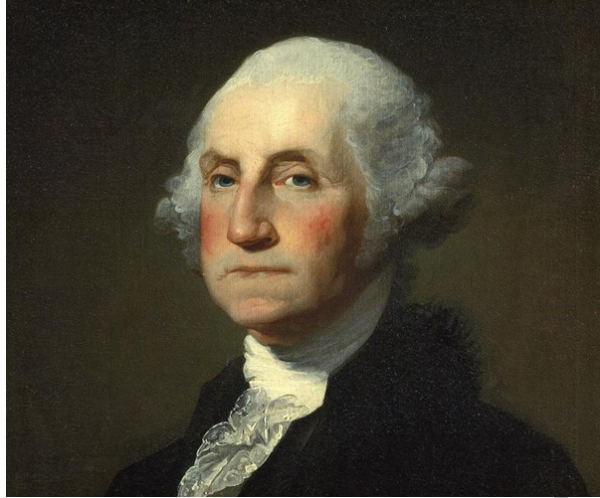


## **George Washington**



1st American President

Born: February 22, 1732

Birthplace: Pope's Creek, Westmoreland County, Virginia

Previous experience: Surveyor, farmer, delegate to Continental Congress, first Commander in Chief

Political party: Federalist

Term of office: April 30, 1789—March 3, 1797

Died: December 14, 1799

Some people wanted George Washington to be King George of the new United States. But Washington had just fought a long war to free America from a king's tight rule. He wanted no kings in America, and he wanted to set a good precedent as the nation's first leader. Very soon, the proper title for the nation's chief executive became "Mr. President."

Born on the family farm in Virginia, young Washington was raised on land which his great-grandfather, a native of England, had

## ***George Washington***

settled. At 15, he was a big-boned young man who was good in arithmetic; he became a surveyor. Later, he commanded the colony's soldiers guarding Virginia's frontiers against French and Indian raiders. When the raids developed into the French and Indian War, Washington became an aide to British General Braddock. At 27, he had married Martha Custis, a young widow with two children, and he looked forward to life as a gentleman farmer. Like many colonists, however, Washington suffered from British regulations and taxes, and he spoke out firmly against them.

And when the growing American resistance was met by British troops, America's Second Continental Congress called for military force. The Congress elected Washington to be Commander in Chief of the American forces. For seven long years, Washington held together his ragtag army—now slipping away from the enemy to launch a surprise attack; now retreating, in the winter cold, to Valley Forge. Many soldiers gave up and went home. But Washington hung on, losing more battles than he won. Eventually, with French aid, he forced the British to surrender.

Washington turned with relief to his beloved home and long-neglected farm at Mount Vernon, Virginia. But he realized that if the new nation was to be strong, it needed a binding contract with all the states. Washington called for a Constitutional Convention to meet in Philadelphia in 1787 to write the Constitution.

After the Constitution was approved by the states, the graying hero, 57 years old, was unanimously elected the country's first president. Washington chose two famous men to help him. Thomas

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Jefferson became America's first secretary of state and Alexander Hamilton the first secretary of the treasury.

At last, after serving two terms, a worn and weary Washington retired to Mount Vernon for good. As its first Commander in Chief, president, and founder, Washington had been a true father of our country, helping it grow from 13 separate colonies into a free nation.

### ***Important Events***

- Department of Foreign Affairs (State Department), Department of War, Treasury Department, Post Office Department, and Office of the Attorney General established (1789)

- First session of U.S. Supreme Court (1790)

- First U.S. census authorized (1790)

- District of Columbia established (1791)

- Vermont admitted as the 14th state (1791)

- First ten amendments to the Constitution—the Bill of Rights—ratified (1791)

- Kentucky admitted as the 15th state (1792)

- Cornerstone of the executive mansion laid (1792)

- Cornerstone of the Capitol laid (1793)

- Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin (1794)

- Tennessee admitted as the 16th state (1796).