



陈 奔◎主编

美国历史上的总统

从乔治·华盛顿到乔治·W.布什 (上册)

The Presidents in American History:

From George Wasington to

George W. Bush

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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

美国历史上的总统：从乔治·华盛顿到乔治·W. 布什 / 陈奔主编.

长春：吉林人民出版社，2016.5

ISBN 978-7-206-12498-3

I. ①美…

II. ①陈…

III. ①总统-生平事迹-美国

IV. ①K837.127

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2016) 第 123501 号

美国历史上的总统：从乔治·华盛顿到乔治·W. 布什

主 编：陈 奔

责任编辑：郭 威

封面设计：中联学林

吉林人民出版社出版发行（长春市人民大街 7548 号 邮政编码：130022）

印 刷：北京天正元印务有限公司

开 本：710mm × 1000mm 1/16

印 张：30.5 字 数：540 千字

标准书号：ISBN 978-7-206-12498-3

版 次：2016 年 6 月第 1 版 印 次：2016 年 6 月第 1 次印刷

定 价：88.00 元（上、下册）

如发现印装质量问题，影响阅读，请与出版社联系调换。

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1. George Washington

(1789—1797)

Part One: Washington's Early Life

George Washington was born on Feb 22, 1732, at the family estate on the south bank of the Potomac River nearly the mouth of Pope's Creek, Westmoreland, Virginia. He was Christened on April 5, 1732 and named after George Eskridge, a lawyer in whose charge George's mother had been left when she was an orphan.

Washington was a half first cousin twice removed of President James Madison, a second cousin seven times removed of Queen Elizabeth of the U. K., a third cousin twice removed of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, and an eighth cousin six times removed of Winston Churchill.

Through his paternal grandmother, Mildred Wanner Washington, Washington descended from King Edward III of England. His great grandfather John Washington sailed to America about 1656, intending to remain just long enough to take on a load of tobacco. But shortly after pushing off the return trip, his boat sank. Thus John remained in Virginia, where he met and married Anne Pope, the president's great-grandmother. His father, Augustine Washington, was a planter who spent much of his time acquiring and overseeing some 10,000 acres of land and about 50 slaves in the Potomac region. On March 6, 1732, he married Mary Ball, who gave birth to George Washington and 11 months later, his father died when George was 11 years old. George was fatherless and orphaned at 12, however, George's relationship with his mother was forever strained. Animosity between mother and son persisted till her death from cancer in the first year of his presidency.

George had two half brothers to live to maturity—Lawrence Washington and Augustine Washington, the former, 14 years his senior, imposed the single greatest influence on young George. George looked upon him as a surrogate father and undoubtedly sought to emulate him. Without their mother's adamant opposition, George might have started a career at sea by serving the British navy at the thought of his stepbrother Lawrence. At 16, George moved with Lawrence at his father's estate which he called Mount Vernon, where he honed his surveying skills and received a smaller part of the inheritance from his father's great estate, while the largest share of the inheritance went to his half brother Lawrence.

Mary Washington refused to send George to school in England, like her late husband had done for his older boys, but instead exposed him to the irregular education common in Virginia. It is clear that what little education he received was closely supervised by his possessive mother, who was determined to keep her eldest son as close to her as possible. By age 11, he had picked up basic reading, writing and math, which was his best subject. The young George grew up enjoying hunting, fishing, and horseback riding. He did not attend university, but this never affected his outlook or vision on his way of American Independence.

Washington was a large, powerful man, about six feet two inches tall, 175 pounds in his prime, up to more than 200 pounds in later years. Erect in bearing, muscular, broad shouldered, he had large hands and feet, a long face with high cheek-bones, a large straight nose, determined chin, blue-gray eyes beneath heavy brows and dark brown hair. His fair complexion bore the marks of smallpox he contracted when he was young. He lost his teeth to gum disease, and wore dentures. Upon his inauguration as president, Washington had only one of his own teeth left. He began wearing reading glasses during the Revolution. He dressed fashionably.

A man of quiet strength, Washington took few friends into complete confidence. His critics mistook his dignified reserve for pomposity. Life for him was a serious mission, a job to be tackled soberly and unremittingly. He had little sense of humor. Although basically good-natural, he wrestled with his temper and sometimes lost. He was a poor speaker and could become utterly inarticulate without a prepared text. He preferred to express himself on paper. But when he did speak, he was candid, direct, and looked at people squarely in the eye. Neither his ambition to succeed nor his acquisitive nature ever threatened his basic integrity.

Washington was a towering figure both in physique and accomplishments. Aristocratic bearing of his six-foot-two-inch figure and the calm nobility of his face created awe in those who saw him. His presence, coupled with the battlefield miracle he had accomplished, made him an idol among his contemporaries. But idolatry brought with it a difficulty. People both then and now refused to accept the truth that Washington was mortal, a man with normal appetites – a man who loved women, enjoyed gambling, liked to dance all night, and prided himself on his fine horse. They interpreted as a god-like coldness his self-conscious determination not to make any blunders that could reveal the background of a poor educated orphan who had achieved success and riches by a combination of luck, ingenuity, and resolution. Legends about his strength and honesty won more ready acceptance as fact than understanding of the human qualities that both hindered and helped him on his way to immortality.

Part Two: The Road to the Presidency

In 1749, Washington accepted his first appointment of surveyor of Culpeper County, Virginia. Two years later, he accompanied his half brother Lawrence to Barbados, where Lawrence died of tuberculous and Washington came down with a near-fatal dose of smallpox. With the death of Lawrence and his daughter in 1752, Washington inherited Mount Vernon, an estate that prospered under his management and one that throughout his life served as welcome refuge from the pressures of public life.

In the French and Indian War 1754—1763, Washington received his first military appointment as a major in the Virginia militia in 1752 and was promoted to lieutenant colonel in March 1754. One year later, he was promoted to colonel and regimental commander. He resigned from militia in December, 1758 following his election to Virginia House. Washington joined those protesting Britain's colonel policy and favored cutting trade sharply but opposed a suspension of all commerce with Britain. He also did not approve of the Boston Tea Party of December 1773. But before long he came to realize that reconciliation with the mother country was no longer possible. From then on, Washington served on various military preparation committees and was chairman of the committee to consider ways to raise arms and ammunition for the coming

Revolution. John Adams urged that Washington be named commander-in-chief of the newly authorized Continental army. In June, 1775, delegates unanimously approved the choice of Washington, both for his military experience and, all the more to enlist a prominent Virginian to lead a struggle that had been spearheaded largely by northern revolutionaries. He accepted with modesty, rejecting any pay for the position, and expressed his willingness to accept any repayment of his expenses.

On July 4, 1776, with the approval of the Continental Congress of the Declaration of Independence, the colonies formally broke off all ties with England. The new country would be forced to stand on its own, if they could drive out the British troops.

Because he was a military man, it was natural that Washington's thoughts turned to the use of force when actions of the British government interfered with rights of the colonists. In March, 1776, he succeeded in forcing the British to sail away from Boston, leaving the city in the hands of American forces. July 4, 1776, led by Washington and other forefathers, the Americans acclaimed independence from the United Kingdom and set up the United States of America. He followed this victory with another at Princeton the first week of January, 1777. The American cause was strengthened in October when General Horatio Gates won a major victory at Saratoga, New York, capturing the British General John Burgoyne and about 5,000 British troops.

From the summer of 1778 through the summer of 1781, Washington kept the main part of the British army sealed in New York City. During these years, he faced and overcame one discouragement after another as inaction led to grumbling and dissatisfaction by his soldiers, while a weak Congress had to be continuously prodded to supply necessary money and supplies. On October 19, 1781, Washington experienced the greatest and the most decisive triumph of his military career when Lord Cornwallis surrendered his entire army of more than 7,000 men. In November 1783, two months after the formal peace treaty was signed, Washington resigned his commission and returned home to the neglected fields of Mount Vernon.

Part Three: Washington's Administration

Throughout the states, there was a general assumption that Washington would be

the first President under the Constitution. This belief made it easier for the states to accept the idea of a strong national executive, because they were sure Washington would never abuse the great powers granted to the office. On Feb 4, 1789, Washington, a Virginia delegate, was unanimously elected president of the convention. He was among those favoring a strong government.

Through much discussion and argument, the Constitution was written based on an ancient Greek concept of a nation ruled by its citizens with officials elected by the people. Many of the provisions of the Constitution were based on the people in charge at that time, and the scope of the powers given to the President indicated the high regard the delegates felt for George Washington, whom they had named president of the Convention. Even before the Constitution was ratified, he was being urged to accept the position of the first President of the United States.

However, according to the historic notes recently publicized in 1987, Washington was far from being fully confident in the Constitution, for he did not actively seek the presidency, but he felt it was his duty to serve if the Electoral College chose him. He once said privately that he did not expect the Constitution to last more than 20 years.

As a Federalist, Washington was obviously the most appropriate choice for the first president of the U. S. As a proven leader whose popularity transcended the conflict between Federalists and those opposed to a strong central government, the man most responsible for winning independence, a modest country gentleman with a wise aversion to the limelight, Washington so dominated the political landscape that not 1 of the 69 electors voted against him, carrying all 10 states, and becoming the only president elected by a unanimous electoral vote in 1789.

On his first term, Washington established the presidential veto in April 1792, when for the first time in American history a president turned down legislation passed by Congress. Although Washington insisted that the president should be a strong leader, he also felt that the three main branches of the government should be as separate as possible. Therefore, he did not personally endeavor to sway Congress to pass legislation that he favored. Instead, he left this to his department heads, particularly Secretary of State Jefferson and Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton.

Washington now faced four major problems upon assuming the presidency:

- 1) Organizing the new government and making many necessary appointments;
- 2) Straightening out the tangled financial affairs of the nation;

3) Obtaining better relations with Great Britain;

4) Negotiating treaties with the Indian tribes on the frontiers.

Fortunately, with his extraordinary administrative managing skills, he successfully achieved solutions to each of them during the course of his administration.

Despite the growing strength of Democratic-Republicans, Washington continued to enjoy virtually universal support in 1792. Again he won the vote of all the 132 electors, and thus carried all 15 states.

Because Jefferson represented the agrarian South and Hamilton the commercial North, Hamilton and his supporters promoted the Federalist party, while Jefferson and his followers became known as anti-Federalists or Democratic-Republicans. So it was natural that their views were often opposed to each other on important national issues. It distressed Washington to see this division between two men that he admired, and he was deeply concerned that the political parties they fostered were likely to divide the country. And other patriots were worried that the new government would collapse if Washington left the Presidency. Washington himself fully realized that it was a strong possibility, and agreed reluctantly to serve a second term, if elected.

Washington's second term began fairly uneventful, but the next year war broke out between England and France. Washington felt the new government of the U. S. should remain neutral, but Jefferson thought aid should be given to France. In this dispute, Jefferson resigned as Secretary of State and Hamilton threatened to resign. His second term was vastly different from his first. He felt betrayed when two closest advisers resigned from his Cabinet – Jefferson in the summer of 1793 and Hamilton early in 1795. Violent political attacks began to be directed at Washington himself by the Democratic-Republican newspapers. The excitement of forming the new government was over, and he found it increasingly difficult to find good men to replace those who retired.

The Federalists under Hamilton and Adams and the Democratic-Republicans under Jefferson joined battle soon after he announced his retirement. Washington's warning to remain aloof from European struggles was better heeded. "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations," he advised, "is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop." Isolationism remained the dominant feature in American foreign policy for the

next 100 years.

"Many things which appear of little importance in themselves and at the beginning," Washington once observed, "may have great and durable consequences from their having been established at the commencement of a new general government." With this in mind, he proceeded cautiously, acting only when it seemed necessary to flesh out the bare-bones framework of government described so sparingly in the Constitution.

In the area of foreign relations, Washington's task was made exceedingly difficult by the general war in Europe, in which Britain and the other monarchies fought against the new French republic. Washington proclaimed a policy of "strict neutrality" that was opposed by Jefferson and the Democratic-Republicans. Criticism of Washington by the Democratic-Republicans reached a peak in 1795 when he signed the Jay Treaty, a trade agreement with Britain that had been negotiated by Chief Justice John Jay.

On the domestic scene, the greatest crisis of Washington's second term was the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania, which he went to crash with 15,000 militia when the farmers there refused to pay federal excise taxes on the whiskey they distilled from their grain.

The last years of Washington's administration was relatively quiet and uneventful. Economic conditions improved as a result of trade stimulated by the Jay Treaty. Attacks on Washington by the Democratic-Republicans diminished both in violence and frequency. Efforts were underway to persuade him to accept a third term, but he published his eloquent Farewell Address on September 19, 1796, ending talk of his candidacy and setting the important two-term precedent.

After making his farewell speech to Congress and turning the presidency over to John Adams on March 4, 1797, Washington, 65, returned to his Mount Vernon to enjoy his retirement. However, Washington was not to be left in the peaceful retirement he had contemplated. For several months in 1798, he had to be busy helping choose the generals and officers for the army prepared for the threatening war with France.

In his last year, Washington faced a financial crisis: Money owed him from the sale or rental of real estate was past due at a time when his taxes and entertainment bills were climbing and a few bad crop years left their finances in a decline. Nevertheless, Washington felt an obligation to continue Martha's standard of living on the same level as her first husband had provided, and he allowed her the same luxuries she had

enjoyed in her first marriage. Another drain on the Washington family finances was the care and feeding of a never-ending stream of guests at Mr. Vernon. Between 1768 and 1775, they entertained about 2 000 people. Some were relatives or good friends, others just passing by. As a result, at age 67 he was compelled for the first time in life to borrow money from a bank.

On the early morning of December 14, 1799, Washington woke up with a sore throat and later in the day his voice grew hoarse. Then with severe chills he was having trouble breathing and speaking. Despite of nearly one-day treatment by three doctors, he seemed to be in a worse condition. Finally, Washington told them to give up, speaking weakly: "I am just going. Have me decently buried and do not let my body be put into a vault in less than two days after I am dead. Do you understand me?" "Yes, Sir," replied Tobias Lear, one of the doctors, "Tis well," said Washington, these were his last words. The funeral services, conducted on December 18, were far from the simple ceremony Washington had requested. His remains were deposited in the family tomb at Mount Vernon. Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, one of his former officers, gave the eulogy that contained the famous description of Washington:

"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen, he was second to none."

According to Washington's instructions, half of his 300 slaves should be freed at his death except those too old to work or children too young. He even had hoped to educate these black people, but Virginia passed a law forbidding their education, so this part of his will could not be carried out. A nephew of George's would inherit Mt. Vernon at Martha's death. Both Washington and Martha are entombed at Mt. Vernon, as Washington had planned years before.

Part Four: Washington's Private Life

Young George was somewhat stiff and awkward with girls, and actually, before he married Martha, his love life was full of disappointment. Washington first fell in love with Betsy Fauntleroy, the daughter of a justice and Burgess from Richmond County, Virginia. Betsy was 16 when she attracted Washington. He pressed his suit repeatedly, but, repulsed at every turn, he finally gave up.

During a trip to Boston to straighten a military matter in 1756, Washington stopped off in New York, and there met Mary Philips, 26 years old, daughter of a wealthy landowner. He remained there for a week and is said to have proposed. Mary later married Roger Morris, who turned out to be a staunch Tory during the American Revolution.

Later, at the time Washington proposed to and was accepted in marriage by Martha Dandridge Custis, he was apparently involved with his neighbor's wife Sally Fairfax. He was crazily caught by her easy charm, graceful bearing, good humor, rare beauty and intelligence. Upon a not short passionate courtship, the relationship came to end for the Fairfaxes would not come to share Washington's passion for an independent America.

On January 6, 1759, Washington, 26, married Martha Dandridge Custis, 27, a widow with two children at her estate, known at the White House. Their marriage appeared to have been a solid one, never troubled by infidelity or clash of temperament, during the American Revolution Martha endured considerable hardship to visit her husband at field headquarters.

Both the Washingtons enjoyed spending money, and they lived well. At first there was plenty money, but a few bad crop years left their finances in a decline. Nevertheless, Washington felt an obligation to continue Martha's standard of living on the same level as Custis had provided, and he allowed her same luxuries she had enjoyed in her first marriage. Another drain on the Washington family finance was the care and feeding of never-ending stream of guests at Mt. Vernon. As the First Lady, Mrs Washington hosted many affairs of state at New York City and Philadelphia. Between 1768 and 1775, they entertained about 2,000 people. Some were relatives or good friends, others just passing by.

Washington continued to have health problems, especially fevers. On December 12, 1799, he caught a heavy cold after ridding over his estate for more than five hours on horseback. A sleety storm began before he could get back home. Two days later, he died.

After Washington's death in 1799, Martha grew morose and died on May 22, 1802. The Washington's never had children of their own.

2. John Adams

(1797—1801)

Part One: Adams' Early Life

A Fifth-generation American, John Adams was born on October 30, 1735 in Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts. He was named after his father, who was a farmer, leather craftsman, Harvard graduate believing in education. In the mind of young John, he was "The honestest man I ever Knew," he once said of his father. It was his father's example that feuded young John's ambition. His father died in the flu epidemic of 1761. John's mother was called Susanna Boylston Adams, who married his father in 1734. She is among the least well known of the famous Adams family, for her name appears infrequently in the large body of Adam's writings. Five years after the death of her husband, she married John Hall, who did not get along well with her grown children. Like George Washington's mother, she died in the first year of her son's presidency.

Adams had two younger brothers —Peter Boylston Adams, farmer, militia captain of Braintree, and Elihu Adams, who while a company commander in the militia during the American Revolution, died from a "contagious distemper."

Adams had four children to live to maturity. Abigail "Nabby" Adams married a veteran officer of the Revolution and secretary to her father in London. She died of cancer after having suffered from three years of severe pain. John Quincy Adams was the sixth president. Charles Adams was lawyer, a bright engaging young man with an outstanding personality in this reserved family, he died an alcoholic at age 30. Thomas Boylston Adams was also a lawyer. From his first case, a sensational trial at which he

defended the owners of a local brothel, he built a modest practice in Philadelphia and served abroad as secretary to his older brother John Quincy, but he, too, drank excessively and died in debt.

John Adams was a second cousin to Samuel Adams, patriot and signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a third cousin to his own wife, Abigail Smith Adams.

In his childhood, John's favorite pastime was hunting. He even took his gun along to school so that he could take to the field at dismissal without having to go home first. He caught time to read and write in his early childhood. In 1751, at the age of 16, Adams entered Harvard College. Class standing in those days depended not on scholastic achievements, but rather on the social position of one's family. Adams ranked slightly below average, 15 th of the 24 students in class. He mostly enjoyed maths and philosophy. His four years at Harvard turned him around intellectually. "I soon perceived a growing curiosity, a love of books and a fondness for study," he wrote of his college days in his autobiography, "which dissipated all my inclination for sports, and even for the society of the ladies." He graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1755. After graduation, Adams taught school for a year in Worcester, Massachusetts, and then decided to become a lawyer. He studied for two years in the office of a Worcester attorney, James Putnam, and in November 1758 he was admitted to the Massachusetts bar. Shortly after, he began law practice in Braintree.

Adams was short, about five feet six inches, stocky in his youth, and portly in middle age. He had quick blue eyes and fine brown hair. Ironically, Adams, the longest-living president, was beset by a train of maladies throughout his 90 years. "My constitution is a glass bubble." He once said. "There are few people in this world with whom I can converse," Adams once admitted. "I can treat all with decency and civility, and converse with them, when it is necessary, on points of business. But I am never happy in their company." This confession sums up the paradox of Adams' personality—he genuinely loved and had deep compassion for humanity but never learned to deal with individual human beings. To his immediate family, he was a warm, generous loving man; to outsiders, he appeared cold, aloof and conceited. As a young man, he was determined to be a man of substance and, if circumstances afforded the opportunity, a great man. He wrestled with his passion throughout his life.

Adams belonged to Unitarian branch of Congregationalism. "My religion is founded

on the love of God and my neighbor." He once reflected as he approached death and believed that although Christ was a great and good man whose example of piety, love and universal brotherhood was the ideal that all people and nations should emulate; he was, after all, still a human being, not the son of God, not the word-made flesh. Adams was confident of life after death and had little use of trappings or organized religion. He believed that one needed only to follow good conscience God gave him and follow the precepts set forth in the Bible in order to be a solid Christian.

Adams liked walking outdoors daily, but his most absorbing hobby was his private library, whose volumes of books he spoon-fed to his children and grandchildren. Not content with simply to read a book, Adams criticized the text, marking the pages with incisive marginalia. Among his regret in old age was that he did not have enough time to learn Chinese in order to read their ancient texts. An inveterate diarist, Adams recorded fine word sketches of people, places, and events. He also collected souvenirs from his many travels. At Stratford-upon-Avon, he even shamelessly carved out a sliver of wood from a chair in Shakespeare's birthplace.

Part Two: The Road to the White House

When the British parliament passed the Stamp Act in 1765, John and his elder cousin Sam Adams took active roles in urging opposition to it. Sam Adams helped organize the Son of Liberty, a patriotic organization that stirred up mob action against the British, while John Adams prepared resolutions against the tax that were approved by Braintree and other Massachusetts towns.

In 1766 Adams moved his family to Boston in order to improve his law practice. His most famous case came with the defense of a British captain and eight soldiers who fired into a mob in the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770. It was a courageous case that nearly cost him his career. In this case, Adams strongly felt that the British authorities who had stationed the troops in Boston were more guilty than the soldiers who actually fired the shots. Adams and his associate, Josiah Quincy, succeeded in winning the acquittal of the British captain and six of his soldiers. Although many Boston patriots, including Sam Adams, denounced John for defending the British soldiers, he also won wide respect for the sense of justice that had led him to take the case.