

GEORGE
MASON'S

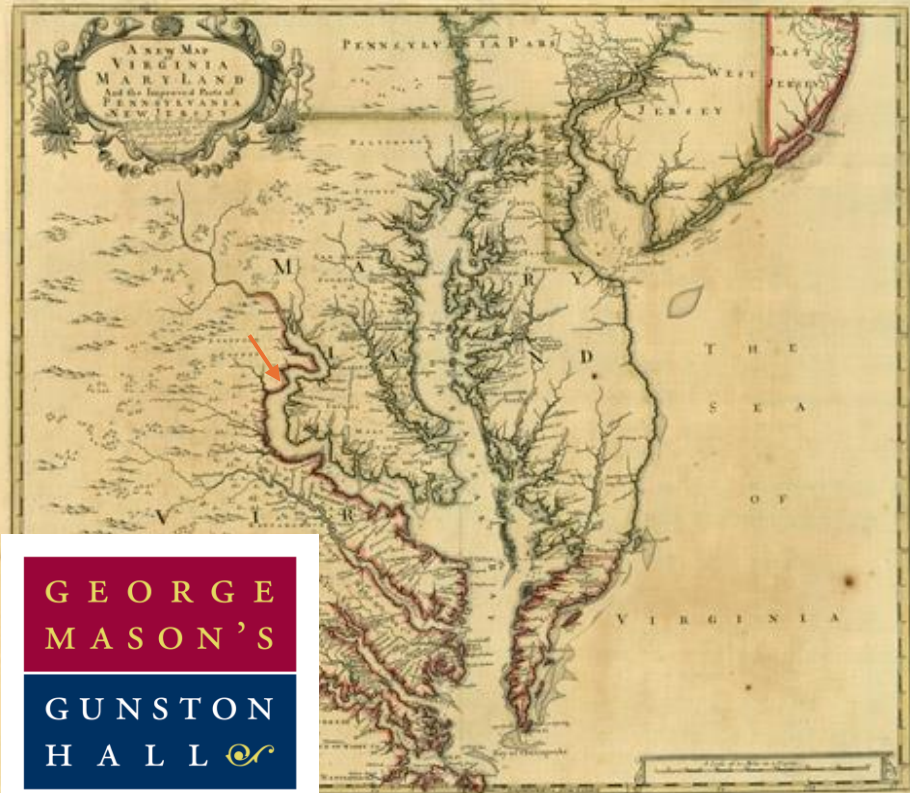
GUNSTON
HALL 

HOME OF *American Rights*

Declaration Day 2026



GUNSTON HALL



- Built between 1755 and 1759 by George and Ann Mason, Gunston Hall was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961.
- Presently located on 554 picturesque acres on Mason Neck in Northern Virginia.
- The last private owners of Gunston Hall, Louis and Eleanor Hertle, donated the property to the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1932.
- Gunston Hall opened to the public as a historic site and museum in 1952 as a joint effort of the Commonwealth of Virginia and The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America.

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Gunston Hall's Mission & Vision

- To stimulate the exploration and understanding of principles expressed by George Mason in the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights.
- Present the life and work of George Mason IV to promote and enrich the understanding of American Democracy.



Virginia *Declaration* of *Rights*

- Drafted by George Mason while in Williamsburg, residing at the Raleigh Tavern, in May of 1776.
- Ratified by the 5th Virginia Convention on June 12, 1776.
- A foundational document of the United States of America.
- Heavily influenced the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution.
- One of the earliest documents to promote the protection of individual rights.

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(Copy of the first Draft by J. M.C.)

Virginia Declaration of Rights

- Article 1 of the Virginia Declaration of Rights states, “That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain **inherent rights**, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, **the enjoyment of life and liberty**, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and **pursuing and obtaining happiness** and safety.”
- Articles 2 and 3 state that “all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people” and “that government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation, or community...”
- Subsequent articles articulated fundamental American freedoms such as freedom of the press and freedom of religion.

A Declaration of Rights made by the
Representatives of the good people of Virginia
in free convention; as the
Basis and Foundation of Government
That all men are created equally free & independent,
with certain unalienable rights, of which they can never
be deprived: among these are life & liberty, with the means of acquiring
property & happiness.

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(Copy of the first Draft by G. M.C.)

Virginia Declaration of Rights

- “Part of the genius of the Declaration of Rights lay in Mason’s ability to combine Enlightenment political philosophy with the English legal tradition to express in scarcely two pages the ideology of the American Revolution. . . In giving legal sanction to popular sovereignty, individual equality, and the right to revolt against an oppressive government, Mason codified basic liberal principles not then recognized in American and English law.”
- Jeff Broadwater, Mason Biographer

A Declaration of Rights made by the
Representatives of the good People of Virginia
assembled in full and free Convention; who
to them and their Posterity
the Foundation of Government

That all men are created equally free & independent,
with inherent natural Rights of which they can never
by compact define or desert their Posterity: among
the Inalienable of Life & Liberty, with the Means of acquiring
the Property & Pursuing the Happiness

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Declaration Day

- Hosted annually, the one-day program in Gunston Hall's signature program and occurs on the Saturday closest to the anniversary of the Virginia Declaration of Rights.
- A family-oriented program intended to help children and families understand the ideas contained in the document.
- Currently, the program kicks off with a naturalization ceremony and is framed with museum theater performances, tours of the historic house, music and spoken word performances, a community partner fair, and themed activities.
- Gunston Hall's largest program, this celebration is offered for free to the public.

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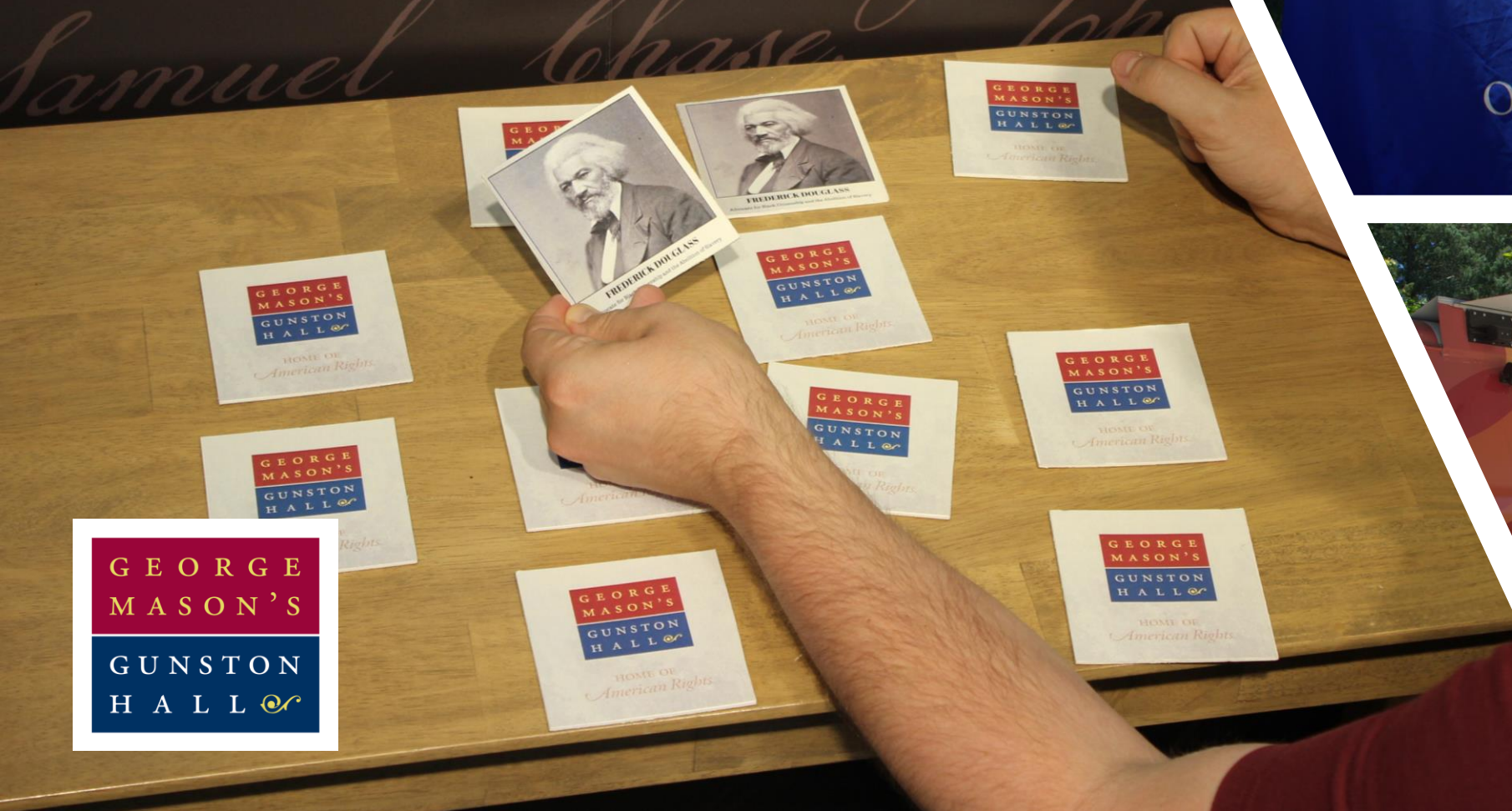
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Additions to Declaration Day 2026

- Expand the program to two days, June 12 and 13, 2026:
 - Give the naturalization ceremony its own day.
 - Increase educational engagement opportunities by adding additional spoken word performances featuring historical figures such as Clementina Rind and Frederick Douglass.
 - Add even more celebratory elements; including local artisans and musicians, decorations in the form of bunting, balloons and signage, more community fair vendors, and more local food vendors.
 - Expanding the reach of Declaration Day allows us to grow audience, expand the impact of this program throughout the Commonwealth, and to provide enhanced educational experiences for children and families focused on civics, rights, and democracy.

Gouvernement
Robert Livingstone
Samuel Chase



Additions to Declaration Day 2026

- Creation of new hands-on activities to enhance audience understanding of the revolutionary importance and contemporary relevance of the Virginia Declaration of Rights.
- Add a new child and family oriented museum theater performance.
 - Gunston Hall has presented a museum theater piece since 2019 as part of Declaration Day festivities. The museum theater piece is performed in the historic mansion and surrounding historic area. The museum theater performance has been a highly successful and deeply impactful component of Declaration Day since its debut.
 - It is our plan to provide a film-based version of this new performance for use at other sites and schools around the Commonwealth.
- Launch a speaker series
 - To take place in June and July 2024 in order to explore the importance of this document and its influence on the Declaration of Independence.
 - Each speaker will focus on one article of the Virginia Declaration of Rights
 - At the conclusion of the series, it is our intent to produce a publication featuring all the lectures.





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Budget \$220,000

- This expanded Declaration Day program directly supports the goals of the VA250 Commission:
 - To educate Virginians, including our students, about our history, our founding ideals and our system of government;
 - To engage every community and all regions in events that tell a complete story; and
 - To inspire Virginians to commit to American citizenship.

We are excited about partnering with VA250 to provide this enhanced signature experience for all Virginians and guests to the Commonwealth.

Budget

- Equipment & Supplies – \$15,500
- Marketing - \$ 40,500
- Event Expenses - \$64,000
 - Vendors
 - Activity supplies
 - Museum Theater
 - Giveaways
- Speaker Series – \$100,000
 - Honoria
 - Publication of talks
 - Naturalization Keynote Speaker
 - Catering

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

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