

Fifty Lesser-Known Facts about George Washington

1. He was the only president unanimously elected; all of the state representatives voted for him.
2. He never served as president in Washington D.C., the capital that was named for him. In his first year the capital was in New York City, then moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
3. He was six feet, two inches tall, which was very tall for the 18th century and makes him one of the tallest presidents.
4. The story of George Washington chopping down his father's cherry tree is considered fiction and likely never happened.
5. George Washington did not have wooden teeth, but did wear dentures made from ivory.
6. Washington gave freedom to his slaves in his will
7. Washington's birthday was not February 22, 1732. Washington was actually born on February 11, 1731, but when the colonies switched to the Gregorian calendar from the Julian calendar, his birthday was moved 11 days. Since his birthday fell before the old date for New Year's Day, but after the new date for New Year's Day, his birth year was changed to 1732.
8. Washington was made an honorary citizen of France in 1792.
9. Washington learned to be a surveyor at age 16. These credentials came via mail correspondence with the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. It can be argued that William and Mary was the first American college to participate successfully in distance learning.
10. Washington led the attack Jumonville Glen, Pennsylvania, that was considered the start of the Seven Years' War.
11. Washington did not have any biological children. He was the adoptive stepfather to Martha's two surviving children from a previous marriage, John (Jacky) Parke Custis and Martha (Patsy) Parke Custis.
12. Washington was an excellent dancer.
13. Washington designed and oversaw the expansion of his family estate, Mount Vernon, which he inherited in 1761. Following the expansion Washington's Mount Vernon was ten times the size of the average home in colonial Virginia.
14. Washington owned property in seven states: Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Kentucky, and Ohio.
15. Washington operated one of the largest distilleries in America at the time at his Dogue Run Farm.

16. Washington was never seriously injured in battle.
17. Washington actually lost more battles than he won throughout his military career, but he never surrendered his army during the war.
18. Washington was the first person to sign the Constitution.
19. Washington created the United States Navy through the Naval Act of 1794.
20. At his second inauguration, Washington gave the shortest inaugural address to date.
21. Washington apparently wrote 18,000 letters to friends and colleagues over the course of his life.
22. One of the United States, 31 counties, and 241 civil townships are named for George Washington.
23. The central vault at the U.S. Capitol building was designed to house the tomb of Washington, but he expressed in his will that he wished to be buried at Mount Vernon instead.
24. Washington was named as the first non-Colonial Chancellor of the College of William & Mary. He was appointed a few months before being elected our first president. He served in this role from 1788 until his death 1799.
25. Washington intended for the facade of Mount Vernon to be symmetrical, but in truth, the door and cupola do not align, nor are the windows symmetrically placed.
26. Washington topped his cupola with a weathervane in the shape of a dove of peace.
27. The exterior of Mount Vernon was rusticated by Washington in 1758 to look like stone - but it is actually made of yellow pine siding with sand mixed in the paint.
28. Washington was perhaps the first to use the piazza in colonial Virginian architecture, or large two-story square columns.
29. The Washingtons hosted as many as 677 guests at the Mount Vernon in 1798.
30. Washington never received a college education and was always bothered by what he saw as his "lack of formal education" though he did in fact have at William and Mary an administrative oversight of a premier educational institution of his time as part of his life experience.
31. Washington is considered the creator of the American Foxhound. He bred black and tan hounds with French hounds to create the breed.
32. Washington remains the highest-ranking U.S. officer of all time.
33. Washington served as an aide to the British General, Edward Braddock in the French and Indian War, meaning he fought both for and against the British in his lifetime.

34. Washington's tactics against the British were to harass them when possible and avoid direct confrontations. He would get his troops to gradually retreat and then suddenly attack.
35. Washington's experience with William and Mary likely had a profound influence on his ultimate decision to make a gift of canal stock to Liberty Hall Academy, the largest gift ever to an institution of learning at that time.
36. After the war was won, Washington resigned his commission as commander-in-chief, stunning many European aristocrats who expected him to declare himself monarch.
37. Washington's final words were recorded as being: "'Tis well."
38. Washington signed into law the first copyright law.
39. Washington's hair was real, unlike the customary wigs of the time.
40. Washington owned 36 American Foxhound pups, and gave them unusually fond names like Sweet Lips, Topsy, Venus, and True Love.
41. Washington held that private property rights were paramount, so he viewed the Boston Tea Party as an act of vandalism rather than a patriotic statement.
42. Washington had two horses shot out from under him and received four bullet holes in his coat as well as one in his hat during the French and Indian War.
43. Washington refused to accept a salary as president and even spent some of his own money to pay the salaries of cabinet ministers and other members of the executive branch.
44. Washington added the phrase "So help me God" to the end of the Presidential Oath of Office during his inauguration and it has been delivered in that manner ever since.
45. Washington actually held the presidential title of Commander in Chief long after he was no longer president. John Adams appointed him to the position in 1798 as a recruitment stunt to try to use Washington's name to attract more soldiers.
46. Washington was one of the unhealthiest presidents ever and suffered from diphtheria, tuberculosis, smallpox, dysentery, malaria, tonsillitis, carbuncle, pneumonia, and epiglottitis.
47. When Washington died in 1799 Napoleon immediately called for ten days of official mourning in France and the British had the entire Royal Navy lower its flags to half-mast.
48. Washington is the only American president to lead his troops into battle.
49. Washington's net worth was estimated at \$525 million (in today's money).
50. George Washington was the only president who did not belong to a political party. Although political parties formed during his first term, he refused to join one.