

Preserving Our Heritage

Washington: Soldier, Statesman, Distiller



Archaeologists excavate George Washington's distillery site.

(NAPSA)—Here's one for the history buffs: What did George Washington do after he left the presidential office in 1797?

Surprisingly, he turned to distilling spirits. The same year he left office, he oversaw the construction of a 2,250 square foot distillery on his Mount Vernon property. Scotsman John Anderson ran the operation, taking grain from Washington's nearby gristmill to the distillery's five copper stills to produce whiskey.

Though the distillery fell into disrepair and was dismantled in the early 19th century (Washington died in 1799), the site was well-preserved. Now, a \$1.2 million grant from the distilled spirits industry is being used to fund an authentic reconstruction of the complex—which will be the only historic site in the country capable of showing the distilling process from crop to finished product.

The grant, from the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) and other distilled spirits organizations, will support the authentic reconstruction of the distillery, as well as educational exhibits and pro-

grams. The Smithsonian Institution plans to loan the project a rare 18th century still which is believed to be one of Washington's original copper stills.

Special exhibitions at the distillery and the new George Washington Education Center at Mount Vernon will teach visitors about Washington's talents as an entrepreneur and distiller, as well as his belief in moderation.

"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," said Dr. Peter H. Cressy, DISCUS President and CEO.

Barrels of whiskey and rum from 11 of the nation's largest distillers were shipped down the Potomac River to Mount Vernon in a colonial re-enactment to mark the reconstruction of the distillery. The arrival of the barrels, which were brought ashore by costumed workers and loaded onto an oxcart, kicked off a day of festivities celebrating Washington's life as a distiller.

To learn more, visit the Web sites at www.mountvernon.org and www.discus.org.