

# MOUNT VERNON

## FARMER WASHINGTON'S BUSINESS ACUMEN

---

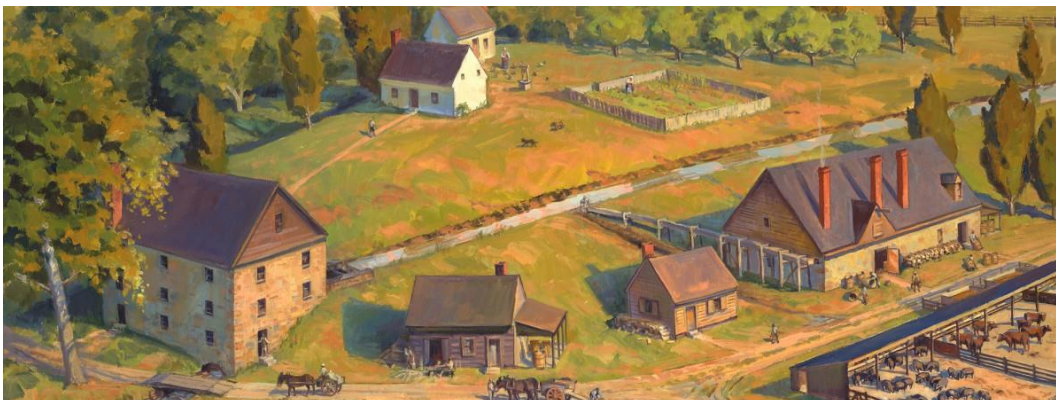
*"When I speak of a knowing farmer, I mean . . . above all, Midas like, one who can convert everything he touches into manure, as the first transmutation towards gold."*

~ George Washington

When George Washington listed his profession at the Constitutional Convention, he described himself as "farmer." Though he had commanded the Continental Army for eight and a half years and served as president for eight, he spent forty-five years running Mount Vernon as, in the words of one historian, the CEO of "WashCorp." That was no easy task; when Washington took over Mount Vernon the plantation was a relatively small outfit that was running more deeply into debt every year. By the time of his death, Washington had made his plantation one of the most advanced and profitable of its kind in the entire nation. **The story of Washington's transformation of Mount Vernon into a thriving and profitable estate offers numerous insights for today's leaders.**

This session begins in the seminar room before going mobile to tour Washington's pioneer farm, gristmill, and distillery. We start with a discussion of Washington's analysis of his predicament as a way of considering **financial management** and the importance of record keeping. We then examine Washington's first forays into new farming methods as a way to explore **entrepreneurship**. Washington's extension of his activities into broader areas offers a perfect window to explore new models on **seizing opportunity and risk management**. Finally, our tour reveals Washington to have been a techie, and the particular manner in which he used technology provides a compelling window into **technology management**. Ultimately, participants see a Washington whose success was driven by a search for efficiencies that would lead to **sustainability**, which required both innovation and investing in the future. Our final stop, at Washington's distillery that produced nearly 11,000 gallons of whiskey in 1799, highlights the pinnacle of Washington's integrated and profitable venture.

After concluding the estate tour, we return to the seminar room where participants reflect upon what they have seen during the tour, what insights it might offer that they can apply in their daily jobs, and what steps they might take in the next week and month to begin integrating some of those ideas.



Washington's  
gristmill and  
distillery.

