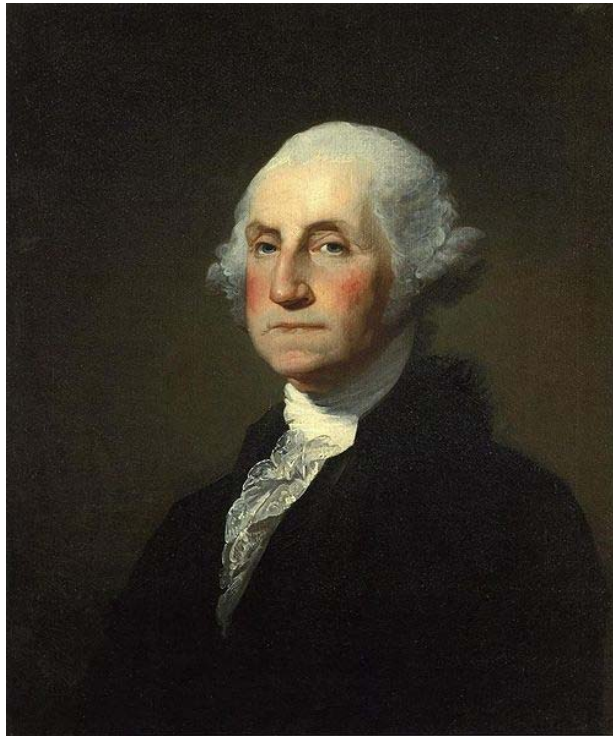


U.S. Presidents George Washington



George Washington is **regarded**¹ as the Father of Our Country. He guided America and helped it **evolve**² into the nation that it is today. Before becoming president, Washington led the Continental Army to victory, winning American independence from Britain during the Revolutionary War. After the war ended, he was a key player at the **convention**³ that drafted the United States Constitution. Finally, as president, Washington's leadership solved many problems. It showed people that the Constitution could work to govern a new nation.

America was a very different place back in Washington's time. The nation was small and weak. There were only 11 states in the U.S. when Washington took office. When he left after two terms there were 16. The country only stretched as far as the Mississippi River. Most people farmed and struggled to make a living. Many children never went to school. Most adults could not read or write. Communication and transportation were slow and difficult. It took days for Washington to travel the distance covered in a couple of hours by car today.

¹ **regarded** – thought of, considered

² **evolve** – to develop gradually

³ **convention** – a meeting arranged for a special purpose

Most Americans loved Washington for the way he handled hardship. As a general, he lost many battles and suffered greatly. Washington never gave up, even during the bitter winters when he and his troops had barely enough food or supplies to survive. Washington's officers admired his loyalty and strength so much that they wanted to make him king. Washington refused.

Today, George Washington is honored in many ways. His face adorns America's dollar bill and its quarter. Both Washington state and our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., are named after the first president. The bridge that stretches across the Hudson River from New Jersey to New York is named the George Washington Bridge. It is located exactly where Washington crossed the Hudson with his troops to defeat British forces. Perhaps one of Washington's officers expressed America's feelings about Washington best: "He was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."