

Today in History - April 30

< April 30 >

Select date April 30



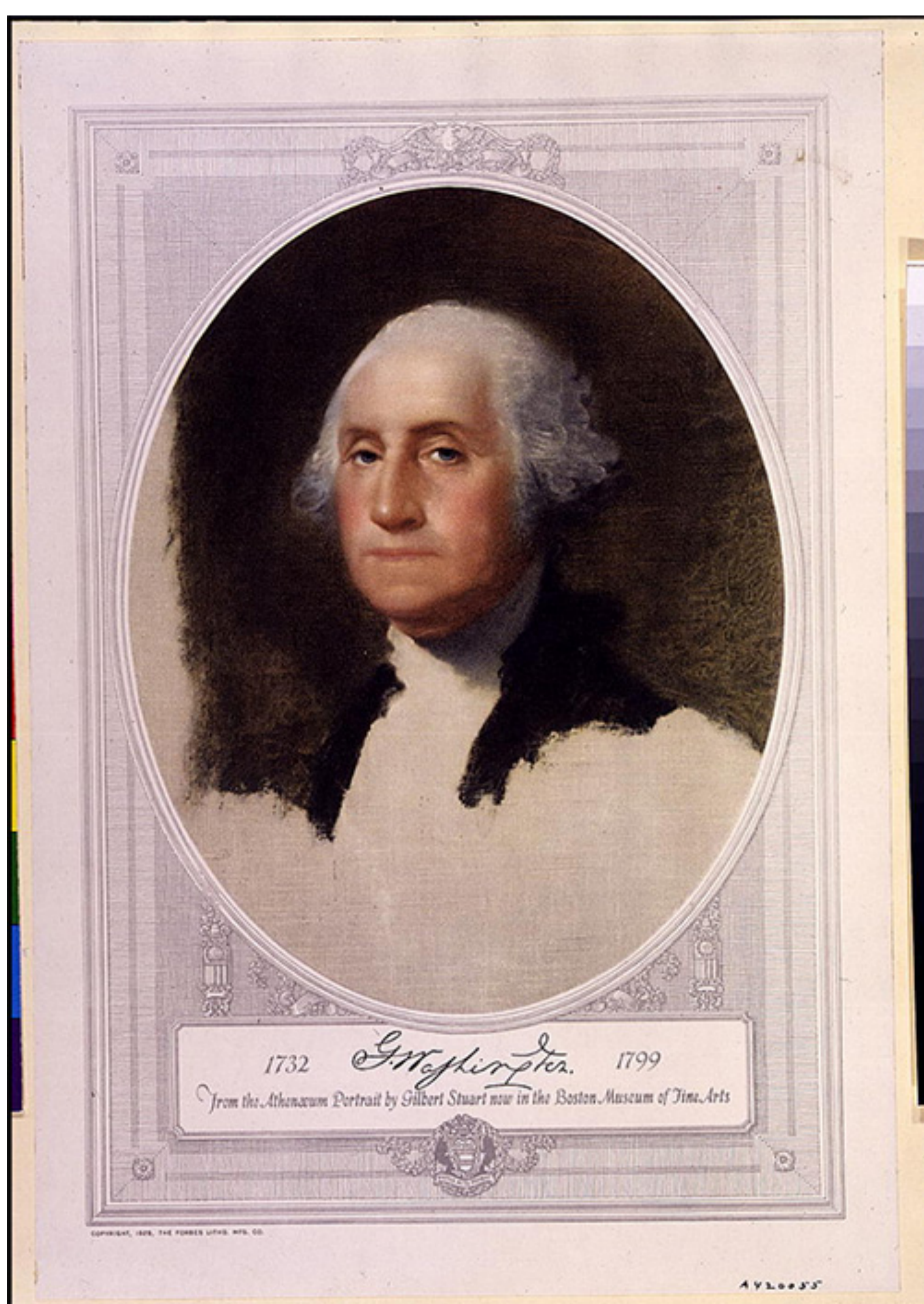
Go

Today's Stories: [George Washington's First Inaugural Address](#)

Listen to this page

George Washington's First Inaugural Address

On **April 30**, 1789, George Washington delivered his [first inaugural address](#) to a joint session of Congress, assembled in [Federal Hall](#) in the nation's new capital, New York City. The newly-elected president delivered the speech in a deep, low voice that betrayed what one observer called "manifest embarrassment." Washington had not sought the office of president and was humbled by the request to serve.



George Washington, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing slightly left. Gilbert Stuart, artist; Athenaeum portrait now in Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Forbes Litho. Mfg. Co., c1929. Prints & Photographs Division

Aside from recommending constitutional amendments to satisfy citizens demanding a [Bill of Rights](#), Washington confined his address to generalities. He closed by asking for a "divine blessing" on the American people and their elected representatives. In delivering his [address](#), Washington went beyond the constitutional requirement to take an oath of office and thus established a precedent that has been followed since by every elected president.

Two weeks before his inauguration, Washington had made an [emotional speech](#) to the citizens of his hometown, Alexandria, Virginia. He expressed regret at leaving his [Mount Vernon](#) estate where he had retired, and stated: "no earthly consideration, short of a conviction of duty, could have prevailed upon me to depart from my resolution, never more to take any share in transactions of a public nature." The reluctant leader served two terms in office.

Learn More

- [George Washington Papers](#) is an online collection at the Library of Congress of more than 65,000 documents (including correspondence, letterbooks, commonplace books, diaries, journals, financial account books, military records, reports, and notes). Search the collection by keyword or browse the [letterbooks](#) and [financial papers](#) by date. The [Timeline](#) and [Essays](#) provide context for the papers and serve as a means of viewing many of the most significant documents.
- Search [Today in History](#) on *George Washington* to read a variety of features about the life of the first president, including his birthday and his experience at Valley Forge.
- Browse the online guide [U.S. Presidential Inaugurations: A Resource Guide](#) to learn more about events surrounding each inauguration since April 30, 1789.
- Search on *George Washington* in the [James Madison Papers, 1723 to 1859](#) for correspondence between the two presidents. Similarly, the [Thomas Jefferson Papers, 1606 to 1827](#) yields correspondence between the two presidents, Jefferson's notes on conversations with Washington, and much more.
- For more on presidential inaugurations, see the [Today in History](#) features for January 20 and March 4, as well as [Inaugurations](#), a feature presentation of the [Teachers Page](#).

< April 30 >

Select date April 30



Go

Follow Us

[Take our survey](#)