



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on February 20, 2023

Washington: The Hero Even King George Called “The Greatest Man in the World”

When even your archrival praises you, with nothing to gain, you know it means something. So it's most notable what [“The Last King of America,”](#) George III, said about George Washington's refusal to become the first king of these United States.

“If he does that,” said the monarch, upon hearing that Washington would relinquish power and return to his farm, “he will be the greatest man in the world.”

Washington did do that, too — twice. Though the story about him being offered the kingship of America is exaggerated, that sentiment did exist, and Washington rejected the proposal unreservedly. He also not only resigned his military commission after the war, but also resisted entreaties to seek a third term as his second one as president was concluding. In the process, he helped forge the greatest civilization history has ever known.



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Thus did Washington have his own dedicated holiday mere decades ago (and still does, officially, at the federal level), before many states decided to create the generic “Presidents’ Day.” It was a fitting tribute to a man who is the closet thing we have to a true American superhero.

It's not just that he “single-handedly led the Continental Army to victory in the American Revolutionary War, presided over the Constitutional Convention, and was our very first president,” as American Thinker [puts it](#) today, though that would be enough. It's also that this “greatest man in the world” was a giant, figuratively and literally (standing about six feet tall, he significantly exceeded his day's average height). And King George wasn't the only leader and ex-foe who admired him, either.

Just consider the “Indian Prophecy.” As MountVernon.org [relates the story](#), “In October 1770, George Washington, his personal physician Dr. James Craik, and a group of fellow soldiers journeyed to the Ohio Country. According to Craik's recollections, an indigenous sachem (local chief) visited Washington and recalled his perspective on the Battle of Monongahela [during the French and Indian War, 1754-1763], fought 15 years earlier on July 9, 1755.” As to what transpired, the site later wrote:

The records do not state the sachem's nation, but he may have been Shawnee, Mingo, or Delaware. Since the sachem and his fellow warriors were allied with the French, they had intended to kill Washington, who took over command of the British army's attempt to retreat after [British Major General Edward] Braddock was injured. Multiple shots were fired directly at Washington, but none touched him. Washington recalled to his mother[,]



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Mary Ball Washington[,] a few days after the battle that “I luckily escap’d with’t a wound, tho’ I had four Bullets through my Coat, and two Horses shot under me.” Convinced that the Great Spirit had preserved Washington, the chief prophesized [sic] that “he will become the chief of nations, and a people yet unborn, will hail him as the father of a mighty empire!”

MountVernon.org adds that although “the story rested on the credibility of Dr. Craik and others, and not Washington himself, people in the young nation were later excited about the Indian Prophecy” — and Washington was hailed as “the father of our country.”

We were taught this, too, and understood it, even when I attended grade school in liberal 1970s NYC. Yet things have changed. When I worked with children, I’d ask them questions about both trivia and matters of import as a sort of contest. And 20 to 30 years ago already, I discovered that many — if not most — young kids no longer knew who “the father of our country” was (one guessed, “Martin Luther King?”).

This is sad and tragic. It’s not just that it reflects a failure to impart knowledge of our national family history to, and instill civilizational pride in, the younger generations. It’s also that, again, Washington is deserving of all the praise once heaped upon him.

And the battlefield tales are the least of it, because, as per King George’s allusion, they paled in comparison to Washington’s moral stature. Oh, the [story](#) about him chopping down the cherry tree at age six and then confessing, saying “I cannot tell a lie,” is fictionalized. But the truth is even more impressive.

Just consider Washington’s “[Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation](#)”; 110 in number, he copied them into the last 10 pages of a book of his personal notes before he was 16 years old. Then there was [the order he issued to his troops](#) on August 3, 1776 in which he inveighed against “the foolish, and wicked practice, of profane cursing and swearing.”

This reflects how Washington really did try to cultivate virtue in himself and those under his command (“virtue” being that “set of objectively good moral habits”). It’s an example sorely needed today, too, in our age of moral laxity where “If it feels good, do it” is a common creed, vulgarity is conflated with manliness, and we’ve lost sight of how virtue in the people is a prerequisite for liberty.

Speaking of which, “Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times,” famously wrote author G. Michael Hopf in *Those Who Remain*. George Washington was the strongest of men who, along with other giants, created for us the best of times. And only by honoring and emulating the best he represented can we avoid the end result of virtue’s continual erosion: the worst of times.



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