

General george washington. life of the commander in chief research paper

[History](#), [American History](#)



The life of George Washington before assuming presidency started like every other American's at that age and era. Born to a planter family in Virginia in 1732, he possessed total manners, knowledge and morals necessary to become a gentleman in his community just like thousands of other young men in Virginia.

His life took a unique direction when he pursued western expansion studies and military arts during his education. His career in the Military started taking shape in 1754, when he was appointed a lieutenant colonel. He participated in the French and Indian wars where he was General Edward Braddock's aide.

Historical sources from the government indicate that Washington was in the line of fire twice during the war. His closest escape was when a series of four bullets tore through his military jacket. In another encounter, (nps 4) indicates that two horses were shot from under him. Despite the close encounters, George Washington clearly gained valuable skills in the war that would help him later during America's fight for independence.

In addition to the French-Indian war George Washington also participated in the revolution movement between 1774 and 1775. Before the onset of the revolution, (nps 5) notes that Washington had served as a Virginia Burgess for 16 years. As a burgess, Washington was part of a team that oversaw the governance of colonies in Virginia.

In 1774 however, Washington was among other burgesses who opposed excessive taxes imposed on residents by the British colonialists. According to

the (nps 5), George Washington had settled back to an ordinary lifestyle as a planter, but was incensed by the exploitation that Americans suffered under the British merchants. He also loathed the restrictive British regulations and became a firm voice of resistance to the restrictions (The White House 42).

The onset of the revolutionary wars saw Washington take the battle front line once again. (The White House 42) notes that Washington was voted the Commander-in-Chief of America's Continental Army during the second continental congress held in Philadelphia.

Barely two months into his election on July 1775, had Washington led his poorly trained troops to the battle fields. Noting the weakness of his troop, Washington's strategy was to use brains to strategize rather than brawn, since the British army was stronger (Lengel 13). According to (nps 56), Washington also used the "element of surprise" to his advantage.

A point in case was the 1776 attack of the Hessian Troops. This attack occurred in Trenton, New Jersey and succeeded pushing the British troops out of New Jersey into New York. Although this was a brief success, (The White House 42) is of the opinion that Washington's skills and boldness managed to move the American troops across the icy Delaware River and into the subsequent actions that helped them recapture New Jersey.

Their success made the Americans more confident about their abilities to win the Independence war against the Britons. Ever strategic, Washington was quick to support fellow commanders of the American troops as seen in some of his letters to Major General Greene and other (Sparks 16)

George Washington's leadership skills came to the fore once again in 1777 when he re-organized the military departments in the troop that he led for purposes of improving services provided to the soldiers. It was apparent to Washington that the already weary troops needed rejuvenation from whatever quarters. Earlier, the troops had lived in a log-hut city, where they had taken expert training for purposes of improving their skills in the battle fields.

In June 1778, Washington led the Continental Army to a successful battle against the Britons in New Jersey (nps 2). This however was not the end of the way. Washington led the American troops for another five years, until they finally defeated the better-equipped and larger British troops led by General Cornwallis. This happened in October 1781 at Yorktown, where the major, but last revolutionary war battle occurred.

After the revolutionary war in 1783 to 1799, Washington went back to Mount Vernon and concentrated on restoring the farm which has considerably deteriorated in his absence. The American historical revolution war files notes that he traveled near the Ohio River to inspect his land.

Having become a popular figure in the national circles, it is noted that Washington recorded an increased number of visitors to Mount Vernon in his diary. During the constitutional Convention held in 1787, Washington was unanimously elected to the presiding officer post. Although he did not make significant direct contributions to the convention, his mere presence is

said to have given the proceeding some prestige (Lengel 36). Notably, Washington had become a respected war hero in America by then.

During the convention, Washington supported the idea of having a powerful central government. This time in Washington's life has been subject to much discussion. While some political analysts see Washington as a War hero who was "simply brought into the constitution convention to act and speak in his honorary capacity", some see him as a pro-active leader who took the lead in reforming the union (Ray 2007).

Although one can only deduct Washington's role in reforming the confederation from his actions, earlier in 1780 he has expressed his fears that the states in the confederation would at some point separate into 13 individual entities. He also feared that congress powers would decline thus losing the respect of a grand American representative body (Ray 207). The constitution was later submitted to individual states for ratification, after which Washington was unanimously elected the United States president in 1789 (Lengel 45)

George Washington took office of the presidency in April 1789. During his term, he laid the foundations of the presidency in America by ensuring that the executive structure that thrived during his presidency would accommodate other presidents in the future (The White House 46). He did this by establishing the judicial and executive branches of the government.

Having fought in the American Revolution War and knowing the pains of working under colonial masters, Washington was quick to guarantee the

survival of the US as an independent nation and sovereign power free from any outside influence. As suggested in the thesis of this research paper, Washington drew quite some lessons from his experiences in the battle fields during his two terms in the presidency.

When he first established the functioning of the federal government, Washington surrounded himself with consultants and supported who he vetted for knowledge and skill. Much like a commander and his lieutenants, Washington delegated most of the responsibilities of running the government to these people. After all, he trusted them to do a good job, and they did. He valued people's opinion, but the decisions would be solely made by him. This was the case with his cabinet, where he would hold cabinet meetings to discuss issues.

Based on opinions raised in such meetings, Washington would then make the final decisions. Just in military camps, solarnavigator. net defines Washington as a systematic, energetic and orderly president. He is further defines as decisive, an enthusiast of consistency and intent on achieving the general goals.

Having learnt the powers of togetherness and consolidating people during his days in the military, he toured the southern states in and New England states in an attempt to reconcile these two geographical regions.

Unfortunately, Washington did not succeed in mending the widening rivalry between leaders Thomas Jefferson from New England states and Alexander Hamilton from the Southern state. His support of fiscal policies proposed by

Hamilton, who was also the secretary of Treasury, earned him attacks from Jefferson's camp (The White House 42).

The rivalry between Hamilton and Jefferson followed Washington into his second term. Having been re-elected president in 1792, the war between France and England became a real test for Washington. France was an official ally to the United States, while Britain was the leading trading partner with the country.

Since he did not want to support either party, Washington maintained that America would remain neutral about the war. The Jefferson camp, was however pro-French, while the Hamilton camp supported Britain's cause. Just to reinforce his country's position, Washington issued a public statement on April 1793 declaring America's impartiality in the war. He further discouraged American citizens against sending any war materials or aid to the warring parties.

According to (nps 56), the president strongly believed that the right foreign policy was vital for the young nation that America was at the time. (nps 12) further suggests that George Washington's reasons for pleading America's neutrality during the British-French war, was out of concern that taking sides in the war would shatter America's new government right in the middle with some people supporting Jefferson while others supported Hamilton.

It's noteworthy that during his presidency, Washington would spend huge amounts of effort trying to reconcile the two factions. An observer can conclusively state that Washington was of the belief that people serving in

the same government could not afford to be divided because governance would suffer. The differences between Jefferson and Hamilton led to the birth of political parties in America.

Although reluctant at first to side with either Hamilton or Jefferson, Washington at some point had to throw caution to the wind and support Hamilton's fiscal policies, which promised to free America from a looming economic crisis and a large external debt incurred during the war (Lengel 47).

By following Hamilton's proposal, Washington's government established a central bank for purposes of funding the national debt and put in place a strong, but effective tax system. The tax system assured the government of continuous revenue, which would be pumped back to the society through services.

Even in presidency, Washington's days in the war field still had a grip on him. When Pennsylvania rebels defied federal power on taxes, Washington took his position at the head of the Military and managed to effectively use his presidential authority to quell the Whiskey rebellion (Archiving early America 42)

His restraint for war was evident when he started peace negotiations with Britain in order to avoid a recurrence of war between the two. The culmination of the exercise was the Jay Treaty that was signed in 1795. Although the Jefferson faction was opposed to the treaties ratification,

Washington was able to use the immense prestige he had in Congress to have the treaty ratified.

At a time when the house requested that Washington release all pertinent correspondence and documents for consideration before they could approve the funds necessary to enforce the treaty, Washington was resolute about the powers of the executive and their separation from the House of Representatives.

Being part of the Constitution convention that came up with the American constitution, Washington retaliated the mandate of the house of representatives and stated categorically that agreeing to their request for the documents and correspondence on the treaty would be tantamount to allowing the house overstep its mandate (nps 12). In his message to the House of Representatives, George Washington made it clear to representatives there in that their approval or lack of it would have no lasting consequence on the Jay treaty.

Washington further stated that the treaty had been submitted to Senate for advice and consideration, and therefore the request by the house was of no immediate or necessary consequence. In his conclusion, Washington called for the need for every government sector to stick to the boundaries as set forth in the constitution (nps 13).

In his non-compliance statement, it is evident that George Washington had a clear understanding of the constitution and its mandate to different arms of the government. Having been a delegate in the constitutional conventional

before going to the American Revolutionary War, it is logical why he had such a grip on the Constitution.

Washington left the presidency in March 1797, and although there were calls by his supporters to run for a third term, he honorably retired into his Vernon estate. By the time of his retirement, it is noteworthy that America's financial system was well on a success course.

More to this, the Indian threat that had existed to the east of Mississippi was almost resolved and the controversial Jay Treaty with the 1795 Pinckney's Treaty with Spain had succeeded in enlarging America's territory, while resolving diplomatic difficulties that had existed between America and the respective countries.

This was not only an advice to uphold political integrity, but a stern warning to Americans to keep off foreign interference. A nationalist to the core, Washington would accept the post of Army Commander a year after his retirement albeit reluctantly. During this time, the war with France looked imminent. He however did not take an active role in his post.

The life experiences of General George Washington in the Military forces had no doubt laid a firm foundation for him and fellow Americans. His days started as an inexperienced young American, who regardless of the power and stature of the opposing troops, mobilized his troops to soldier on. This gave him invaluable leadership skills, which he would later use in his days as president.

He also learnt negotiations skills as commander in the military. Even when his troops did not impress congress with their performance in the war, Washington had to plead his case for the troops to get more training, supplies and government support (Sparks 3). Over the years, his negotiation skills improved tremendously and he would convince congress that giving up or substituting him was no option. Such skills later helped him in his days as president.

Crossing the icy waters of the Delaware River to ambush the British troops and force them to retreat into New York was among the strategic highlights of George Washington in the Military. Although this success would closely followed by a failed attempt to capture New York, George Washington's acts have been revered as not only courageous, but giving hope to already despairing troops.

As one person eulogized him, George Washington lived the war, lived the peace and ensured that America's politics was set on the right foundation. His discipline and dedication to his country, the right institutions, separation of powers, sovereignty and political responsibility was no doubt a result of his life experiences, most of which were gained from his days in the Military.

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