

## GOAL

Highlight how a person can engage their passion into historic preservation.

## OVERVIEW

Instructor presents information about Ann Pamela Cunningham and leads a reflection on how she used her passion to make change.

Snackable stories offer a new way for learners to connect with the material and provides a mental break from intense learning while still keeping them engaged in the content.

### SCHMEAR

Instructor shares Ann Pamela Cunningham's biography.

### REFLECT, CONNECT, SHARE

Instructor guides reflection with discussion questions.

## MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- Learning Resources:
  - Images related to Ann Pamela Cunningham (included)
  - Optional – printed biography of Ann Pamela Cunningham for learners

Instructor has the option to print 1 or multiple copies of these, based on set-up options below.

## SET-UP

### Option 1

Instructor gathers group into a standing circle. Instructor reads aloud the biography and passes the images through the group. Best as an ice-breaker, returning from a break, or reinvigorating people's energy during a lull or after a difficult section.

### Option 2

Instructor prints images with parts of the story printed on the back. In sequence, Instructor asks for volunteers to read sections aloud and share the images. This can be in a standing circle (best for options described in Option 2) or learners can remain where they are – best if learners seem engaged and comfortable taking initiative.

### Option 3

Instructor breaks learners into groups of 2 – 4. Each group gets one copy of the biography and images to read and observe together. Best when groups are comfortable working together.

## WALKTHROUGH

**Total time: 15 - 30 minutes**

**2 - 3 minutes** Instructor arranges learners and provides them with the necessary materials for various set-up options.

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**8 – 12 minutes** Instructor introduces the topic and instructs the group on their task:

**Option 1:** “Please listen to the story I share with you for the next few minutes. Make a mental note of about anything you find noteworthy or if you have questions.”

**Option 2:** “Now, we will learn about someone important in the history of preservation in the United States. Would anyone like to volunteer to read a couple of paragraphs to start? For everyone listening, please make mental notes of any questions you have or about anything you find noteworthy.”

**Option 3:** “In your group, you will see a few images and a biography of Ann Pamela Cunningham. Please read the biography together and observe the images. Discuss anything you find noteworthy or any questions you have.”

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**5 – 15 minutes** Instructor calls time. Then, ask the discussion questions for individuals or groups to share verbally:

- a. Think about how Ann turned values and belief. How did she turn it into action?
- b. What historic places do you value? What does it mean to you?

**ANNE PAMELA CUNNINGHAM**

Ann Pamela Cunningham was born in 1816 in Laurens County, South Carolina on Rosemont, her family's estate. Her parents Louisa and Robert were well entrenched in the upper-class societies of South Carolina, as well as Philadelphia and Alexandria. Cunningham's upbringing included every refinement deemed necessary for a young lady of the upper class; she received an education both at home and at fashionable boarding schools.

Among other activities during her adolescence, Cunningham was particularly fond of horseback riding. When she was in her late teens, Cunningham was thrown from a horse. While the exact details of her injuries remain unknown, the accident caused chronic pain for the majority of her life. To ease her pain, Cunningham received regular treatments from Dr. Hugh Hodge, a specialist in Philadelphia. Her mother regularly accompanied her to the city and returned to South Carolina by boat. One such voyage in 1853 inspired Ann Pamela Cunningham to undertake the work of her life.

To return to South Carolina, Cunningham's mother boarded a steamer on the Potomac River. Awoken in the dead of night at the sound of the ship's bell, Mrs. Cunningham witnessed the state of Mount Vernon as the ship steamed by. What she saw inspired her to write her daughter, "I was painfully distressed at the ruin and desolation of the home of Washington and the thought passed through my mind: Why was it that the women of his country did not try to keep it in repair, if the men could not do it? It does seem such a blot on our country!" Cunningham was inspired by her mother's sentiments and took up the cause of purchasing and restoring Mount Vernon.

Both Congress and George Washington's great-grandnephew, John Augustine Washington III, initially scoffed at the idea early in Cunningham's fundraising stages—tensions that would eventually erupt in the Civil War were already manifesting, and the country was in the midst of a financial panic. New hope arose when Charleston lawyer James Louis Petigru came to the Association's aid. Petigru drafted a new charter for the MVLA, which was passed by the Virginia Legislature. Cunningham and her constituents argued in favor of a second bill urging the state to acquire Mount Vernon (with the Association's funds), but the bill failed to pass in the Virginia Legislature.

Not to be dissuaded, Cunningham appealed to Washington. The MVLA no longer sought to act as a mediator between Washington and the state; with Cunningham at the helm as Regent, the Association would purchase Mount Vernon itself. Though Washington was

initially unwilling to sell the estate unless Virginia or the United States was interested, he subsequently wrote, "Under the circumstances, and believing that after the two highest powers in the country, the women of the land will probably be the safest, as they will certainly be the purest, guardians of a national shrine, I am willing so far to comply with your request." Cunningham had earned the owner's blessing, but now needed to continue raising funds.

By 1858, Cunningham and her Vice Regents had raised enough money to offer a down payment of \$18,000. On April 6, 1858, Cunningham, Washington, two vice-regents, and the Association's lawyers met in Richmond to sign the official terms of the transaction. According to the contract, the Association had four years to pay off the remaining \$182,000 balance, due February 22, 1862. After delivering the down payment, Cunningham busied herself with selecting additional Vice-Regents, raising funds, and publishing *The Mount Vernon Record*, a newspaper that chronicled the efforts of the Association and printed the names of every monetary contribution.

Mount Vernon, 2000s



Ann Pamela Cunningham

Mount Vernon Ladies Association





Mount Vernon Watercolor, 1796



Mount Vernon Photograph, 1858



### HELPFUL TIPS

- The set-ups are suggestions. Adapt as needed for the learners based on your reading of their comfort levels with sitting, standing, working individually, in groups, or speaking in front people.
- If people have more questions, they can visit the Mount Vernon website for more information.
- Snackable Stories help spark inspiration. They are not arduous mental tasks, intentionally.