

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

*Inside the Vault:
Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*

January 7, 2021

The session will start shortly. Please note:

- Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
- You can participate through the Q&A function.
- If you have technical difficulties, please email firstfriday@gilderlehrman.org so we can assist you.

Resources!

CLASSROOM-READY RESOURCES:

- Spotlight on Primary Source: **George Washington's First Inaugural**
- Spotlight on Primary Source: **George Washington's letter to Henry Knox, April 1, 1789**
- Essay: **"'No Event Could Have Filled Me with Greater Anxieties': George Washington and the First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789,"** by Phillip Hamilton
- Images: **Newspaper account of Washington's Inauguration**
- Images & Transcript: **Pages from the first draft of George Washington's Inaugural Address**
- Images & Transcript: **Opinions on Taking the Oath of Office**

NEW RESOURCES! TRANSCRIPTIONS OF NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF WASHINGTON'S INAUGURATION:

- Transcript: **Address of the Citizens of Alexandria congratulating George Washington, April 16, 1789**
- Transcript: **Answer of George Washington to the citizens of Alexandria, April 16, 1789**
- Transcript: **Address of the Citizens of Baltimore congratulating George Washington, April 17, 1789**
- Transcript: **Answer of George Washington to the citizens of Baltimore, April 17, 1789**
- Transcript: **Address of the Pennsylvania State Society of the Cincinnati congratulating George Washington, April 20, 1789**
- Transcript: **Answer of George Washington to the Pennsylvania State Society of the Cincinnati, April 20, 1789**
- Transcript: **Address of the President and Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania congratulating George Washington, April 20, 1789**

Gilder Lehrman Staff

Panelists

- Sandy Trenholm - Collection Director
- Kevin Cline - 2016 National History Teacher of the Year
- Sabrina Imamura, *Hamilton*
- Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator

During the Session



- If you would like to ask a question, you can **use the Q&A feature**, which is at the bottom of your screen.
- **Viewing in full screen** is recommended to see the presenters and the presentation at the same time.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.



Today's Documents

The Gilder Lehrman Collection

- Letter from Henry Knox to George Washington
- Letter from George Washington to Henry Knox
- George Washington's First Inaugural Address

The Election of 1788

**December 15-
January 10**
States select the
electors.

March 4
The first Congress
was *supposed* to
begin.

April 6
Electoral College
reports votes to
Congress.

April 16
Washington
leaves Mount
Vernon for the
capital.

April 30
Washington is
inaugurated.

February 4
Electors met in
their states to
cast their votes.

April 1
Enough congressmen
arrived for the
session to begin.

April 14
Washington
is notified he is
President.

April 23
Washington
arrives in NYC.



Preparing for the Inauguration

H. K. J. 1793
 H. K. J. 1793
 (Copy)
 It is our opinion
 XXXIII-162-3819 793-11
 March 1 1793

1. That the President ought to take the oath in Public
2. That the time be on Monday next at 12 o'clock in the forenoon
3. That the place be the Senate chamber.
4. That the Marshal of the district inform the vice President that the Senate chamber being the usual place of the Presidents Public acts, it is supposed to be the best place for taking the oath; and that it is wished that the chamber be open.
5. That it be informally notified to the vice President, Governor and foreign ministers, that the oath is to be taken at the time and place above mentioned
6. That Mr. Cushing be requested to attend; and to administer the oath
7. That the President go without formal attendants by such Gentlemen, as he may choose, and return without formal guards, except that he be preceded by the Marshals

H. K. J.
 Dr: Randolph
 March 1 1793. 1/14

Washington seeks advice about how to take the oath of office from

- Henry Knox
- Alexander Hamilton
- Edmund Randolph
- Thomas Jefferson

“a culprit who is going to the place of his execution”

Mount Vernon April 1. 1789
LIII-74

My dear Sir,

The Mail of the 30. brought me your favor of the 23. - For which, & the regular information you have had the goodness to transmit of the State of things in New York, I feel myself very much obliged, and thank you accordingly. -

I feel for those Members of the new Congress, who, hitherto, have given an unavailing attention at the Theatre of business. - For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence I can assure you with the world it would obtain little credit - that my movements to the Chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution! So unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill & abilities, which is necessary to manage the helm. - I am sensible, that I am embarking the voice of my Countrymen and a good name of my own on this voyage, but what returns will be made for them - Heaven alone can ascertain. - Integrity, & firmness is all I can promise these, be the voyage long or short, never shall I forsake me although I may be deserted by all men. - For of the consolation, which are to be derived from these (in every circumstance) the world cannot deprive me. - With best wishes for Mr. Knox, & sincere friendship for yourself - I remain
Your affectionate

The Hon
May Gen Knox

Edw. Washington

“my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill – abilities & inclination which is necessary to manage the helm”

18th-Century Language

Very different

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Syntax
- Formality
- Complexity

Strategies for Decoding Text

- Skim the text - is there anything that pops out right away?
- Break it down - start crossing out filler text and phrases
- Mark it up - use highlighter or underline what you think the most important words and phrases are
- Translate it - look up words you do not know, but also consider how would you say it to friends
- Pay attention to tone

Translation

“my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution: so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill – abilities & inclination which is necessary to manage the helm”

I sooo don't want to do this

UGH! I'm old and I just wanted to chill at home. Do you have any idea how hard this is going to be?

I'm not a politician. I'm not even sure I can do it.

"Integrity & firmness is all I can promise"

Mount Vernon April 1. 1789
LIII-74

My dear Sir,

The Mail of the 30th brought me your favor of the 23^d. - For which, & the regular information you have had the goodness to transmit of the State of things in New York, I feel myself very much obliged, and thank you accordingly. -

I feel for those Members of the new Congress, who, hitherto, have given an unvaried attendance at the theatre of business. - For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence I can assure you - with the world it would obtain little credit - that my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution! So unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public care, to quit a peaceful abode for an Ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political ^{consideration} skill - abilities which is necessary to manage the helm. - I am sensible, that I am embarking the voice of my Countrymen and a good name of my own on this voyage, but what returns will be made for them - Heaven alone can foretell. - Integrity & firmness is all I can promise - these, be the voyage long or short, never shall forsake me although I may be deserted by all men. - For of the consolations which are to be derived from these (under any circumstances) the world cannot deprive me. -

With best wishes for Mr. Knox, & sincere friendship for yourself - I remain

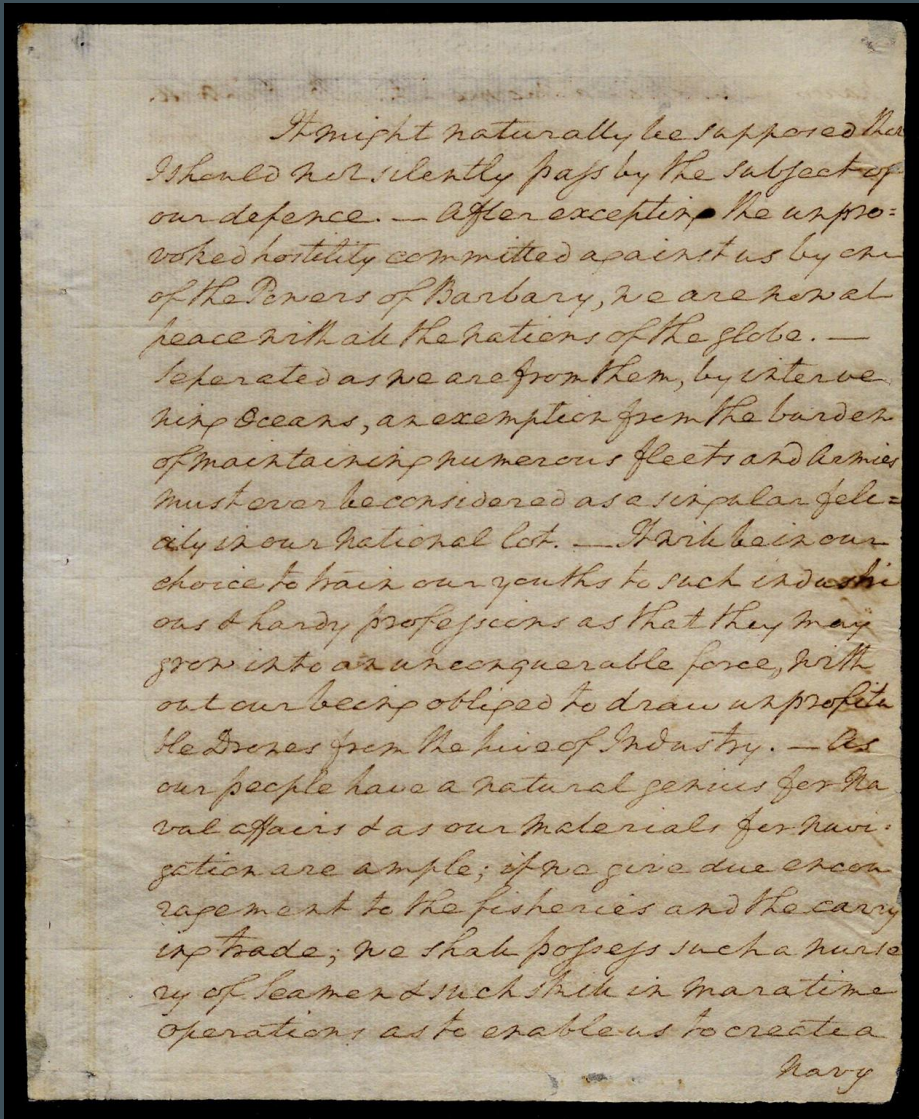
Your affectionate

G. Washington

The Hon^{ble}
Maj^r Gen^l Knox

"I am sensible, that I am embarking the voice of my Countrymen and a good name of my own, on this voyage, but what returns will be made for them - Heaven alone can foretell. - Integrity & firmness is all I can promise - these, be the voyage long or short, never shall forsake me although I may be deserted by all men. - For of the consolations which are to be derived from these (under any circumstances) the world cannot deprive me."

Writing the Speech



It might naturally be supposed that I should not silently pass by the subject of our defence. — After excepting the unprovoked hostility committed against us by one of the Powers of Barbary, we are now at peace with all the Nations of the globe. — Separated as we are from them, by interveining Oceans, an exemption from the burden of maintaining numerous fleets and Armies must ever be considered as a singular felicity in our National Lot. — It will be in our choice to train our youths to such industrious & hardy professions as that they may grow into an unconquerable force, without our being obliged to draw us profuse Expenses from the bosom of Industry. — As our people have a natural genius for Naval affairs & as our Materials for Navigation are ample; if we give due encouragement to the Fisheries and the carrying Trade; we shall possess such a Nursery of Seamen & such Skill in Maritime Operations, as to enable us to create a Navy

- George Washington and David Humphreys wrote a 73-page inaugural address.
- Fairly detailed on policy
- It *could* offer insight into Washington's views.
- It was completely discarded and a new version was written.

What Happened to Washington's First Draft?

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Handwriting of Washington.

of the soil and the sea, for the wares and
merchandise of other nations is open to all
... Notwithstanding the embarrassments
under which our trade has hitherto labour-
ed, since the peace, the enterprising spirit
of our citizens has steered our vessels to
almost every region of the known world.
... In some distant & heretofore unques-
tioned countries, our new Constellation has
been received with tokens of uncommon
regard. — An energetic government will
give to our flag still greater respect: which
a sense of reciprocal benefits will serve to
connect us with the rest of mankind in
strict ties of amity. — But an internal
commerce is more in our power; and may
be of more importance. — The supplies
of produce in one part of the United States
will, in many instances, be wanted in
another. — An intercourse of this kind
is well calculated to multiply Sailors,
exterminate prejudices, diffuse blessings,
and increase the friendship of the inhabi-
tants of one State for those of another. —
While

- In 1827, historian Jared Sparks discovered the draft and consulted with James Madison.
- They decided to suppress it.
- It then became “the victim of the most horrendous historical vandalism.” (James Flexner)
- Sparks tore it into pieces and distributed it to friends and family.
- Of the 73 pages, only 12 full leaves survive.

Washington's Address

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE SENATE,
AND OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

AMONG the vicissitudes incident to life, no event could have filled me with greater anxieties, than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month.—On the one hand, I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years; a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me, by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens, a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence, one, who, inheriting inferior endowments from nature, and unpractised in the duties of civil administration, ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies. In this conflict of emotions, all I dare aver, is, that it has been my faithful study to col-

“Defining your powers”

“The circumstances under which I now meet you, will acquit me from entering into that subject, farther than to refer to the great constitutional charter under which you are assembled; and which, in defining your powers, designates the objects to which your attention is to be given.”

“Instead of undertaking particular recommendations on this subject, in which I could be guided by no lights derived from official opportunities, I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your discernment and pursuit of the public good....”

“no separate views, nor party animosities”



“In those honorable qualifications, I behold the surest pledges, that as on one side no local prejudices, or attachments; no separate views, no party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests....”

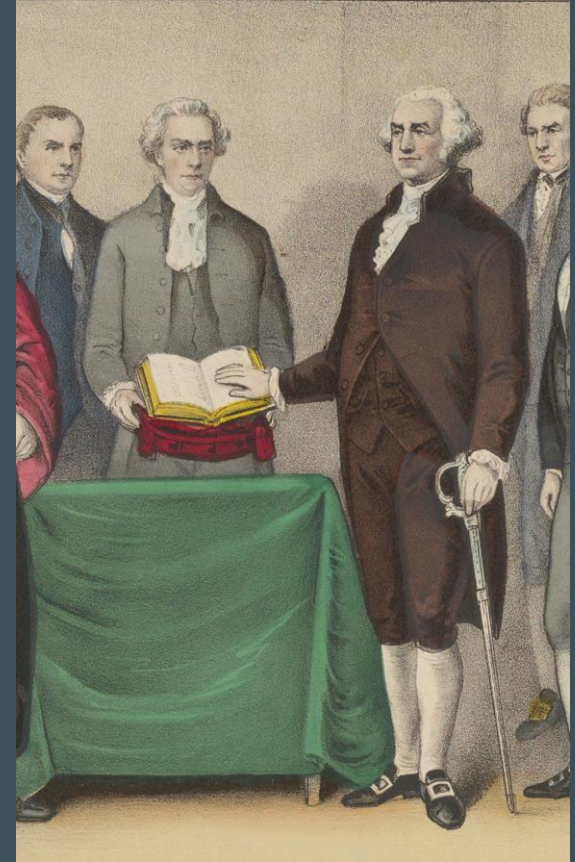
“the foundations of our national policy”

“that the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality; and the pre-eminence of free government, be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and command the respect of the world.”

“I dwell on this prospect with every satisfaction which an ardent love for my country can inspire. Since there is no truth more thoroughly established, than that there exists in the economy and course of nature, an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness, between duty and advantage, between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity....”

William McClay's description of the Inauguration

“This great man was agitated and embarrassed more than ever he was by the leveled cannon or pointed musket. He trembled, and several times could scarce make out to read, though it must be supposed he had often read it before. He put part of the fingers of his left hand into the side of what I think the tailors call the fall of the breeches..., changing the paper into his left [right] hand. After some time he then did the same with some of the fingers of his right hand. When he came to the words *all the world*, he made a flourish with his right hand, which left rather an ungainly impression.... He was dressed in deep brown, with metal buttons, with an eagle on them, white stockings, a bag, and sword.”



The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Q&A

Upcoming Programs

- *Inside the Vault*, Thursday, January 21 at 7 pm ET (4 pm PT)
 - We will be discussing primary source documents that reveal information about the lives of enslaved people.
- *Book Breaks*, December 10 at 2 pm ET (11 am PT) *new time!
 - Marcus Nevius discusses his book *City of Refuge*.
- Visit gilderlehrman.org for free resources for students, teachers, families, and history enthusiasts of all ages.