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U.S. Presidents ▶ George Washington



A copy of The Declaration of Independence

Independence and the Presidency

You might have thought that George Washington was in Philadelphia with Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and the other delegates of the Continental Congress as they wrote the Declaration of Independence, but he wasn't. In July 1776, Washington was in New York with his troops. On July 9, he received his copy of the Declaration with a note from John Hancock telling Washington to share the news with the troops. Can you imagine how the troops reacted?



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Independence and the Presidency

The soldiers were so excited and filled with patriotism after they heard the Declaration that they rushed over to the Bowling Green and tore down the statue of King George III. Shortly after this the British, as Washington expected, attacked the colonists and the American Revolution was under way. The colonists fought eight long, hard years (1775-1783) for their independence from Britain.



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Washington on his way to be inaugurated as the first president of the United States

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America's Story

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The inauguration of Washington on the balcony of Federal Hall, New York City

Independence and the Presidency

After the war was over, Washington hoped he would be able to retire and return to Mount Vernon. Instead, in 1789, the electors unanimously voted George Washington the first president of the United States. Because it was such an honor, and he felt a great duty to his country, he accepted. He left Mount Vernon on April 16 and arrived in New York City on April 30 for his inauguration. As he took his oath standing on the balcony of Federal Hall, a crowd broke into cheers. The members of his first Cabinet included Thomas Jefferson as secretary of state, Alexander Hamilton as secretary of the treasury, Henry Knox as secretary of war, and Edmund Randolph as attorney general.



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