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George Washington

George Washington began his leadership efforts as an adjutant for the southern district of Virginia. Throughout his career, he was a well-respected military fellow but is ultimately known as the first president of the United States of America. George was born in February 1732 in Westmoreland County, Virginia. Although little is known about his early life, the first president’s military and political career is the most notable.

Washington was born to Augustine and Mary Ball Washington of Virginia. Augustine was known as a businessman who made his living by acquiring land, building mills, and opening iron mines. The Washington family primarily resided on Ferry Farm, a plantation near Fredericksburg, Virginia where George spent the bulk of his youth. Unfortunately, when George was 11 his father passed away and George took over the role as man of the house helping his mother care for the plantation (Mullen et. al, 2009). Washington excelled in mathematics and with his skills became a successful surveyor eventually saving enough money to buy land of his own. However, in 1752 after the untimely passing of his older half-brother Lawrence George inherited his estate, Mount Vernon, in Alexandria, Virginia.

Towards the end of 1752, Washington’s military career began when he was made a commander of the Virginia militia. He went on to fight in the French and Indian War and is noted for being a pivotal person in the wars beginning. Washington was a part of a team that lead the May 28, 1754, surprise attack on commander Coulon de Jumonville killing him and nine of his men (Graff & Nevins, 2024). This attack began the French and Indian War. During the French and Indian War, Washington is most noted for his strength and perseverance through sickness and efforts to rally troops. After the death of General Braddock, Washington helped bring back his troops and was rewarded by being appointed commander of all Virginia troops at only 23 years old in 1755. Unfortunately, 2 years later in 1757, Washington fell ill with dysentery and the physician ordered him home to Mount Vernon. Washington returned to war in 1758 after a full recovery. The timeline of Wahington’s movement becomes a little foggy at this point as he was apart of the march on Fort Duquesne, but after his appointment to the House of Burgesses he resigned from the military with the honorable title of brigadier general. During the years between the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War Washington was a devout farmer. He expanded Mount Vernon from 2000 to 8000 acres that contained five farms and hosted a wide variety of crops and animals. He grew wheat and corn, maintained several successful fruit orchards, bred mules, and ran a fishery (Mullen et. al, 2009). However, once the Revolutionary War began Washington quickly rose in the ranks.

During the Revolutionary War, Washington was not known for his battlefield tactics but for his innate ability to bring the army together and give untrained and poorly educated soldiers willpower, direction, and motivation (Mullen et. al, 2009). During the second Continental Congress, the first task they agreed upon was finding someone to permanently lead this force. According to the Graff and Nevins, “On June 15, Washington, whose military counsel had already proved invaluable on two committees, was nominated and chosen by unanimous vote. Beyond the considerations noted, he owed being chosen to the facts that Virginia stood with Massachusetts as one of the most powerful colonies; that his appointment would augment the zeal of the Southern people; that he had gained an enduring reputation in the Braddock campaign; and that his poise, sense, and resolution had impressed all the delegates.” (Graff & Nevins, 2024). The War lasted eight years in which the Americans won few battles, but in in 1781 under the direction of Washington and with aid from the French the colonists captured British troops and won the Battle of Yorktown effectively ending the war and earning Washington the title of national hero. Washington had no intention of continuing her military or political career, but upon his invitation to the Constitutional Convention and being asked to head the committee tasked with drafting said constitution Washington impressed fellow attendees and was soon named the most qualified man to become the nation’s first president (Mullen et. al, 2009). Washington was inaugurated on April 30, 1789, in New York City because what we now know as the nation’s capital, Washington D.C., was not yet built. As the first president, Washington was aware that the actions he took would dictate political doings from that point forward. He ran his office with fairness and integrity. During his presidency, Washington is most noted for his part in nominating the first Chief Justice of The Supreme Court, establishing the first national bank, and creating his presidential Cabinet (Mullen et. al, 2009). After two presidential terms, Washington returned to Mount Vernon in 1796. After only three short years at home Washington passed in December of 1799 due to a throat infection that resulted from a cold. He was laid to rest at Mount Vernon which was designated a national landmark in 1960 (Mullen et. al., 2009)

The United States of America’s first president lovingly was deemed the “Father of His Country” and his face can be seen everywhere today. Students everywhere learn about George Washington every day, he is on the dollar bill, carved into Mount Rushmore, and in every history book in every school across America. George Washington is truly one of the great pioneers of America and is a pillar in creating the country we know today. “It is unquestionable that Washington’s strength of character, his ability to hold the confidence of army and people and to diffuse his own courage among them, his unremitting activity, and his strong common sense constituted the chief factors in achieving American victory.” (Graff & Nevins, 2024)

References

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