

Yesterday in Mekeel's:

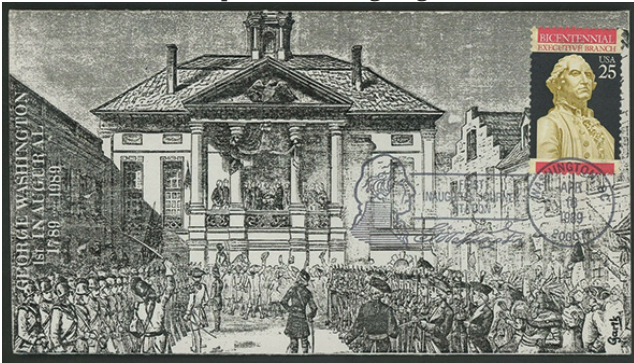
George Washington's Big Day

by Thomas W. Bradley

(From Mekeel's Weekly, April 29, 1989, with images added)

April 30, 1789, not only was a big day for George Washington, but also a momentous day in the history of the fledgling United States. For it was on that day that Washington took the oath of office as the first president of the country.

On April 14, 1989, the U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp focusing attention on the executive branch of the government, as well as the first presidential inauguration. The adhesive is part of the ongoing Constitution Series.



Garik cachet for FD of Sc. 2414, Executive Branch issue, depicting the Presidential swearing in ceremony

Half a century, ago, on April 30, 1938, the U.S. Post Office Department also issued a stamp commemorating the first presidential inauguration.



Early Artcraft color FDC for Sc. 854, stamp and cachet depicting the Presidential swearing in ceremony

But, what was it like, back: two centuries ago when Washington was about to embark on his role of leading his country as its first president?

The framers of the Constitution had done their job. The Electoral College had met in New York City on Feb. 4, 1789. Ten states had sent 69 electors.

Ironically, New York State had not chosen its electors. The votes of four electors, two each from Maryland and Virginia, were delayed. North Carolina and Rhode Island had not yet ratified the Constitution and, thus, were not eligible to cast electoral votes.

Each elector cast one of his two votes for Washington who received 69 of the 138 votes. The remaining 69 votes went to 11 others, with John Adams grabbing the greatest number: 34, and thus becoming vice president. (Through the 1800 election, the person receiving the second highest number of electoral votes was elected vice president.)

It would be a while before Congress would count the votes and officially notify Washington that he had been chosen president. Nonetheless, Washington knew he had been tapped to lead the nation and began to take care of some personal affairs.

On March 7 through 9, he visited his mother in Fredericksburg, Va. It was to be his last visit with her, for Mary Bell Washington would die on Aug. 25 of that year.

There also was the matter of finances. Although Washington was one of the richest men of his time, he was "land poor" and was obliged to borrow money to finance his trek to New York City, then the nation's capital, for his inauguration. He received a loan of £600 from Richard Conway of Alexandria, Va.

Congress, meanwhile, had a little trouble getting organized, with some of the members taking their time making their initial journey to the seat of the government.

It wasn't until April 1 that the House of Representatives managed to muster a quorum, the Senate taking another half-dozen days to reach it. With the full Congress officially in session, the electoral votes were counted.

It was on April 14 that the secretary of the Congress, Charles Thomson, arrived in Mount Vernon to notify Washington officially that he had been picked to be the nation's first chief executive.

Washington must have had his bags packed, for two days later he began what would prove to be a triumphal journey from Mount Vernon to New York City.

On the day of his departure, Washington penned in his diary: "About 1 o'clock I bade farewell to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity, and with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York...with the best disposition to render service to my country in obedience to its call, but with less hope to answering expectations."

A full spring was burning out over the Virginia hills as Washington left. He moved northward over roads that at some points paralleled the route he had taken in 1781 to capture Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown.

In every hamlet, town and city, people poured forth to give him lusty cheers. In Alexandria, Va., Washington was entertained at a public dinner by his neighbors and more immediate personal friends.



Sc. 644, Surrender of Burgoyne, 150th Anniversary



At Philadelphia, cavalry paraded and Washington rode under triumphal arches of evergreen and laurel.



As he approached the city, 13 guns boomed while the general landed to find the city of 33,000 filled with joyful crowds which included many Revolutionary War veterans. It now was April 23.

As Inauguration Day drew near, the joyous mood of the people began to approach hysteria. When Washington appeared on the morning of the ceremony, crossing the harbor on a ceremonial barge, the town's citizens and thousands of visitors cheered wildly and tirelessly. It now was April 30.

Washington looked majestic, calm, and tall. After all, he was six feet two inches tall and tipped the scales at 175 pounds. He was dressed in brown broadcloth and white stockings, with his dress sword at his side. His suit was American made.

No one bothered to jot down the weather conditions of the day. Years later, two conflicting accounts of inaugural weather conditions were given.

Sixty-five years after that famous day, Rufus Griswold published Washington Irving's reminiscence of the occasion. Irving remembered, in 1854, that at 8 a.m. the skies had been cloudy, but by 9, when the ceremony began, the sun had shown brightly.

On the other hand, Mary Hunt Parker, daughter of a prominent general, who was 14 years old in 1789, recalled clouds at age 85. But, her clouds were larger, darker and more forbidding than Irving's. Parker's clouds never disappeared, but instead brought down a drenching rain. She said, "It never rained faster than it did that day."

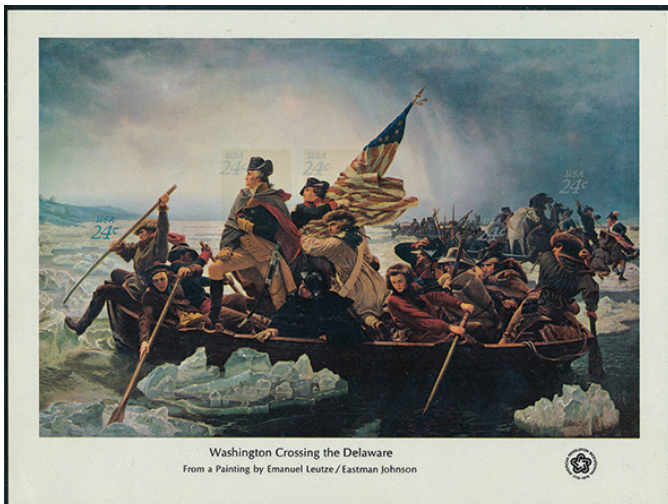
Regardless of whose weather tale is more accurate, Washington had to carry an umbrella as he proceeded up the street to be sworn in.

The inaugural ceremony was held out of doors on the balcony of the Senate Chamber in Federal Hall, located at the corner of Wall and Nassau streets. A subtreaury building now occupies the site.

The oath was administered by Robert R. Livingston, then chancellor of New York State and no stranger to history. He had been a member of Thomas Jefferson's committee to draft the Declaration of Independence, and later was to negotiate the Louisiana Purchase Treaty with France and became a prime



Federal Hall, facing Wall Street, with Trinity Church in the background facing what is today where Wall Streets ends at Broadway.



Washington Crossing the Delaware
From a Painting by Emanuel Leutze / Eastman Johnson

Sc. 1688s, 1976 Bicentennial sheet imperf error. Notice the 24¢ denominations where the five stamps should be perfed.

He reached Trenton, N.J., on a Sunday afternoon, where a dozen years earlier he had crossed the Delaware River in darkness and storm to strike one of the most famous blows against the Redcoats.



At Trenton, a party of white-clad maidens strewed flowers before the president-elect and sang an ode.

On the shores of New York Bay, Washington was escorted aboard a handsome barge manned, appropriately, by 13 men in white uniforms.

financial backer of Robert Fulton's steamboat, the *Clermont*, named for Livingston's Hudson River estate.



Sc. 323, Robert Livingston on the 1¢ Louisiana Purchase Centennial issue.



Sc. 3782, Signing of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty Bicentennial issue, with Robert Livingston at center.

The Bible used in the ceremony was borrowed from St. John's Masonic Lodge and Washington rested his hand on Psalm 127:1: "Except Jehovah build the house, They labor in vain that build it: Except Jehovah keep the city, The watchman waketh, but in vain."

A newspaper account of the time noted that Washington repeated the oath with such "devout fervency" that many of the huge crowd were in tears.

After the oath, Washington bowed and kissed the Bible. Livingston intoned: "It is done—long live George Washington, president of the United States." The crowd echoed the cry as cannon fire and bell ringing rolled out across the city.

After the official ceremony ended, the group retired to the Senate chamber for the first inaugural address, 1,425 words long, and then to the president's house at No. 1 Cherry St.

The evening celebration opened and closed by 13 sky-rockets and 13 cannons being fired.

The first inaugural ball was held May 7 in the Assembly Room on the east side of Broadway, a little above Wall Street. It was attended by Washington, Adams, the French and Spanish minister, Livingston, Baron von Steuben, Gen. Henry Knox, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and members of the House and Senate.

Fans decorated with a medallion portrait of Washington's profile were presented as souvenirs to the women.

Notably absent during all of the inaugural festivities was Martha Washington who did not arrive in New York City until the end of May to take up residence at the first presidential mansion.

The only other president to take his oath of office in New York City was Chester A. Arthur. That was on Sept. 20, 1881, the day after the death of President James Garfield. Arthur later repeated the oath in the vice president's room in the U.S. Capitol building.



Federal Hall today, fronted by a large statue of Washington. The original building where Washington was inaugurated was demolished in 1812.



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Yesterday in STAMPS:

The Parenthood of the Bicentennial Series

From STAMPS Magazine, December 3, 2032

THE George Washington Bicentennial Celebration marks a new chapter in the history of American Philately.

Documentary evidence appearing below discloses the fact that the father to the idea of a commemorative stamp issue was the Post Office Department in Washington, while the United States Bicentennial Commission mothered the adopted portraits.

The treasury of collectors was enriched not only by everliving seeds of patriotism, but by a miniature gallery of priceless portraits, immortalizing mostly native masters of fine arts.

The entire series of twelve stamps, based on authentic expressions of contemporary artists, who perpetuated the Father of Our Country, as they saw him when alive, fill a page in the album that for years to come will be marked as the SHRINE-LEAF of every American collection.

Although the celebration was officially scheduled to open with George Washington's 200th Birthday, on February 22, 1932, and close with Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1932, first day covers were cancelled on January 1, 1932. And it is said that among the hundreds of collectors in line in front of the Washington Post Office, a messenger from the White House was standing with a set of covers for our honorable fellow-philatelist, President Herbert Hoover. On that memorable day there was undoubtedly in the mails another set of covers, addressed to an equally known collector, Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt, now President-elect.

THE following two letters, one over the signature of Honorable Frederick A. Tilton, Third Assistant Postmaster General, Washington, whose department embraces the Division of Stamps, and the other signed by the tireless Congressman Sol Bloom, Associate Director of the United States Bicentennial Commission in Washington, form the official birth certificate of the George Washington Commemorative Series.

The historical record of the Post Office Department is dated November 1, 1932:

"In reply to your letter of October 28, you are advised that the issuance of a Bicentennial series of postage stamps was first initiated by the Post Office Department.

"For several years previous to the beginning of the Bicentennial celebration, the Department had arranged to secure various designs, with the view of having a full series of new stamps from 1c to \$5. Suggestions were invited, and the Bicentennial Commission submitted to the Department various portraits of Washington, and, in cooperation with the historians connected with that commission, it was finally decided to use portraits, instead of reproductions of various incidents in the life of Washington, because these stamps could be produced more economically and distributed more readily through better facilities offered in the printing of 400 stamps to a sheet.

"The Postmaster General approved the designs of portraits selected by the Directors of the George Washington Bicentennial Commission, and it was decided to restrict the issue to 12 stamps, of the same size as the regular stamps, so that there would be no additional cost in effecting their distribution.

"As stated before, the Post Office Department, immediately after the passage of the Act creating the Bicentennial Commission for the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington, inaugurated a plan to provide a special series of stamps

for this celebration.

(signed) F. A. Tilton
Third Assistant Postmaster General"

HONORABLE SOL BLOOM relates the history of the origin of the stamp and embossed envelopes issue under same date of November 1, 1932:

"My dear Mr. Gouled:—

"Your inquiry of October 28, 1932, has been received and we have made an effort to obtain the facts which you desire regarding the Bicentennial series of postage stamps. In the midst of our search, we learned that the Division of Stamps of the Post Office Department has received a similar inquiry from you and it is probable that their reply will be more comprehensive than ours. It will certainly be authoritative.

"The Act of Congress authorizing the Bicentennial Celebration was approved December 2, 1924, and it is probable that the Post Office Department considered the issuance of a commemorative series of stamps before this Commission made a formal suggestion to the Treasury Department that both stamps and medals be issued. This was done on April 15, 1930, but we are unable to say at this time who first proposed the plan. A great many suggestions have come to us from individuals all over the country and it is probable



Not part of either article, we see here the Washington Inauguration Bicentennial issue, Sc. 854, and a wider rendition of the design on which the stamp was based.

that the Post Office Department received many also. As a matter of passing interest, the earliest suggestion in our files is dated April 26, 1930, and it came from Professor Arthur I. Andrews, whose address is Widener M, Cambridge, Massachusetts. We understand that he has previously made the same suggestion to his congressman but it is improbable that any individual proposed this feature of the celebration before the Post Office Department, of its own initiative, took the matter under consideration.

"With reference to the 1½c stamp, which was included in the series after your visit to the commission early in February, 1931, our records show that on February 27 of that year Postmaster General Brown wrote to us, in part, as follows: . . . 'we have found, upon further consideration, that it would be desirable to issue a stamp in the 1½c value, in addition to those already agreed upon. The 1½c stamp is used on third-class mailings and is issued in larger quantity than any other denomination, except the 1c and 2c stamps.'

"A number of considerations were taken into account in the selection of the denominations to be included in the series. As implied in Postmaster General Brown's letter regarding the 1½c stamp, perhaps the most important was to give the widest possible distribution to the series during the period of the celebration. Another was the matter of economy and both of these objectives could be attained through the use of stamps of small denominations. These motives probably account for the rejection of many suggestions which were offered in regard to Bicentennial issue of Air Mail and Special Delivery stamps.

"With reference to the choice of portraits for reproduction in this series, the final decision rested with the Postmaster General. It was the desire of this commission that they should reveal, as far as possible, the true likeness of our First President at different periods of his life, and preference was given, in general, to portraits painted from life. As you know, the 1c stamp depicts the profile view of the Houdon bust which was chosen as the official picture of this commission by the committee charged with this duty. Their reasons for its selection were that 'it has every guarantee of being an accurate likeness, and . . . it represents Washington in the prime of his achievement.' Other questions, such as adaptiveness to the engraver's art, may have influenced the

Postmaster General in making his decisions. We are reminded of your own part in having the portrait which appears on the 9c stamp included in the series and it may be that other persons put forth similar efforts but we have no information on this point.

"We do know that some consideration was given to the idea of showing some of the memorable events of Washington's career on stamps of larger size, but this plan was rejected. Such pictures would necessarily have shown only the artist's conception of the event with considerable danger of historical in-

accuracy. The matter of expense, the difficulty of reproducing attractively a large scene in a small compass, and other objections, probably had some weight also.

"We are sorry that we cannot supply you with a cut showing all the portraits but we are enclosing a mat which may serve your purpose and, as of possible assistance, a Post Office Department circular on which we have noted a correction which has been suggested by the Division of Fine Arts of the Library of Congress.

"We would be very pleased to have, for our permanent records, a

The George Washington Portraits



United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission

copy of the publication in which your contemplated article appears and we will greatly appreciate your courtesy in sending it to us, addressed to the attention of our Mr. Donald A. Craig.

(Signed) Sol Bloom
Associate Director."

THE George Washington Bicentennial series, more than any other commemorative issue, has

aroused a nationwide interest in stamp collecting.

To the "Parents" of that precious series are due sincere congratulations. Their offspring, entrusted to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, were admirably groomed, and the prediction seems to be safe that they are destined to achieve the distinction of marking an epoch in American Philately.

—PETER GOULED.

original is owned by the New York Historical Society.

The *six cent orange* stamp represents Washington in the uniform of a general. The original was painted by John Trumbull in 1793 and hangs in the Trumbull Gallery at Yale University. Trumbull was born in Connecticut and was Aide-de-Camp to Washington during the Revolution. He is the best known of the early historical painters. In 1817 Congress commissioned him to paint four pictures for the Rotunda of the Capitol. His "Signing of the Declaration," "Surrender of Burgoyne," "Surrender of Cornwallis," and "Resignation of Washington" are known to all Americans.

The bust portion of a full length portrait by Trumbull is shown on the *seven cent black* stamp. It was painted in 1780 and shows Washington in Colonial uniform. The original hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A crayon drawing furnished the figure for the *eight cent olive green* stamp. It was made from life by Chas. B. F. St. Memin, at Philadelphia in 1798.

The *nine cent pink* stamp displays a likeness taken from a pastel portrait owned by the Masonic Lodge at Alexandria, Virginia, where Washington was a member. It was drawn from life by W. Williams in 1794 and shows Washington in the Masonic regalia. The figure on the *ten cent orange* is from a painting by Stuart made in 1795, which is known as the "Vaughn" portrait and is owned by S. P. Avery.

The Pictures on the Bi-Centennials

THE Bi-centennial year is almost over and the commemorative series of stamps that the government has issued will be discontinued. In this series of twelve stamps, each one bears a different and celebrated Washington portrait that is historically interesting.

The figure on the *one half cent brown* stamp, is taken from a miniature painted by Charles Wilson Peale in 1777. The original which was given by Washington to his niece Harriet is in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Peale, born in Maryland was a contemporary of Washington and a famous painter. He founded the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the first of its kind in the United States.

The engraving used on the *one cent green* stamp was chosen as the official portrait of the Bi-centennial. It is a reproduction in profile, of a bust by Jean Antoine Houdon which was made from life in 1785. This bust is supposed to be the most faithful likeness of Washington, and is now at Mount Vernon. Houdon came to the United States at the invitation of Benjamin Franklin, who had been in France as ambassador for the new republic. This famous French sculptor was commissioned to make the bust and the statue of Washington which is in the Capitol at Richmond, Virginia.

The reproduction on the *one and one-half cent light brown* stamp, is from a painting known as "The Virginia Colonel" which shows Washington in the uniform of a Colonel of the Virginia Militia. It was made by Peale at Mount Vernon in 1772 and is the earliest portrait of Washington. The original hangs in the Lee Memorial Chapel at Washington and Lee University.

The "Atheneum" portrait by Gilbert Stuart graces the *two cent red* stamp. The original was painted at Germantown, Pennsylvania in

1796. It now hangs in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. This is the best known and handsomest portrait of Washington. Gilbert Stuart was born in Rhode Island in 1775 and won his greatest acclaim as a portrait painter. Many distinguished men and women of that period sat for him, but his most celebrated portraits are of Washington.

The *three cent purple* shows Washington in the uniform of a General with cocked hat. Peale painted this portrait in 1777 at Valley Forge. The original is now in Teachers' College at West Chester, Pennsylvania. The portrait reproduced on the warm brown stamp is also by Peale. It was made in 1777 and now hangs in the home of William Patten Rhinebeck of New York. Peale seems to have the monopoly on Bi-centennial portraits. In 1795 he painted the likeness used on the *five cent blue* stamp. The

