

The Father of Our Country

As America's first president, George Washington set the standard by which all other presidents are measured. His strong leadership in the first years of America's history has had a lasting impact.

Born in Virginia in 1732, George Washington spent his early life working on his family's farm. At age sixteen, Washington worked as a surveyor. This job gave him a chance to study the American wilderness and make maps of the land. As an adult, Washington joined the army, where he gained experience leading other men.

After he resigned from the army, Washington spent many years in Virginia managing Mount Vernon, the home he shared with his wife Martha. Like many other colonists, Washington disliked the rules and taxes imposed by Britain. In 1776, the thirteen American colonies declared

their independence from Britain. They called themselves the United States of America. The Revolutionary War had begun.

George Washington served as general of America's military forces until 1783, two years after the United States had defeated Britain. The young country needed a strong leader. In 1789, Washington was elected to be the first president.

As the first president, Washington was responsible for organizing parts of the new government. Washington chose intelligent and respected men, including Thomas Jefferson, to serve as his advisors. This group would later become known as the president's Cabinet. Washington helped establish how the U.S. government would handle its work and get

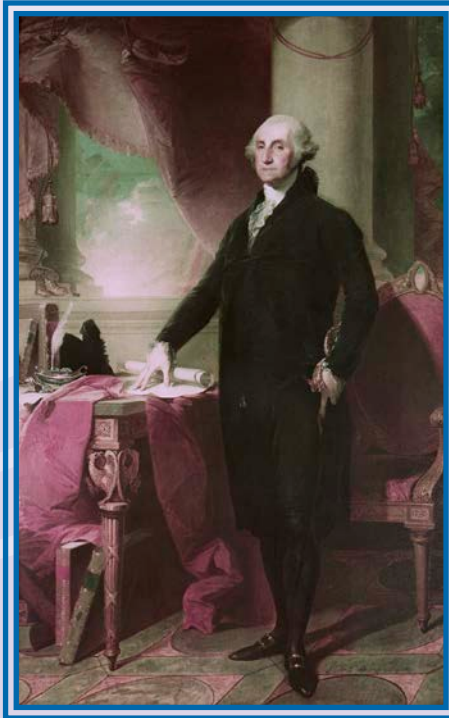


The inauguration of
George Washington

things done. Washington believed this would help the government be both effective and efficient. He supported the development of the judicial branch. This included a Supreme Court as well as a series of district courts.

Washington understood that his decisions and actions would have an impact on the future of the United States. He knew he would set the standard for future presidents. He carefully thought about everything he did. As president, he acted with fairness and integrity. He wanted to show Americans that their president could be a fair, reasonable ruler.

The country was in debt because of the long war. Washington quickly responded to the problem by finding ways to restore the nation's finances. A tax on whiskey was passed to raise money. However, some people were angry about the tax. A group of protesters in western Pennsylvania attacked the tax collectors. Washington showed his power as president by ordering troops to keep



order. Then he decided to travel to the town himself to evaluate the situation.

By 1793, Washington was ready to retire and return to Mount Vernon, but his advisors convinced him to stay for a second term. During his next four years in office, Washington effectively handled problems with other countries. When war broke

out between France and England, Washington kept America out of the war. He believed it was important for America to have time to grow stronger and develop as a country.

At the end of his second term in 1797, Washington returned to his farm. In 1799, at the age of sixty-seven, he died of a throat infection. Today, Americans honor Washington for helping to create a government that has lasted for more than two centuries.

DID YOU KNOW?

Washington helped select the location of the city that would one day become the capital of the United States. The city was named after Washington to honor him as the first president.