

GEORGE WASHINGTON



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I was born on a farm in Virginia on February 22, 1732. My father was Augustine Washington and my mother was Mary Ball Washington. I had two older half-brothers, and three brothers and two sisters who were younger. I didn't have much of a chance to go to school but I loved to read, and I learned a lot from reading military history, geography, and agricultural books.

My father died when I was eleven years old. When I was fifteen, I went to live with my half-brother Lawrence at his beautiful home, Mount Vernon. I was tall and strong, and I was good at playing games. For fun I went on fox hunts and swam in the Potomac River that flowed past Mount Vernon.

Lord Fairfax was a neighbor of mine, and he was a real gentleman. From watching him I learned good manners and how to be a gentleman. Lord Fairfax knew I liked to work, and he hired me to do some surveying when I was seventeen years old. I became a good surveyor with an interest in the development of western lands.

Lawrence, my half brother, died, and I inherited Mount Vernon. I was elected to the House of Burgesses in 1758 and helped govern Virginia. In 1759 I married a widow name Martha Custis.

England sent troops to Boston to see that the colonists paid their taxes. I was angry and agreed with many other colonists that it was time to break away from England. I was ready to do my share. It turned out that I was chosen to be Commander-in-Chief of the American army. Soon the Declaration of Independence was signed and the war began in earnest.

My army was small and there wasn't much money for uniforms or food. At times I used my own money to keep the war going. I kept busy trying to defeat the British from 1778 until 1783. Help from Lafayette of France brought an end to the war, and a new nation was born--The United States of America.

I wanted to stay at Mount Vernon with my family and be a gentleman farmer, but our new country wasn't doing well and I was chosen to be the leader of America. I had excellent helpers in the eight years I guided our new nation. Thomas Jefferson was Secretary of State and Alexander Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury. While I was president three new states were added to the original thirteen colonies – Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

During my presidency I established a mint for coining money. I also put down a revolt by some farmers in Pennsylvania. I kept the United States out of trouble with England when a war began between England and France. In 1797, after eight years as President, I was happy to turn over my job to the newly elected John Adams and go back to Mount Vernon.

I'm sure you've heard stories about my life. I understand that children's books will be written about my honesty, piety, hard work, patriotism, and wisdom. There will even be a story about me cutting down my father's cherry tree and how I couldn't tell a lie! I'd like to be remembered by one of my Army officer's comments: "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."