

Washington Administration 1789-1797

Name: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

The Election



The Electoral College unanimously elected George Washington to the presidency of the United States of America on February 4, 1789.

He took the oath of office on April 30, 1789, at Federal Hall in New York City, the current capital of the United States of America.

Washington described going to his inaugural as a criminal going to his execution. He had enough of public life and wanted to retire to his home at Mount Vernon.

Yet Washington knew that he was the symbol of the country; the one link holding all thirteen states together. His honesty, virtue, modesty, wisdom, and bravery were legendary, but he also understood symbolism. Washington allowed himself to be painted time and again so that his image could be seen across the country. He visited every state in the country to meet the leaders and citizens, often riding into town on a white horse, creating a larger than life image. Through these carefully planned celebrations, he became a national symbol that held America together.

1. Washington became (circle one)

- e. the first king of America
- m. a symbol of unity
- y. a member of Congress

Washington the Man

Washington was an ambitious man in his early years. He wanted wealth and respect in order to be accepted by Virginia high society. Washington believed to succeed in life a person must be modest,

polite, and respectful of others. First impressions were very important; therefore, manners and appearance mattered. He spent his life trying to keep his explosive temper under control. Washington tended to keep only a few close friends at any time. To others his personality seemed cold and distant. Like many Southerners, he definitely believed the upper class was better than everyone else. Nonetheless, the entire country worshipped the man who became the first president.

Setting Up the Government

One of the first jobs was to determine what to call the president. John Adams, the Vice President, suggested the title "His Highness the President of the United States." Washington liked the title "His High Mightiness." In the end, Washington decided on "Mr. President" and the title has remained ever since.

Important legislation passed during the Washington Administration. In September 1789, Congress created the Department of the Treasury to deal with financial matters, headed by Alexander Hamilton; the Department of War to deal with military matters, headed by Henry Knox; the State Department to deal with foreign relations, headed by Thomas Jefferson; and the Attorney General to give legal advice and prosecute law suits, headed by Edmund Randolph. The Judiciary Act of 1789 created the federal court system.

In December 1791, the states ratified ten amendments to the Constitution known as the Bill of Rights guaranteeing the rights of American citizens.

The new nation suffered from a large national debt left over from the Revolutionary War. Washington's Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton,

solved the problem by passing tariffs, getting new foreign loans, and putting a sales tax on whiskey. To get support for his program from the southern states, Hamilton agreed to support building the nation's capital, to be called Washington DC, on the Potomac River. In addition, Washington signed a bill to create a national bank to help coin money, pay debts, and aid business growth. Some claimed the bank was unconstitutional because the Constitution failed to mention any power given to the federal government to create a bank in the first place.

2. To gain southern support for his program, Alexander Hamilton agreed to... (circle one)

- e. protect slavery
- m. move the bank north
- y. build Washington DC on the Potomac River

3. The purpose of the national bank was to... (circle three)

- e. aid business growth
- h. coin money
- p. expand government
- o. pay debts
- w. run American business

Foreign Issues

On July 14, 1789, the French people attacked the Bastille, a fort often used as a prison for political prisoners, to acquire its gunpowder stores. Inspired by the American Revolution and its ideals of democracy, the French masses overthrew its monarchy and in 1793 executed King Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette. This execution scared and angered monarchs throughout Europe and

caused Britain and other European powers to declare war on France.

France asked America for help to fight the British, but President Washington wanted to avoid war because it was expensive and Americans were passionately divided on who to support: Britain or France. To keep domestic peace, Washington passed the Proclamation of Neutrality stating that the United States would not take sides in the war.

Nonetheless, Britain began seizing American ships carrying cargo to France, prevented American trade with the West Indies, and continued to occupy forts on American land in the west. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Jay, went to Britain to discuss avoiding a war with that country. The result was Jay's Treaty (1795). Britain agreed to remove troops from the Northwest Territory and to pay for seized American ships. America agreed to pay pre-1776 debts owed to British merchants and gave Britain normal trading rights. Also, a commission was created to determine the border between America and Canada.

4. The American Revolution inspired a revolution in... (circle one)

- e. Britain
- m. France
- y. Holland

5. Britain violated America by... (circle three)

- e. attacking American cities
- h. seizing American ships
- p. breaking off relations
- o. building forts in America
- w. cutting off U.S. trade in the West Indies

Domestic Problems

Domestic problems plagued Washington as well. Farmers in western Pennsylvania were angry over the tax on whiskey. Five hundred of them began an armed protest, threatening revolution. Washington led 13,000 soldiers into Pennsylvania to put down the protest. Halfway there, however, Washington became disgusted with the whole business and secretly turned back but left Alexander Hamilton in charge. The rebels fled before the army arrived. Unlike Shays' Rebellion of a few years before, the federal government showed it could and would put down any threat to the peace.

On the frontier, several Indian tribes, including the Shawnee and Miami, were fighting with settlers in the Northwest Territory. After several American defeats, General Anthony Wayne was victorious at the Battle of Fallen Timbers on August 20, 1794. In the Treaty of Greenville (1795), the Indians agreed to give up parts of modern-day Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois and to move west beyond the frontier settlements. In return, they received \$20,000 in trade goods.

6. Why was putting down the Whiskey Rebellion important? (infer, circle one)

- e. it showed the strength of the new government
- m. it made Hamilton a hero
- y. Britain supported the rebellion

Treaties

Washington signed other important treaties. The Treaty of San Lorenzo (October 27, 1795) established the western and southern borders between Spain and the United States. The treaty also gave America navigation (water travel) rights on the Mississippi River. This provided

America a faster and cheaper way to move goods from one part of the country to another.

In the Treaty of Tripoli, signed in 1797, the United States agreed to pay a tribute (protection money) each year to keep American ships from being attacked by the Barbary pirates—North African Muslim states that regularly attacked ships and took hostages to ransom¹. For most European countries, it was easier to pay tribute than to fight. Without a strong navy and now lacking the protection of the British Empire, the United States chose to pay.

Leaving Office

Despite pleas from friends, politicians, and citizens, Washington refused to run for a third term. He took offense to some of the criticism aimed at him, complained of a failing memory, and wished no further aggravation. While he took the Federalist Party position in most cases, he disliked political parties. In his farewell speech in September of 1796, he said Americans should look beyond their differences and be united as a people, respect the Constitution and make changes to government only through amendments and not rebellion, keep political parties from power because they will work to take power away from the people and give it to themselves, and avoid foreign alliances as they will draw the United States into needless wars.

7. What advice did Washington give in his farewell speech? (circle four)

- e. respect the Constitution
- h. limit terms for office
- p. avoid political parties
- o. remain united
- w. avoid taking sides with foreign nations

¹ Money paid for the release of people taken prisoner.