WASHINGTON
The Myths and the Man

VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF HISTORY & CULTURE
As commander-in-chief, George Washington led the Continental Army to victory. As president of the Constitutional Convention, he helped forge the independent states into a nation. As the first President of the United States, he established precedents that continue to define that office. After his death in 1799, Washington was “above the clouds,” to paraphrase Mason Locke Weems, the general’s most popular biographer. The glorification of Washington continued for more than a century, culminating in the romanticized and popular history paintings of the Philadelphia artist Jean Leon Gerome Ferris (1863–1930). These canvases present a remarkably appealing and virtuous figure, but provide limited reliable information about the “Father of our Country.” This exhibition presents 13 original paintings by Ferris along with 17 historical records that reveal facts about Washington’s life and about the man behind the myth.

“Lighthorse Harry” Lee eulogized that Washington was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen. . . . The purity of his private character gave effulgence to his public virtues.” This exhibit focuses on Washington’s private life at Mount Vernon to reveal what motivated Washington the public servant.

The exhibition is supported in part by the Robins Foundation.
EXHIBIT SPECIFICATIONS

1  Main text panel
6  Subtext panels
13  Framed original paintings
17  Reproduction panels

Size: 1700 square feet
Rental period: 4 months
Display period: 3 months

For rental pricing and availability please contact:

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The War Years

1775–1783

I have been called upon by the unanimous voice of the Colonies to take the command of the Continental army. It is an honour I cannot lightly shun, or wait by any means for acceptance.
American Cincinnatus

1783–1789
The First President & Retirement

1789–1799

You are now entering into that
hope of life when good, or bad habits are
formed... When the mind is not be turned to
virtue, a praise worthy, or to dissipation.