



◀ Button from Washington's inauguration

The Sacred Fire of Liberty

“The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are . . . staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.”

—George Washington,
First Inaugural Address, 1789

◀ Advisers to President Washington (far right) included (from left) Henry Knox, Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Randolph, and Alexander Hamilton.

Washington Takes Office

Objectives

- Discuss how the new government was organized during Washington's presidency.
- Explain why the new nation faced an economic crisis.
- Identify the three parts of Hamilton's financial plan.
- Describe how Washington responded to the Whiskey Rebellion.

Reading Skill

Identify Similes Similes use the signal words *like* or *as* to connect two items being compared. The comparison helps the reader to imagine the description more fully. For example, “the gunfire echoed like thunder” creates a mental image of the sound of a battle. Look for similes as you read this section.

Key Terms

inauguration
precedent
bond

speculator
unconstitutional
tariff

Why It Matters In 1789, the American people had a new Constitution. They also had a new Congress and their first President. The United States was one fourth of its size today. All thirteen states were in the East. The nation's western border followed the Mississippi River. In the North, the Great Lakes formed much of the border separating the United States from British-controlled Canada. In the South, the United States bordered on Spanish-controlled Florida and Louisiana.

Section Focus Question: How did President Washington set the course for the new nation?

The First President

In April of 1789, George Washington traveled from Virginia to the nation's capital, New York City, to begin his term as the first President of the United States. Washington's journey along bumpy roads took eight days. Large crowds lined the streets. As one newspaper reported, Americans greatly admired the tall, stately war hero:

“Many persons in the crowd were heard to say they should now die contented—nothing being wanted to complete their happiness . . . but the sight of the savior of his country.”

—*Gazette of the United States*, April 1789

