

= George Washington (inventor) =

George Constant Louis Washington (May 20 , 1871 ? March 29 , 1946) was an American inventor and businessman of Anglo -@-@ Belgian origin . He is best remembered for his invention of an early instant coffee process and for the company he founded to mass @-@ produce it , the G. Washington Coffee Company .

An emigrant from his native Belgium , he arrived in the New York area in 1897 and dabbled in several technical fields before hitting upon instant coffee manufacture during a sojourn in Central America in 1906 or 1907 . He began selling his coffee in 1909 and founded a company to manufacture it in 1910 . Based in New York and New Jersey , his company prospered and became an important military supplier during World War I. The company 's products were also advertised in New York newspapers and on the radio . The success of his company made Washington wealthy , and he lived in a mansion in Brooklyn and then moved to a country estate in New Jersey in 1927 . In that same year , he lost a dispute with the tax authorities . Washington was married and had three children .

Washington 's company was sold to American Home Products in 1943 , shortly before his death . Though the coffee brand was discontinued by 1961 , Washington 's name is still used today in the product G. Washington 's Seasoning & Broth .

= = Early life = =

George Washington was born in Kortrijk , Belgium to Jean Guillaume Washington (John William Washington) of England and Marie Louise Tant of Belgium , on May 20 , 1871 . Following then @-@ current nationality law , which considered fatherhood primary , Washington was a British subject until he was naturalized as an American in May 1918 . At least six siblings in the family also settled in different parts of the United States and Central America . A number of accounts claim a relation to U.S. President George Washington , but this is not clearly explained .

Washington came to reside in Brussels and also attained a degree in chemistry at the University of Bonn in Germany . In December 1895 , Washington married Angeline Céline Virginie (later , just " Lina ") Van Nieuwenhuysse (born 1876) , also from Belgium . The US Census of 1900 records that Lina , like her husband , had English and Belgian ancestry (a Belgian father and an English mother) . The Washingtons ' arrival in the United States on a ship from Antwerp , Belgium , on October 6 , 1896 , was recorded at Ellis Island , though the 1900 US Census states that they emigrated to the United States in 1897 . The Washingtons settled in the New York area , where they had three children : Louisa Washington (born May 1897) , Irene Washington (born May 1898) , and George Washington Jr . (born August 1899) .

After arriving in the New York area , Washington founded a company producing kerosene gas mantles . At this time , they lived in New Brighton on Staten Island , but his company , George Washington Lighting Company , was based in nearby Jersey City . This business was abandoned with the maturation of incandescent light bulb technology . Washington also had a camera company for a time . By the time of the 1900 US Census , Washington , recorded in the census as an inventor , was 29 years old and living in a rented house in Brooklyn with his 23 @-@ year @-@ old wife , their three young children , his younger sister (age 25) , three servants , and a child of two of the servants .

Washington tried his hand at cattle ranching in Guatemala in 1906 or 1907 while , in the meantime , developed his instant coffee process . Washington returned to New York City after only a period of about a year in Guatemala , and then began pursuing the main part of his career in coffee manufacture . His father remained in Guatemala and died there in 1912 .

= = Personal life = =

After his coffee business was established in 1910 , Washington resided at a Park Slope mansion , occupying half of a city block , at 47 Prospect Park West in Brooklyn , and also at an 18 @-@

bedroom country home , later known as " Washington Lodge " , on a 40 @-@ acre waterfront estate at 287 South Country Road at Bellport in Suffolk County , which included the largest concrete swimming pool in New York at the time . Washington sold these homes in 1926 ? 1927 (for a price reportedly exceeding \$ 1 million) to a group of wealthy Brooklyn men intent on founding a " Park and Shore Club " for their membership at both properties . This was short @-@ lived , however , as the Park Slope mansion , following a neighborhood trend , was replaced by a six @-@ story apartment building at 44 Prospect Park West , and the Bellport estate was for most of its history used by local Catholic Marist Brothers as a summer retreat , before recent conservation projects on modern divisions of the former property by local nonprofits and Bellport resident Isabella Rossellini ; the " Washington Lodge " building there still stands , though its future use is uncertain .

With his company 's relocation to New Jersey , following the purchase of land there in 1927 , he moved to the former estate of Governor Franklin Murphy at " Franklin Farms " in Mendham . Washington was a lover of exotic animals , as well as gardening . He maintained extensive menageries on his country properties , first at Bellport , and later at Mendham . On Long Island , it is reported that he was often seen with a bird or monkey on his shoulder . At both his menageries , Washington specialized in rare birds , but such animals as deer , sheep , goats , and antelope are also recorded at Bellport , and deer , llamas , and zebras are recorded among the hundreds of animals in the larger space at Mendham . Socially , he was an active member of the Lotos Club , a literary gentlemen 's club in New York City .

Washington 's name was briefly put forward for the 1920 presidential election in South Dakota 's preference primary for the " American Party " , although papers were filed too late to be valid . There is no indication , however , that the nomination was serious . George Washington would not have been eligible for that office , in any case , as he was foreign @-@ born . There have been several " American Party " s in history ? it is unclear if the nomination was a particular satire on any so @-@ named movement at the time .

That 's the fellow . He has put one over on us . He has a barrel of money ? enough to run a slambang campaign . Why , don 't you remember , he just bought that \$ 100 @,@ 000 mansion from Albert Feltman on Prospect Park West . He 's learned a lot about politics by being a neighbor of Senator Calder and George Hamlin Childs . And when you come to think of it , that American Party stuff is good campaign dope this year , what with all the Bolsheviki and the Government after the Reds and the row about the League of Nations , and all that . We 've been overlooking something for sure .

= = Invention and business = =

George Washington held over two dozen patents , in the fields of hydrocarbon lamps , cameras , and food processing . He was not the first to invent an instant coffee process , David Strang in New Zealand had the first patent in 1890 (Number 3518) for instant or soluble coffee and was sold under the name Strangs Coffee , another was chemist Satori Kato 's work was a precursor , among others , but Washington 's invention was the first effort that led to large scale commercial manufacture . There is some suggestion that he was inspired by seeing dried powder on the edge of a silver coffee pot while in Guatemala . Federico Lehnhoff Wyld , a German @-@ Guatemalan doctor , along with Eduardo T. Cabarrus , also developed an instant coffee process about this time , which he later marketed in Europe ; as Wyld was Washington 's personal physician , there is some suggestion that their discoveries were not independent .

Washington 's product was first marketed as Red E Coffee (a pun on " ready ") in 1909 , and the G. Washington Coffee Refining Company was founded in 1910 . Washington 's first production plant was at 147 41st Street in Brooklyn 's Bush Terminal industrial complex . The company later moved operations to New Jersey , acquiring the land for the new plant at 45 East Hanover Avenue in Morris Plains in 1927 .

Advertising for the company 's product often emphasized its supposed convenience , modernity , and purity . It was claimed to be better for digestion , and even that the " pure " coffee did not have the wakefulness effect of coffee from ground beans (a direct effect of caffeine content , present in

both forms). After World War I ended , the American military 's use of the coffee became another selling point . A different avenue for promotion came when the company sponsored The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes radio series on NBC and its Blue Network from 1930 to 1935 , which started with Dr. Watson welcoming listeners to his recollections told by " a blazing fire and a cup of G Washington brewing " . Other radio sponsorships were for O 'Henry Stories (1932 , NBC Blue) , Professor Quiz (1936 , CBS) , Uncle Jim 's Question Bee (1936 ? 39 , NBC Blue) , and Surprise Party (1946 ? 47 , CBS) .

But the early instant coffee was also often considered of poor quality , of disagreeable taste , and little more than a novelty product .

Washington experienced some tax trouble with federal authorities , concerning the financial relationship between himself and his company . In November 1918 , he contracted with the company for the use of his trade secrets in the manufacture of the coffee , and a month later gave a four @-@ fifths stake in this to his immediate family . The Washingtons insisted that taxes needn 't be paid on the family members ' income , and the case went first to the Board of Tax Appeals , and then to the Court of Appeals , which in 1927 ruled against the Washingtons by a two @-@ to @-@ one decision . A petition to the Supreme Court was not accepted .

Washington 's son , George Washington , Jr . , served for a time as treasurer of his father 's company , and , like his father , dabbled in invention , patenting a widely used photoengraving process for newspapers that was introduced by Fairchild Camera and Instrument in 1948 .

= = Military contracts = =

Washington 's at @-@ that @-@ time unique product saw major use as combat rations in World War I. Coffee consumption on the battlefield was seen as valuable since it gave soldiers a caffeine boost . E.F. Holbrook , the head of the coffee section of the U.S. War Department at the time , also considered it an important aid in recovery from mustard gas . It was employed by the Canadian Expeditionary Force from 1914 until the American Expeditionary Force entered the war in 1917 , and all production was shifted toward American military use . New , smaller producers also sprung up to meet the incredible level of demand from the Army , which in the final period of the war was six times the national supply .

The instant coffee achieved some popularity with the soldiers , who nicknamed it a " cup of George " . As the prime attraction was the caffeine boost , rather than the flavor , it was sometimes drunk cold .

American emergency rations in World War I consisted of a quarter ounce (7 grams) packet of double @-@ strength instant coffee , packed one per man in containers with multiple types of foods meant for twenty @-@ four men . Instant coffee was also used in reserve rations and trench rations . During World War II , the U.S. military again relied on Washington , but this time on an equal footing with the other major instant coffee brands that had emerged in the interwar period , most notably Nescafé , as well as the new companies formed to meet a renewed military demand .

= = Final years = =

G. Washington Coffee Refining Company was purchased by American Home Products in 1943 , and George Washington retired . The purchase of the company , which was mostly held by the family , was in exchange for 29 @,@ 860 shares (approx . \$ 1 @.@ 7 million) of American Home Products stock , at a time when American Home Products was in a period of intense buying , purchasing 34 companies in eight years . Clarence Mark , general manager of G. Washington , succeeded Washington in running the merged unit .

In Washington 's final years , he sold the " Franklin Farms " property , and lived in a home on New Vernon Road in Mendham .

He died three years after his company was sold , on March 29 , 1946 in Mendham , New Jersey , after an illness , at the age of 74 . His funeral was held three days later .

= = Legacy = =

G. Washington coffee was discontinued as a brand by 1961 , when Washington 's New Jersey plant was sold to Tenco , by then a division of The Coca @-@ Cola Company . The last remnant of the brand survives in G. Washington 's Seasoning & Broth , a sideline developed in 1938 . This brand was sold by American Home Products in 2000 , and , after passing through a couple of intermediaries , has been run by Homestat Farm , Ltd. since 2001 .

= = Patents = =