

The Uncommon Man

The great British statesman and four times Prime Minister, William E. Gladstone, once proposed the creation of a grouping of pedestals for statues of history's most famous men. One pedestal stood higher than all the rest, and Gladstone was asked to identify the figure to be given the place of honor. Without a moment's hesitation, he named George Washington.

[At the meeting of Congress] in Philadelphia, December 1799, one of Washington's finest military commanders, the famous cavalry general, Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, now Congressman from Virginia (and later to become that state's governor) upon hearing of the death of our first president, rose to his feet and with tears in his eyes spoke for all Americans for all time when he said of Washington, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Many students of history consider George Washington to be the greatest man who ever lived. Certainly, he was the greatest American - a brilliant, educated, successful man who risked everything for the freedom of our country.

Washington was a man of great moral character. He was forthright, honest, charitable and a gentle man of quiet modesty and proper deportment - considerate, kind and courteous. Washington was also a man of great talent. He was knowledgeable in agriculture, was a surveyor with an established reputation, and early in life became a land owner of some importance and considerable wealth.

He was held in such respect that at the age of 21 he was made a Major and Adjutant of the Virginia Militia, and so distinguished himself that at the age of 23 was made Commander in Chief of the Frontier Forces of Virginia.

Washington had a commanding appearance. He was the most physically impressive of all of our Presidents, and in his prime stood over 6 feet 4 inches tall and was a lean and powerful 225 pounds. In addition, this handsome figure had a distinct military bearing.

Washington was appropriately described by colleagues and writers of the time as ".....straight, tall, wide-shouldered, with head well shaped, large straight nose, penetrating blue-gray eyes, a long handsome face terminating in a good firm chin, clear fair skin, firm mouth, and a commanding countenance; with speech, movement and gestures which are agreeable, differential, engaging and graceful."

Most important of all, Washington was a man with a total sense of responsibility, unquestioned integrity and deep devotion to God.