

George Washington

200TH ANNIVERSARY

APRIL 30, 1989

**GEORGE
WASHINGTON:
JOURNEY TO THE
PRESIDENCY**

COMMISSION ON THE BICENTENNIAL
OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION
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On September 13, 1788, the Confederation Congress, in one of its last acts, authorized the states to select Presidential electors (as called for in Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution), for the purpose of electing the first President of the United States. By February 4, 1789 -- the date designated for voting -- 10 of the 11 states then in the Union had chosen electors. They met in their states and after voting sent the sealed ballots to New York City, the site of the first U.S. Congress. The ballots were to be officially counted as soon as the body convened for the first time -- which was scheduled for March 4, 1789.

When the Senate finally achieved a quorum on April 6, 1789, the electoral votes were counted. Every one of the 69 electors had cast one of their two votes for George Washington of Virginia, who therefore became President. John Adams of Massachusetts received 34 votes and became the first Vice President. Senator John Langdon, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, dispatched Secretary of Congress Charles Thomson to inform Washington of his election. On April 16, Washington left Mount Vernon by coach accompanied by his former aide-de-camp, Colonel David Humphreys, and Thomson. In a diary entry Washington described his departure from home: "I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity; and with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York." Upon Washington's arrival in New York City, the details of his inauguration were planned and the date was set for April 30, 1789.*

The week-long journey took Washington and his party through Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. Along the way, Washington visited with many friends from his days as Commander-in-Chief of the Army as well as those who took part in the Constitutional Convention. This publication recounts his journey as "We the People" commemorate the 200th anniversary of the inauguration of our first President.

*Until the 12th Amendment was ratified in 1804, each elector voted for two people without specifying the vote for President and Vice President. The person who received a majority of votes became President; the person who came in second became Vice President.

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THE JOURNEY TO NEW YORK

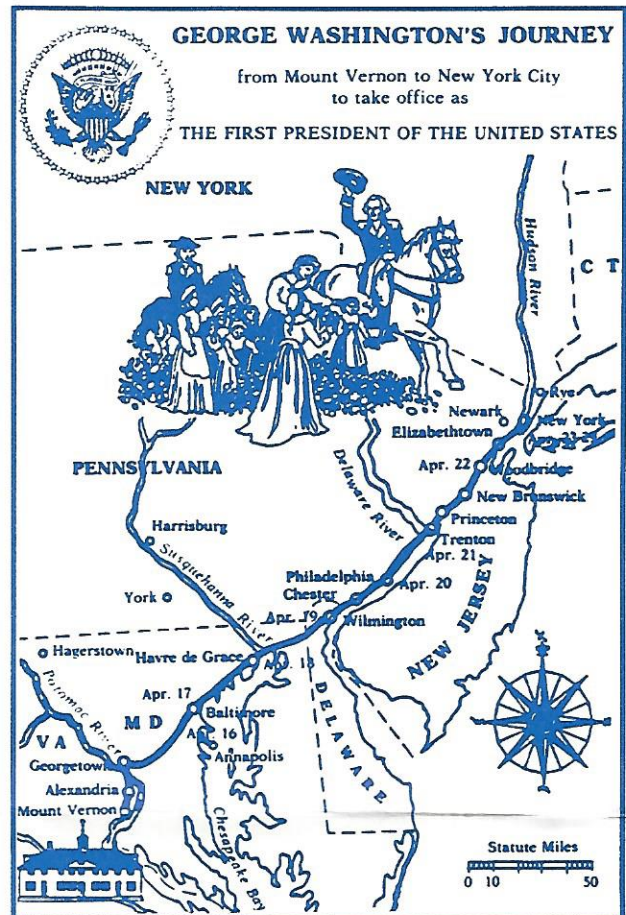
APRIL 16 Washington departs Mount Vernon about 10:00 a.m. with the Secretary to Congress, Charles Thomson, and his former aide-de-camp, Col. David Humphreys. Arriving in Alexandria about noon, he takes an early dinner at Wise's Tavern. After an address by the Mayor and 13 toasts, he is escorted up the Potomac and ferried across the river to Georgetown. He spends the night at Spurrier's Tavern, about 12 miles southwest of Baltimore.

APRIL 17 Although Washington resolves to start every morning at sunrise and travel the entire day, he finds he cannot disappoint the people who insist on the opportunity to praise their leader or at least catch a glimpse of him. His trip becomes a triumphal procession through the mid-Atlantic states. As he moves toward Baltimore, Washington is met by a large party of "citizens on horseback" and is conducted, with a cannon salute, to Daniel Grant's Fountain Inn. (One of the "outstanding public houses in America," the inn boasted 6 parlors, 24 bedrooms, 3 kitchens, a laundry, an ice house and a barber's shop.) After a dinner and more greetings and addresses from the citizens of Baltimore and some of his former officers, he retires for the night.

APRIL 18 Washington departs Baltimore about 5:30 a.m., accompanied by a band of citizens and sent off with an artillery salute. After seven miles, he requests his escorts to return home, "thanking them in an affectionate and obliging manner for their politeness." He spends the evening in the vicinity of Havre de Grace.

APRIL 19 On Sunday, Washington travels toward Wilmington and arrives in the evening. Because it is the Sabbath, the town is not illuminated as had been proposed; instead, a vessel has been decorated to commemorate his crossing of the Delaware River. He spends a relatively quiet night.

APRIL 20 After several addresses to and from the officials and citizens of Wilmington, Washington is accompanied by a mounted escort to the Pennsylvania line. There he is met by a contingent of Philadelphians, among them several of his compatriots from the Revolutionary War.



APRIL 20 (cont.) Reaching Chester at 7:00 a.m., Washington stops for breakfast and a brief address. Upon his departure, he mounts a white horse, provided so that the citizens of Philadelphia would have "an unobstructed view of the General" as he rides into the city. About noon, the procession, which has greatly increased in size, reaches Gray's Ferry Bridge on the Schuylkill River. The bridge has been decorated, under the direction of the Gray Brothers and Charles Willson Peale, with laurel, evergreens, state flags and banners, and at each end a classical arch, "emblematic of the ancient triumphal arches used by the Romans." As Washington passes under one of the arches, a child lowers a crown of laurel over his head. Thousands of spectators witness the crossing and at least 20,000 line the road from the bridge to Philadelphia. Washington is greeted by discharges of artillery and salutes from the ships in the river and is escorted to City Tavern. There he dines with a party of 250 and is entertained with band music, toasts and more artillery salutes. Before retiring to the home of Robert Morris, he enjoys a fireworks display.

APRIL 21 After addressing five different committees, Washington departs Philadelphia in the rain for Trenton. Crossing the Delaware at Colvin's Ferry, he is met by a company of infantry and a large group of citizens from Trenton. Again mounting a white horse, he is escorted to a bridge over Assunpink Creek. An arch of greenery 12 feet long and 20 feet high, supported by 13 columns, spans the entrance. It is topped with a large artificial sunflower, "designed to express the sentiment or motto 'To you alone.'" While crossing the bridge, Washington is welcomed by a group of women and girls who sing an ode and strew flowers in his path. Washington later wrote the ladies of Trenton that their "gratulatory song [has] made such impressions on [my] remembrances as . . . will never be effaced." After a dinner and reception at Samuel Henry's City Tavern, Washington (apparently) spends the night in Trenton.

APRIL 22 Washington leaves at sunrise and breakfasts at Princeton. There he receives an address from the president and faculty of Princeton College and the citizens of the town, followed by a brief ceremony. Departing with a military escort he travels toward New Brunswick, where he is met with a federal salute from artillery, the ringing of church bells and a welcoming band procession. The troops form a line down the main street for Washington to review. After dinner, he is conducted by Governor William Livingston and a crowd of citizens to Woodbridge where he lodges for the night.

APRIL 23 Washington leaves Woodbridge with his military escort and proceeds toward Elizabeth Town. He is received with a militia salute and stops at the home of Elias Boudinot, where a joint committee from Congress waits to escort him to New York. After breakfast, nearly the entire population follows Washington to Elizabeth Town Point. There, at about noon, he and the committee members board a specially prepared barge to carry the President-elect to New York City. The ceremonial barge has a keel of 47 feet, 13 oars on either side and is festooned with red curtains. The 13 pilots are dressed in white smocks and fringed, black caps. Six additional barges, carrying other dignitaries, accompany him; and as the flotilla enters New York Harbor it is joined by other vessels, including a Spanish sloop of war and a British packet.

APRIL 23 (cont.) Amid gun salutes, tuneful odes and cheers from thousands of New Yorkers along the shore, Washington arrives at Murray's Wharf at the foot of Wall Street at about 3:00 p.m. After a welcome by Governor Clinton, a military escort of light infantry and grenadiers cuts a passage through the dense throng. Washington proceeds on foot with Governor Clinton and other dignitaries to the Franklin House where he will reside. The evening closes with dinner and a fireworks display.

APRIL 24-29 Washington receives numerous visits from well-wishers. Meanwhile, Congress makes arrangements for his inauguration into office and debates a proper title for the incoming President. Some favor "His Most Benign Highness." Washington prefers no undue attention to the matter. In honor of Washington's wishes, the title of "President of the United States" was finally chosen.

APRIL 30 INAUGURATION DAY

The morning begins with a firing of artillery from Ft. George and the ringing of church bells for half an hour. Washington is dressed in a suit of brown broadcloth spun at Hartford -- in honor of American industry -- the buttons of which display a wing-spread eagle. At 12:30 p.m. a military escort arrives at Franklin House to accompany Washington to Federal Hall. The ceremonial procession includes a parade of troops, artillery, light infantry, Scottish Highlanders in traditional garb, city officials, the heads of the federal departments and the joint committee of Congress. Washington travels in a state coach pulled by four horses.

INAUGURATION CEREMONY

When the procession arrives at Federal Hall, Washington proceeds to the Senate Chamber where the two Houses of Congress await him. After John Adams greets the President-elect, Washington is escorted to the outer balcony in front of the Senate Chamber. The balcony is bedecked with a canopy and with curtains of red and white and is furnished with a table, a Bible and an arm chair. Chancellor Robert Livingston, who is dressed in a black suit and his official robe, administers the oath and Washington, his right hand on the Bible, responds "I swear, so help me God." Livingston then turns to the cheering crowd below and proclaims, "Long live George Washington, President of the United States."

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Reenact through role play with classmates the inauguration ceremony at Federal Hall, April 30, 1789.
- Research historical monuments to George Washington; make a photographic / pictorial display.
- Prepare a chart showing Presidents and Vice Presidents from George Washington to President George Bush.
- Research the life of Martha Washington; research the lives of the other First Ladies.
- List the Constitutional qualifications for the President; discuss changes in the Constitution relating to the Presidency.
- Research the life of Samuel Fraunces (chief steward of Washington's household); research the lives and activities of people who worked for Washington at Mount Vernon.
- Select your favorite President or First Lady; pretending that you are that person, answer questions from the class about "your" life; dress in appropriate costume.
- Prepare a display chart showing how a President was elected in 1789 and how elections take place today.
- Research the lifestyles and daily activities that took place at Mount Vernon in 1789; in your community in 1789; in your family in 1789.
- Visit a museum or historic site that has exhibits or programs on life in the 18th-century.
- Display artifacts and replicas of items from 1789; discuss and demonstrate their uses.
- Compare schooling practices of 1789 with schools of today.
- Discuss popular games and home entertainment in the 18th century. Play a colonial parlor game, such as charades, or an outdoor game, such as marbles.
- Draw a map of Washington's journey to New York; research and graphically depict activities along the way.
- Draw a map of Mount Vernon; label each building and indicate what activities took place there.
- Research travel in the eighteenth century -- types of transportation, roads, country inns, etc.

HOME ECONOMICS

- Make a colonial costume that might have been worn by a man, woman or child in 1789.
- Compile colonial recipes; prepare a colonial meal.
- Discuss how home-making activities, such as cooking and sewing, have changed since 1789.
- Research the use and importance of herbs in 1789; prepare a potpourri mixture reminiscent of the times.
- Discuss the history of quilting in America; quilt a pillow, wall hanging or pot-holder.

MUSIC

- Learn songs sung at the time of George Washington.
- Prepare a short band program of music from 1789.
- Write your own song or jingle saluting our first President.

ART

- Design a bulletin board showing changes in American life, 1789-1989.
- Make a diorama depicting George Washington as President; people, activities or events of 1789.
- Design a poster commemorating the 200th anniversary of the First Inauguration; a salute to George Washington; a salute to all American Presidents.
- Make a colonial toy, kite, doll, puppet or musical instrument.
- Draw a cartoon depicting the inauguration or an event from Washington's life as President; draw a caricature of a favorite President.
- Look for modern images of George Washington. What kind of qualities do you think the artists are trying to portray? What kinds of values and beliefs are associated with those images?