



“... the constitution is the guide, which I will never abandon.”

GEORGE WASHINGTON TO THE BOSTON SELECTMEN, JULY 28, 1795

Building His Library

Washington's Acts of Congress will be a centerpiece of The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon. The library will serve as a center for scholarly research, a site for leadership training programs, and a place for safeguarding original Washington volumes. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, a private, not-for-profit organization, is constructing the library and building its slate of innovative programs. Learn how you can help support this mission at MountVernon.org.

The gallery video presentation was produced by American History TV on C-SPAN3 for this exhibit.

George Washington's
MOUNT VERNON
P.O. Box 110, Mount Vernon, Virginia 22121
703-780-2000 | MountVernon.org

George Washington's
ANNOTATED COPY OF

The Constitution and Bill of Rights, 1789



The Presidential Libraries of the National Archives

The Book's Journey

1789

Printed by Francis Childs and John Swaine. Acquired by Washington after the end of the Congressional session on September 29.

1797

Brought to Mount Vernon by Washington after his retirement from the presidency in March.

1799

Listed in the inventory taken after Washington's death in December 1799. Willed to his nephew Bushrod Washington, who inherited Mount Vernon upon Martha Washington's death.

1859

Remained in Washington family hands after the sale of the estate to the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

1876

Sold at auction to Philadelphia lawyer and historian Charles Henry Hart.

1892

Sold again at auction. Owned by California philanthropist Phoebe Apperson Hearst and then her son, newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst.

1941

Sold to Henry Flynt of Greenwich, Connecticut by a New York dealer. Mr. Flynt and his wife founded the Heritage Foundation of Deerfield, Massachusetts.

1964

Sold at auction by the Heritage Foundation of Deerfield, Massachusetts to H. Richard Dietrich, Jr. for the Dietrich American Foundation.

2012

Acquired by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association on June 22 for The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon.



Nationwide Tour

The Presidential Libraries of the National Archives are honored to host this historic book for a national tour March-September 2013.

Herbert Hoover Library

West Branch, Iowa | www.hoover.archives.gov

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

Hyde Park, New York | www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu

Harry S. Truman Library

Independence, Missouri | www.trumanlibrary.org

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

Abilene, Kansas | www.eisenhower.archives.gov

John F. Kennedy Library

Boston, Massachusetts | www.jfklibrary.org

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

Austin, Texas | www.lbjlibrary.org

Richard Nixon Library

Yorba Linda, California | www.nixonlibrary.gov

Gerald R. Ford Library

Grand Rapids, Michigan | www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov

Jimmy Carter Library

Atlanta, Georgia | www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov

Ronald Reagan Library

Simi Valley, California | www.reaganlibrary.gov

George Bush Library

College Station, Texas | <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu>

William J. Clinton Library

Little Rock, Arkansas | www.clintonlibrary.gov

George W. Bush Library

Dallas, Texas | www.georgewbushlibrary.smu.edu

For tour details please visit
www.archives.gov/exhibits/acts-of-congress

About the Book

One of the most historic publications owned by Washington, the book testifies to his crucial role in the implementation and interpretation of the Constitution and the establishment of the new American government. The first Congress ordered the printing of 600 copies of the Acts, which were distributed to federal and state government officials. Chief Justice John Jay and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson owned volumes similar to Washington's.

Property of the President

This custom-bound copy of the Acts is embossed in gilt letters reading "President of the United States." Washington's bold signature appears on the right corner of the title page. He also pasted his engraved armorial bookplate to the inside front cover. The bookplate features the Washington family coat of arms and the motto "exitus acta probat," which translates to "the result is the test of the actions."

Washington's Notes

The most significant features of this book are Washington's personal notes, penciled in the margins. Washington only rarely inserted notes or markings in his books, choosing instead to make notes on separate sheets of loose-leaf paper. All of his notes in this volume appear alongside the text of the Constitution, where he drew neat brackets to highlight passages of particular interest. In Article Two, spelling out the powers and duties of the president, he added the words "President," "Powers," and "Required." He also marked passages in Article One concerning the president's power to veto Congressional legislation – a critical element of the Constitution's system of checks and balances on governmental power.