

# *Witness* TO REVOLUTION | The Unlikely Travels of Washington's Tent

## AUDIO TOUR »»

### Object Highlight: Mary Custis Lee's Trunk 220

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We're lucky no one lost this luggage! Like Martha Washington's trunk displayed earlier, this one travelled many miles. It belonged to Martha's great-great-granddaughter, Mary Custis Lee. She was Mary and Robert E. Lee's daughter and the last private owner of Washington's tents. She was born at Arlington in 1835 and lived until 1918. It is the smaller of two trunks that she repurposed to store the family's archive, depositing them in a bank vault in Alexandria, Virginia, where they lay forgotten until they were rediscovered in 2002. The materials the trunks contained give us a remarkable glimpse into Mary Custis Lee's life as a world traveler, her global social network, and her work advocating for her family's legacy and importance to American history. She often met people who admired her as the daughter of the Confederacy's top general and as a direct descendant of Martha Washington.

In 1906, she decided to sell George Washington's sleeping and office marquee as a fundraiser for Richmond's Home for Needy Confederate Women. Just steps away from where our Museum stands today, a newspaper printer published an interview with her announcing this decision. Mutual friends brought this amazing opportunity to the attention of a man who would become the next caretaker, an Episcopal priest who lived outside of Philadelphia named W. Herbert Burk.