
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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**Albany, NY - Accepting Bust -
George Washington**

Address Accepting Bust of George Washington, Senate Chamber,
State Capitol, Albany, August 21, 1931

George Washington

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In accepting this symbol, a reconsecration by the State of New York to patriotic endeavor, I wish to state that in 1928 a commission of ten members was created to cooperate with the Federal government in the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of George Washington. It is further provided by law that "The various municipalities may appropriate and expend such moneys for local expenses in carrying out the program of celebrations as the State Comptroller may determine is reasonable, the maximum amount, for any municipality, to be fixed by him, before expenditure, on application of the commission."

This means, of course, that each city, village and town should have a duly appointed official committee to lay out plans for the celebrations to be held next year. The State Commission has appointed a field force which is visiting municipal officials and has sent letters to the mayors of all cities, villages, and to supervisors of towns, urging the appointment of an official committee for the municipal unit, and the response to the suggestion has been general.

The program of the State calls for an address by the Governor on February 22, 1932, and the Legislature, the executive and administrative departments, the highest court, and the Regents of the University to convene in joint session, in honor of this day.

On April 30, 1932, Inauguration Day, the Governor and the Legislature, judges of the various courts and all city officials will assemble in New York City. The exercises will take the form of pageantry, military and civic parades, in which events the various hereditary and patriotic societies will cooperate.

The plans of the commission call for municipal celebrations of more than usual interest on July 4th, Independence Day, with parades by military, civic and patriotic organizations, the reading of the Declaration of Independence and orations by prominent citizens.

The Education Department is arranging a special program of instruction for all the schools of the State, dwelling upon the life, teaching and influence of George Washington, especially in the relation of such to New York State.

A number of special days and special programs have also been arranged by the commission. These include Church Day, the second Sunday in January, to exemplify the religious and moral character of Washington. On the second Sunday in February Press Day will be observed. Special exercises under the immediate direction of hereditary and patriotic societies will mark the observance of April 19th, Patriots' Day, the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington. On the second Sunday of May, commonly known as Mother's Day, sermons will be preached and addresses delivered on the influence of Mary Ball Washington, the mother of George Washington, who by her devotion to the youth who was left fatherless at the age of eleven years reared him to become the father of his country.

Other days throughout the year for which special observances are planned are Memorial Day, Flag Day, Labor Day, Constitution Day, Armistice Day, with the final celebration Thanksgiving Day, November 24th.

The commission has tentative plans for a number of pageants representative of Washington's activities. It is suggested that one be held at Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh. After Yorktown the army went into winter quarters at New Windsor with headquarters at Newburgh. It was here that Washington received, on April 17, 1783, the proclamation of Congress suspending hostilities; on the 19th of April, Washington's order, commanding the cessation of hostilities was read to the army; it was at Newburgh that Washington refused the tender of a crown; and it was at Newburgh that the army was disbanded.

A number of other pageants are suggested, including the reproduction of the journey of Washington and Clinton in 1783 by water and land from Newburgh to Ticonderoga and Crown Point, returning by way of Saratoga and Ballston Spa to Fort Stanwix and from there back to Newburgh, while the National Washington Portal Committee plans a pageant in memory of the battle of Long Island which took place August 27, 1776.

Out of 308 skirmishes and engagements during the Revolutionary War no less than 92 were fought on New York soil. The number of soldiers enlisted and inducted into service by the State of New York during the Revolution is placed by James A. Roberts in "New York in the Revolution" at 43,645. The State of New York raised and equipped five regiments in the Continental Army, certain artillery regiments, light dragoons and artificers and a regiment known as the Congress regiment. Besides it had a state militia of 37 regiments and various independent organizations.

Consequently through the session laws of 1777 to 1783 reference is made to the "five battalions of continental troops", raised under direction of this State, which apparently means the five regiments of infantry. One of the laws passed in 1778 is typical. It directed the supervisors of the various counties to procure the number of strong shoes made of neat leather and good strong woolen stockings enumerated therein. The quota for Westchester county was 125 pairs of stocking and 104 pairs shoes; for Albany county it was 850 pairs of stockings and 708 pairs shoes.

A law passed in 1778 provided that any person who shall procure another to enlist in the continental regiments shall be exempt from all drafts in the militia during the period of such enlistment.

Chapter 17 of the Laws of 1778 imposed the first direct state tax of three pence per pound on realty and one penny half penny on personal property

to defray the expenses of the present war. A law was passed in 1778 for supplying the families of persons belonging to the five battalions of Continental troops with the necessaries of life at moderate prices. Another law of 1778 provided a bounty of \$50 for each person enlisting in the Continental battalions for three years or for the duration of the war.

New York State was in many ways the principal battle ground of the war. The first forts captured from the English were Theodorega and Crown Point, May 10 and 12, 1775; and the first attempt to construct an American Navy was made by Arnold on Lake Champlain in June of that year. Johnson's last raid through the Mohawk valley, in which the battle of Johnstown and various smaller encounters were fought, took place in 1781. Between these dates were the expedition from New York into Canada, resulting in the siege and capture of St. John's, September 25, 1775, followed by the disaster at Quebec; the expedition to Johnstown, resulting in the surrender of 300 Scotch Highlanders, January 19, 1776; Battle of Long Island in August, 1776; Battle of Harlem Plains, September, 1776; Battle of White Plains, October, 1776; capture of Fort Washington, November, 1776; the Battle of Bennington, August 16, 1777, which prevented the British forces receiving needed supplies; the successful defense of Fort Schuyler and the bloody battle of Oriskany, August 6, 1777, which prevented the junction of St. Leger and Burgoyne, and made the latter's surrender inevitable; the glorious battles of Saratoga, September 19 and October 7, 1777, leading to Burgoyne's surrender, October 17, 1777; the destructive expedition up the Hudson river under Sir Henry Clinton, October, 1777; Sir Henry Clinton's second expedition up the Hudson in May, 1779; Johnson's Indian raid through the Mohawk, Schoharie and Susquehanna valleys, 1778; Mad Anthony's capture of Stony Point, July 15, 1779; campaigns against the Indians and raids by Johnson, Brant, Cornplanter and Carleton during 1779, '80 and '81. The surrender of Cornwallis in 1781 was the practical end of hostilities and the foregoing enumeration shows that every year during the war New York was the scene of very active conflict.

General Washington was in our State each year from 1775, when he was chosen head of the American forces, until he bade farewell to his officers at Fraunces Tavern in New York City on December 4, 1783. A little over five years later, April 30, 1789, in Federal Hall in New York City, Washington took the oath of office as the first President of the United States. New York, therefore, perhaps more so than any other state, has the proud privilege of considering this Bicentennial event as in honor of one whom she could well claim as an adopted son.

No name in the annals of our national history is more revered today than that of George Washington. Nor is so heavy debt of gratitude due to any other man for the blessings of liberty and independence which we enjoy.

Nations from time immemorial have honored their great heroes. But always such honors have been bestowed for certain distinctive services. In honoring George Washington today we are paying just tribute to the man whose every quality of mind and heart was devoted to the betterment of mankind.

We do not think of George Washington alone as a great soldier, although he has been ranked as one of the three greatest soldiers that the world has produced.

We do not think of him alone as a great constitutionalist although he was the leader in the development of our constitutional form of government and was president of the first constitutional convention.

George Washington was more than a soldier, more than a constitutionalist, more than a country gentleman. He embodied in his personality those supreme qualities which gave him distinction in every line of human activity.

Had there been no George Washington, in all probability there would have been no United States of America. Not only did George Washington by his supreme military intelligence, fortitude and patience, achieve the independence of the colonies, but he established upon the basis of that independence the government of the United States as we know it today.

George Washington is the greatest figure in our national history. Yet he

is one of the least known. It is true that scholars and historians have delved into every phase of his remarkable career, yet it is also true that few Americans of today appreciate the greatness of George Washington, or the service which he rendered to his country and to all mankind.

The Government of the United States and of the State of New York want to impress the personality of Washington upon the present generation of Americans, to instill into the hearts and minds of our people an understanding of what his life means to us, to bring Americans to a better realization of what patriotic service means.

The celebration next year is most appropriately a celebration in the hearts of our people. It is the feeling of the United States and State Commissions that in every church, school, home and appropriate organization, there should be next year programs and observances devoted exclusively to the honoring of the memory of George Washington. No matter how humble or obscure the observance, its spirit will be in keeping with the simplicity and transcendent beauty of George Washington's character.

It is particularly fitting and proper that this should be done. Even as much as the country needs a business revival, it likewise needs a revival of the spirit of patriotism and a better understanding of the teachings and doctrines of this great man, whose ideas of government are today the source of guidance to our statesmen and citizens. And I am not so sure but if we all can get a revival of the spirit of patriotism throughout the length and breadth of this great country, but what a continuing and lasting revival of business will be much easier to accomplish.