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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Washington’s Youth
1732–1752
Virginia Soldier and Planter
1753–1775
The War Years
1775–1783
You are now entering into what
the next forty years of life are
to be. When good, or bad habits are
formed, they will be hard to
resist, and a person may grow.

The First President & Retirement
1789–1799