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# Guide to the George Washington Collection 1776-1792



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## Descriptive Summary

<b>Identifier</b>	ICU.SPCL.WASHINGTONG
<b>Title</b>	Washington, George. Collection
<b>Date</b>	1776-1792
<b>Size</b>	0.25 linear feet (1 box)
<b>Repository</b>	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
<b>Abstract</b>	George Washington (1732 –1799) first President of the United States of America and was one of the country’s founding fathers. The collection contains five original or facsimile documents written by Washington, from 1776 to 1792.

## Information on Use

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Washington, George. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

## Biographical Note

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, in Colonial Beach, Virginia, to Augustine Washington (1694-1743) and his wife, Mary Ball Washington (1708-1789). Descended from English gentry, Washington’s family were moderately prosperous members of the Virginia gentry, building wealth through ownership of tobacco plantations and slave labor. Washington had a number of sibling, though only six reached maturity. Washington’s education consisted of a variety of tutors as well as a brief period in a school run by an Anglican clergyman. Thanks to his half-brother Laurence’s connection to the powerful Fairfax family, Washington was appointed the official surveyor for Culpeper Country which was well-paid and allowed him to expand his land holdings.

Washington became increasingly involved in the military, having been appointed to the rank of major in the Virginia militia in 1753. While never officially gaining commission in the British army, Washington gained a great deal of military and political leadership skills in the 1750s,

largely from his involvement in the Seven Years' War and subsequent commission as "Colonel of the Virginia Regiment and Commander in Chief of all forces now raised in the defense of His Majesty's Colony" by Lt. Governor Dindwiddie.

Washington is obviously best known militarily for his involvement in the American Revolution (1775-1783). Continually growing in influence, especially from his increasingly opposition to British rule, Washington was appointed General and Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army created by Congress to lead the war against Britain. The history of the American Revolution is too complex to go into in greater detail here, but it was throughout this war that Washington cemented his name, if not as a particularly able military strategist, then as a strong political leader and someone with the ability to surround himself with equally effective generals and leaders.

After the war, Washington was unanimously elected president in both the 1789 and the 1792 elections. As president, he established many traditions of the office still in place today, including the cabinet system, the two-term tradition, and the title of "Mr. President," among many others. As president, Washington oversaw successful navigation of the French Revolutionary Wars, the Whiskey Rebellion, and won support of the vast majority of Americans. He help establish a strong, well-financed central government and defended the principles of Republicanism.

Washington retired in 1797 and returned to Mount Vernon, one of his first purchases of land as a young man. He turned his focus to his plantations and business interests. Washington was offered the position of lieutenant general and Commander-in-Chief by President Adams in preparation for war with France. Washington accepted and served as a senior officer of the U.S. Army until his death in on December 14, 1799.

### **Scope Note**

The George Washington Collection contains a small set original and facsimile documents written by Washington. In these letters and manuscripts, Washington discusses mainly political and military happenings, such as the appointment of Henry Lee to the government of Virginia, and a request to Pierre Van Cortlandt for supplies for his troops. Also included in the collection is an abstract from the Potomack Bill, discussing the responsibility of the president and directors of a company that would construct canals and locks. Finally, the collection also contains a photocopied facsimile of one letter. Items are dated from 1776-1792 and are arranged in chronological order.

The collection was previously part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection.

### **Subject Headings**

- Lee, Henry, 1756-1818
- Washington, George, 1732-1799
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- Potomac Company -- History
- 
- 

## INVENTORY

### Box 1

#### Folder 1

Letter: Cambridge, Mass., to Pierre Van Cortlandt, [New York], 1776 Feb. 10.

- Autograph letter signed. Signed by Washington. Washington writes that his troops are in great need of arms and asks Van Cortlandt to procure as many as he can.
- Silked.
- Transferred from Codex Manuscript 684.

### Box 1

#### Folder 2

Letter: Headquarters, Valley Forge, Pa., to Thomas Wharton, [Lancaster, Pa.], 1778 Apr. 6.

- Draft letter signed. Signed by Washington. Requests of acting Governor Wharton safe passage for four women who are seeking release of Quakers exiled in Virginia. According to the book, *Exiles in Virginia* (1848), the final draft of the letter was in the Office of Public Documents, Harrisburg, Pa.

### Box 1

#### Folder 3

Abstract from the Potomack [sic] bill: manuscript, [1784?].

- Autograph document. Outlines responsibilities of the president and directors of a company that would construct canals and locks.
- Signed G.W., but probably traced from another document.

### Box 1

#### Folder 4

Letter : Philadelphia, to Henry Lee, [Richmond, Va.], 1791 Dec. 7.

- Autograph letter signed. Signed by Washington who congratulates Lee on his "appointment to the government of Virginia."

### Box 1

#### Folder 5

Letter: George Washington to John Sinclair, photocopy of facsimile, 1792 Oct. 20.