

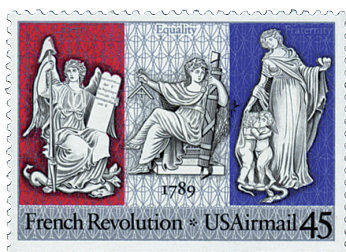
This Day in History... December 14, 1799

Death of George Washington

America's first president, George Washington, died on December 14, 1799. He served his country for 45 of his 67 years, and is remembered as the Father of our Country, hero of the American Revolution, and first president of the United States.

Having left school at age 11 because his family couldn't afford it, he's the only major founding father without a college education.

During the French and Indian War, two horses were shot out from under Washington, and his coat and hat had several bullet holes. And while he would lead Continental troops to several important victories, he lost more battles than he won during the Revolution.



In 1792, Washington was made an honorary citizen of France.

donkeys), which played a large role in Southern agriculture. He also bred several dog breeds including Dalmatians, English foxhounds, French hounds, greyhounds, Italian greyhounds, mastiffs, Newfoundlands, pointers, spaniels, and terriers.

Washington ran one of the largest and most successful commercial distilleries in the country. He produced a whiskey made from rye, corn, and barley, as well as apple, peach, and persimmon brandies and vinegar. The distillery shut down after Washington's death, but was rebuilt in 2007 and can be visited today.

Under his care, Mount Vernon grew from 2,000 acres to 8,000. In all, it had five farms, fruit orchards, and a fishery. His vegetable garden could feed 14 people.

After he left office, tensions grew with France. In 1798, President John Adams named Washington commander-in-chief of the US military, hoping his name would help increase recruits. Washington only served as an advisor, but was unhappy to be left out of the loop on the military situation.



Washington wrote 18,000-20,000 letters during his life.

Though widely revered today, Washington was highly criticized during the final years of his presidency for his neutrality in European conflicts. John Adams once cited that the presidential mansion was surrounded daily by people "demanding war against England, cursing Washington."

Washington had many brushes with death, both on and off the battlefield. He had diphtheria, tuberculosis, smallpox, malaria, dysentery, quinsy, carbuncle, and pneumonia, and once almost drowned in an icy river. Yet, it was epiglottitis, an infection in the back of his throat, that ultimately led to his death on December 14, 1799. Though curable by antibiotics today, the doctors of the day went to extremes to try to save the former president. This included burning him to remove the sickness and draining about 40% of his blood. Despite these harsh treatments, his final words were "'Tis well." Washington believed many before him had been buried alive and feared that for himself, so before his death, he instructed that he not be buried for three days.

Congress asked General Henry "Lighthorse Harry" Lee to deliver Washington's eulogy. Sixteen cannons boomed at dawn on the morning of December 26, 1799, and volleys continued every half hour throughout the day. A somber procession marched through Philadelphia, accompanied by a riderless horse escorted by two marines. General Henry Lee addressed a grieving audience that numbered more than 4,000. Of the fallen commander in chief, Lee said:

"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen, he was second to none in the humble and endearing scenes of private life. Pious, just, humane, temperate, and sincere – uniform, dignified, and commanding – his example was as edifying to all around him as were the effects of that example lasting. Correct throughout, vice shuddered in his presence and virtue always felt his fostering hand. The purity of his private character gave effulgence to his public virtues. Such was the man for whom our nation mourns."



A reprint of America's second postage stamp issued for the 1876 Centennial Exposition.



In 1776, Washington was made general of the Armies, the highest rank in the US military, so no one could ever outrank him.



Though we often see images of Washington with white powdered hair, his natural hair color was a reddish-brown chestnut.

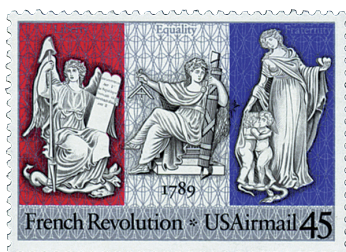
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