

3/20/2018 Question of the Week

In 1777, Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, a staunch patriot, had her loyalty questioned after she took part in two treasonous incidents on the part of her husband, one of which involved delivering a questionable letter to which Revolutionary War general?

Answer: General George Washington

Born in Philadelphia in 1737 to Dr. Thomas Graeme and Anne Diggs, Elizabeth Graeme would become a noted poet and writer. The youngest of nine children, she lived with her family at their estate Graeme Park near Horsham, Pennsylvania.

In the 1760s, Graeme began holding gatherings she called "Attic Evenings," where she and other local leaders socialized and discussed current events. It was at one of these meetings in 1771 that she met Scottish immigrant and British sympathizer Henry Fergusson. Graeme's father did not approve of Fergusson, but the couple married in 1772.

During the Revolutionary War, Elizabeth met with controversy thanks to her loyalist husband. Henry asked her to ferry a treasonous letter from Revered Jacob Duché to General George Washington. (In the letter, Duché attempted to sway Washington into seeking peace with the British directly without the approval of Congress.) She also took part in a bribery attempt of an army major. These acts called into question her allegiance. Henry was later labeled a traitor and Graeme Park was confiscated. It took her three years for Elizabeth to regain control of the property. She lived at Graeme Park for the remainder of her life with good friend Eliza Stedman, and she continued her work as a published poet and writer. She died in Horsham in 1801.
