then shouted and pushed on till they came on Shepherd, posted behind a fine double stone wall; he rose up and fired by grand divisions, by which he kept up a constant fire, and maintained his part until he exchanged seventeen rounds with them, and caused them to retreat several times, once in particular so far that a solider of Colonel Shepherd's leaped over the wall and took a hat and canteen off a Captain that lay dead on the ground they retreated from."

QUESTIONS:

1. How many pieces of artillery (canon) did the British have?

2. How many yards were the British away before the Americans opened fire?

3. What did one of Col. Shepherd's men take from a dead enemy soldier?

4. Why do you think he did this?

5. Why do you think the farmers had built stone walls?

6. Why were the stone walls so necessary for the American soldiers in the battle?

7. What did the soldiers do to trick the enemy troops?

8. Why was this battle important?

9. Use your dictionary to find the meaning of the word "deceive".

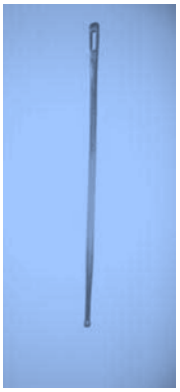
10. If Glover had about 800 men, and the enemy 4,000, how many times the number did the enemy forces have?

The Church that became a Hospital

The battle of Pell's Point was over, but the Hessians had stayed in Eastchester, and they had sick and wounded men. What would they use as a hospital? The best place was the half-finished Church of St. Paul's It had no floor, windows, or seats, but it was still the biggest, strongest building closest to the battlefield. It was also unlocked and empty. Fires were built inside for warmth, and straw covered the cold, hard ground for the men to lie on. When a soldier was wounded, the surgeon first stopped the bleeding with a tourniquet, and gave him strong liquor to dull the pain he would feel. Then he used a probe to find the musket ball in the soldier's body, and forceps to remove it. Sometimes he even had to cut off part of an arm or leg. Some of the soldiers recovered, but many died of infection. Here are pictures of some of the instruments the surgeon's used.

Forceps

Probe



Screw Tourniquet

QUESTIONS:

1. Which of these instruments would a Revolutionary War surgeon have used to locate a musket ball?

2. What modern instrument would an army surgeon have today to locate a bullet or ball?

3. Name the instrument that was used to take out a musket ball.

4. Which instrument was used to stop the bleeding during surgery? How do you think it worked?

5. Why do you think surgeons gave wounded men liquor, or alcohol before an operation at the time St. Paul's Church was a military hospital? What would be used today?

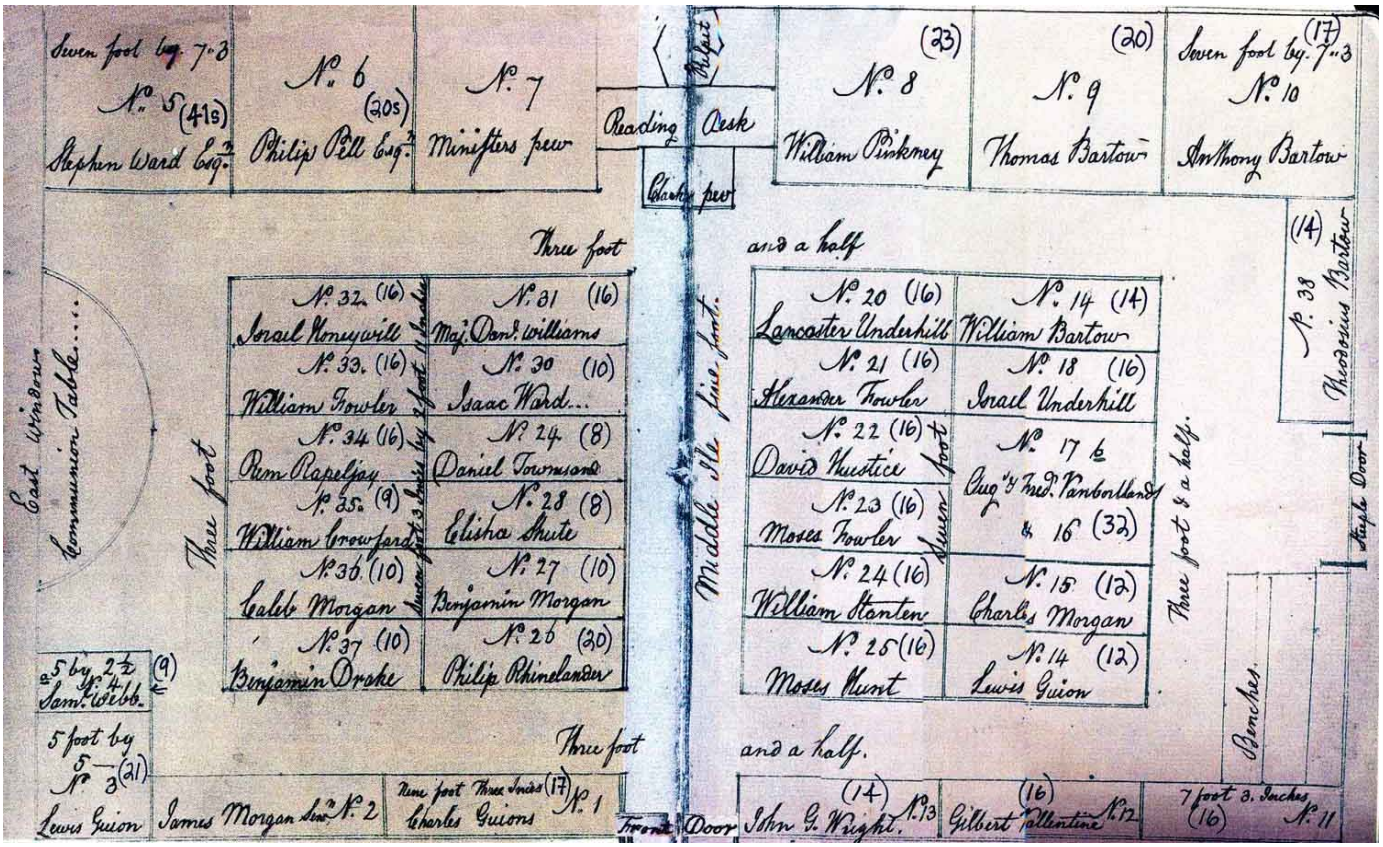
6. Why would a lantern have been important in the St. Paul's church military hospital?

7. Why do you think they put straw on the ground?

8. If there was a war battle in your community, what place do you think an army might use today as a military hospital?

Sitting in a Box

Finally, in winter of 1787, the new church of St. Paul's was finished. Here is a copy of the plan showing the inside of the church, drawn by one of the people in the town. The boxes were called pews. Each box pew shows its number (N.), the name of the family it belonged to, and the number of shillings (s) each family paid for its pew that year. A regular family pew held five or six members, and double pew (the big ones in the front, and one on the right side) held eight or nine. The plan helps us understand family names, how many people lived in the town, which families were the largest, which were the richest, and where they all sat. Use the plan to answer these questions.



QUESTIONS:

1. Which family owned pew N. 30?

2. List the family names (last names) that appear more than once. (Hint: There were several.)

3. What does the appearance of so many common last names tell us about the people living in the town?

4. Which families were closest to the communion table?

5. What was the distance between Moses Hunt's pew and John Wright's pew?

6. When the people of Eastchester paid for their pews in 1787, 1 shilling was worthy about 6 dollars. How much (in dollars) did Lancaster Underhill (pew N. 20) pay for his pew?

7. Which family do you think was the most important in St. Paul's, and why do you think so?

8. Who do you think sat in the benches in the back, on the right side, of the church?

9. Whose pew was N. 7, and what letter of his name (written in script) is different from the way we would write it today?

10. How many doors were there?

11. All the names on the family pews are the first and last names of men, the fathers – even though there were mothers and children in the families. Why do you think they did it that way? (Hint: What does this show about who owned the pews, the houses and all the property?) Would it be the same or different now? Why, or why not?

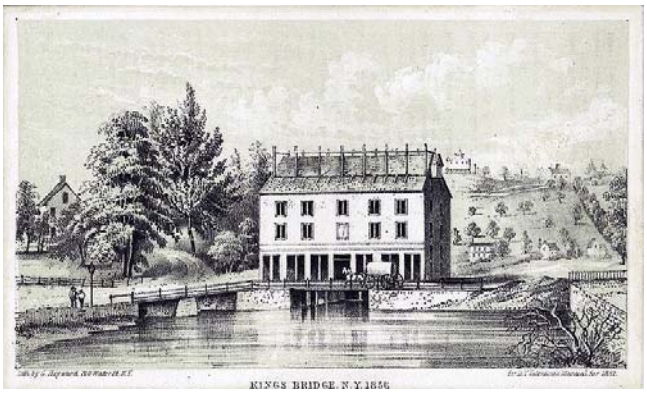
President George Washington, c. 1789.

The Return of Washington to Eastchester

How Eastchester had changed! President Washington noticed the difference as he was riding through, past St. Paul's Church. Thirteen years earlier as commanding General of the Continental Army, he had been inspecting the area preparing for battle. Many of the houses had been empty; the farmers had left.

But the enemy had been delayed at Pell's Point by Colonel John Glover and his men, and Washington had fought again and finally won the war. Now, as President, he was beginning a tour of the New England States, and passing the very same place.

The farms that had suffered from the war had recovered, and he could look at the land in a different way from when it was a battlefield. It reminded him in some ways of his plantation in the state of Virginia. Here is part of his diary:



King's Bridge, over the Harlem River, New York, part of Washington's route in October 1789.

Thursday, 15. Commenced my Journey at about 9 o'clock for Boston and a tour through the Eastern states. The Chief Justice, Mr. Jay and the Secretaries of the Treasury and War Departments accompanied me some distance out of the City. About 10 o'clock it began to Rain, and continued to do so till 11 when we arrived at the house of one Hoyatt, who keeps at Tavern at Kings-bridge where we, that is Major Jackson, Mr. Lear, and myself with 6 Servants who composed my Retinue, dined. After dinner through frequent light Showers we proceeded to the Tavern of a Mrs. Haviland at Rye; who keeps a very neat and decent Inn.

The Road for the greater part, indeed, the whole way, was very rough and Stoney, but the Land strong, well covered with grass and a luxuriant Crop of Indian Corn intermixed with Pompions [pumpkins] (which were yet ungathered) in the fields. We met four droves of Beef Cattle for the New York Market (about 30 in a drove) some of which were very fine ~ also a flock of Sheep for the same place. We scarcely passed a farm house that did not abd. (abound) in Geese. Their Cattle seemed to be of good quality and their hogs large bur rather long legged. No dwelling Ho. (house) is seen without a Stone or Brick Chimney and rarely any without a shingled roof ~ generally the Sides are of Shingles also. The distance of this days travel was 31 Miles in which we passed through (after leaving the Bridge) East Chester New Rochel & Marmeroneck; but as these places (though they have houses of worship in them) are not regularly laid out, they are

Hessian fly.

scarcely to be distinguished from the intermediate farms which are very close together and separated, as one Inclosure from another also is, by fences of Stone which are indeed easily made, as the County is immensely Stony. Upon inquiry we find their Crops of Wheat and Rye have been abundant – though of the first they had sown rather sparingly on Acct. (account) of the destruction what had of late years been made of that grain by what is called the Hessian fly."

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the weather like when President Washington was starting his tour?

2. When did Washington stop for dinner? At what time do most people have dinner now?

3. Washington tells us he traveled 31 miles the whole day. How do you think he was traveling?

4. On what kind of roads did he travel? Give a reason for your answer. Hint: Find a word that Washington uses more than once to describe the country where he was traveling.

5. Name some of the places and things that interested him as he was passing by?

6. Which animal did Washington especially notice? How can you tell?

7. What did the people here do for a living?

8. When he was a young man, Washington had spent some time as a surveyor – that is, he measured land distances. How can you tell this in his writing?

Reviewing What You've Learned – A Scavenger Hunt

Complete the following sentences. The answers are located in the lessons that you've just completed. First, write down the answers on the spaces. Next, write the letters from the boxes on the line below question 8, and when you finish, you'll have a scrambled word. Finally, unscramble it and print it at the bottom. Then you'll have a word that tells something about St. Paul's.

1. The families who came here separated themselves from the [ ] __ __ __ __ __ of England.
2. An important settler buried in the cemetery of St. Paul's is a man with the last name of [ ] __ __ __ __.
3. Voters gathered outside St. Paul's for the __ __ __ __ __ [ ] __ __ of an important official.
4. The last name of the officer who led the American forces at the Battle of Pell's Point was __ __ __ __ __ [ ].
5. The __ __ __ __ __ [ ] __ __ sat in pew n. 7.
6. President Washington wrote in his diary that the land around St. Paul's was very __ __ [ ] __ __ __.
7. The unfinished church of St. Paul's was used as a [ ] __ __ __ __ __ __ __ after the Battle of Pell's Point.
8. The first church was made of wooden __ __ [ ] __ __ __ __ __.

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

so

St. Paul's is a National __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Site