



When Manners Made History

A signature event is bringing the past to life

IN AN ERA WHERE CONVERSATIONS OFTEN HAPPEN BEHIND SCREENS and civility can feel like a forgotten art, one New Jersey nonprofit is quietly – and powerfully – bringing manners back to the center of American life.

Mannerly Traditions: Much More Than Please and Thank You is not about rigid rules or antiquated formality. It is about connection. About dignity. About honoring the women and men who shaped history through character, composure and courage – and inviting a new generation to do the same.

Founded by Mary Louise Bianco, affectionately known as “Mrs. Manners,” Mannerly Traditions grew out of a lifetime devoted to education, service and storytelling. Long before it became a nonprofit, manners were a way of life. Bianco credits her mother, Phyllis Goffredo – who would be more than 100 years old today – with instilling what she lovingly calls “lady training.” Summers and school breaks were spent learning how to greet others properly, speak respectfully and carry oneself with confidence and grace. Manners, she discovered, were not small things – they were tools for navigating the world.

At the heart of the organization today is inclusion. Mannerly Traditions specializes in teaching manners to children and adults with neurodiversity and disabilities – communities often overlooked or unintentionally excluded from traditional etiquette instruction.

“Manners are about acknowledging the person in front of you,” Bianco says. “It’s about engagement, not isolation.”

History, however, remains the organization’s most compelling classroom. Bianco is also a historical interpreter who portrays courageous women whose stories have too often been sidelined.

That passion led her to one of the most influential – and least understood – women in American history: Mary Ball Washington.

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Bianco began asking a simple question: Who raised George Washington?

It is no coincidence that George Washington, as a teenager, copied and studied *The Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation* – the first American book on manners. They were lessons first learned at home, under the guidance of a mother who understood that character is built long before history takes notice.

A legacy comes to life at Mannerly Traditions’ next signature event: **President George Washington’s 294th Birthday Bash**, held on Sunday, February 22 at the Moorestown Community House.



Tickets: Eventbrite



Tickets: Venmo



Tickets: \$55 Adults, \$25 Children under 10
Seating is limited. RSVP by January 22, 2026

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Part living-history performance, part celebration, part educational experience, the event honors Washington’s birthday while commemorating the nation’s Semiquincentennial. Bianco will portray Mary Ball Washington, joined by young George, played by 17-year-old Juilliard Pre-College student and Moorestown High School senior Ivan Denissov. Together, they will reminisce about George’s early years – before the presidency, before the portraits – when manners, music and moral grounding shaped the man he would become. Guests will enjoy patriotic songs, a buffet lunch, birthday cake, colonial reenactors and a mini museum display by the Historical Society of Moorestown.

At its core, Mannerly Traditions is about legacy. “Gifts may not be remembered,” Bianco quotes, “but good manners last a lifetime.” ■