

George Washington

At the funeral for George Washington in 1799, General Henry “Light-Horse Harry” Lee said Washington was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” The Virginia planter-turned-soldier proved his leadership skill during the American revolution and the postwar efforts to build a new Washington as the first United States President.

Washington was not the smartest leader of the revolutionary era. And some military officers questioned his battlefield tactics. Yet Washington commanded respect. He fought bravely and inspired confidence in the people around him. He also believed he and other Americans had a duty to serve the greater public good instead of seeking personal gain.

Washington’s military career began in 1753. The next year, he led a group of soldiers against a small force of French scouts. The battle marked the start of the French and Indian War. During the American revolution, he served as commander in chief of the Continental Army. Washington overcame frequent shortages of men and supplies to lead the Americans to victory.

In 1787, Washington was chosen as the president of the CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. He supported the strong national government created by the Constitution and easily won the first Presidential election held under it in 1789. He then helped define the position for the presidents who followed him. Washington asserted the president’s right to conduct foreign policy, limited Congress’s influence. He also added the last words now spoken by all presidents as they take the oath of office: “...so help me God.” Most importantly Washington helped Americans trust the new Constitution, the U.S. government, and the presidency itself.

Many books have been written about Washington’s roles as general and president. And these web sites have information on the man called the Father of His country.

- The Papers of George Washington
 - <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/>
- The president of the United States (POTUS) page on Washington
 - <http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/gwashington.html>