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**(George Washington Iconography) His Excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON Esqr
Commander in chief of the AMERICAN ARMIES. The Protector of his COUNTRY, The
Supporter of LIBERTY, And the Benefactor of Mankind May his name never be
forgotten.**

Stock#: 93359
Map Maker: Anonymous

Date: 1781 - 1785 circa
Place: Np.
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: Good
Size: 11 x 14 inches

Price: \$ 29,500.00



Description:

Superlatively Rare 18th-Century American Engraving of "His Excellency" George Washington

Among the Rarest Examples of 18th-Century Washington Iconography

Paul Revere's "Gallant Warrior" Engraving of Washington?

This captivating and unusual 18th-century American engraving of George Washington has puzzled scholars of Washington iconography for over a century. The engraving's status as an unsigned work of extreme rarity has long been a stumbling block to discovering its full story. Wendy Wick Reaves, Senior Curator of Prints & Drawings at the National Portrait Gallery, identified two editions and several states of the print, but still concluded "very little is known about this equestrian engraving."

Drawer Ref: Curiosities - People

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While recent authorities have made valiant attempts at deciphering the engraving, none has been definitive. After careful comparisons between the few extant examples of the engraving, we have discovered that all early (i.e., 18th century) impressions of this print were made from the same, albeit continually modified, copperplate. By taking a closer look at the object itself and picking up the various threads left by earlier connoisseurs, we can significantly advance our understanding of the engraving, getting closer to a likely date of production and a possible maker. And while further study is needed, there are hints that suggest Amos Doolittle or even Paul Revere as a possible maker.

Attributing the Engraving

Earlier authorities have largely side-stepped the issue of attributing the portrait. Monsky's 2002 article in the *Winterthur Portfolio* comes closest to offering an answer, but he does not go so far as to formally attribute it.

In our examination of the portrait's authorship, we assert that two distinguished 18th-century American engravers, Paul Revere and Amos Doolittle, emerge as strong candidates. We endeavor to explore each possibility in detail, offering insight into the rationale behind our assertions and contributing to the ongoing debate.

In our analysis, we argue that this engraving could potentially be Paul Revere's long-lost so-called "Gallant Warrior" portrait of Washington. This assertion challenges the earlier proposed metal cut attributed to Revere, first advanced by Hart in 1904 (Wick 6). The present portrait better fits the established circumstantial evidence about the identity of the "Gallant Warrior" portrait, and further archival research may reveal substantial evidence to support this hypothesis.

On the other hand, our investigation also uncovers a compelling case for attributing the portrait to Amos Doolittle, suggesting the work might serve as a precursor to his acclaimed Washington portrait, *A Display of the United States of America* (circa 1788).

In the subsequent sections, we will thoroughly analyze both possibilities, delving into the evidence that supports each artist's potential involvement in crafting this significant portrait of Washington.

Paul Revere's Engraving of George Washington as a "Gallant Warrior"

Clarence S. Brigham summarized the background story behind Paul Revere's "lost" engraving of George



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Washington in his exhaustive and classic 1954 study of Revere's engravings:

*On October 26, 1781, Paul Revere wrote a letter to his cousin Mathias Rivoire in France, in which he says: "Before this reaches you, you will have heard of the victory gained over the British Army by the Allied Armies commanded by the brave General Washington. (A small engraving of him, I send enclosed, it is said to be a good likeness and it is my engraving)." Rivoire replied, thanking his cousin for the "engraving of General Washington representing a gallant warrior." (E. H. Goss's *Life of Paul Revere*, Volume 2, page 502).*

The critical variables for attribution of the portrait therefore are:

- **The portrait is unsigned.** This is determined from both Revere's need to explicitly mention his authorship and from the fact that no signed portrait is known to exist.
- **The portrait is an engraving.** This is as opposed to a woodblock or metal cut. Revere states this twice, leaving little ambiguity.
- **Washington is represented in the form of "gallant warrior".** The wording here is both critical and complicated, as the transcription is based on a translation rather than the original French in which Rivoire is assumed to have written.
- **The portrait is "small".** Nearly all 1780s American engravings were small even by early 19th-century standards (and certainly by French standards of the time). The engraving must have been small enough to be included with a letter, but beyond that, not much can be said. After all, was Revere being self-effacing (or humble-bragging) when he called it a small engraving?

Brigham felt compelled to mention Charles Henry Hart's belief that a small portrait of Washington in type metal might be the lost Revere engraving. The portrait described by Hart (Wick 6) was first printed in Weatherwise's *Town and Country Almanack for the Year of our Lord 1781*, and was subsequently printed in other publications, including an undated edition of the *New England Primer* printed in Boston by L. Draper. Brigham demonstrates that the type metal engraving was likely copied from John Norman's copper-plate engraving of Washington, which originally adorned the masthead on Norman & Bedwell's broadside *Philadelphia Almanack* for 1780.

Hart's rather cavalier suggestion that the type-metal portrait could serve as a placeholder, as it were, until a better candidate for the Revere Washington surfaced, invites further scrutiny. Brigham himself brings up an obvious and strong objection that "the portrait certainly did not portray 'a gallant warrior'...", extending



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only lukewarm acknowledgment of Hart's contention, while looking forward to a better solution: "...the evidence...is interesting, if not conclusive. Perhaps some day the problem will be solved." Brigham does not seem to have known or commented on our equestrian engraving.

Hart's metal cut fulfills only two of the important variables; it is unsigned and it is small. But it is neither an engraving nor, as noted by Brigham, does it represent Washington as a gallant warrior. Any reasonable observer would agree that our engraving of Washington, in full uniform, on a rearing horse, is much more "a gallant warrior" than the Weatherwise almanac bust portrait.

There are precious few other candidates among unsigned early 1780s portraits of Washington, and in our estimation, the present is the best fit.

Amos Doolittle

The basis for the Doolittle attribution lies first and foremost in the striking similarities between the present portrait and Doolittle's well-known work, *A Display of the United States of America* (ca. 1788).

The *Display* features a circular portrait of Washington with a strikingly similar (but, we argue, updated) version of the text that rings the present portrait.

The present portrait (circa 1780-83) reads: *His Excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON Esqr.
Commander in chief of the AMERICAN ARMIES. The Protector of his COUNTRY, The Supporter of
LIBERTY, And the Benefactor of Mankind * May his name never be forgotten **

The Doolittle *Display* (circa 1788) reads: *GEORGE WASHINGTON President of the UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA. The Protector of his COUNTRY, and the Supporter of the rights of MANKIND **

The shift in language is somewhat subtle but highly significant. The deletion of "His Excellency" and the allusions to Washington's military career trace his transition from military hero to national head during the 1780s. More about this can be found in the "Dating" section below.

The naive engraving also makes sense in the trajectory of Doolittle's career. O'Brien notes:

By the summer of 1780 Doolittle had a shop on a corner of the Yale College yard and was calling himself a jeweler... it appears that engraving was still an ancillary occupation that he was attempting only small orders. He may have been still in the learning stage, experimenting with



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different intaglio processes, before he later settled on line engraving." - O'Brien, page 9.

Furthermore, we have established that the present engraving was subject to many reworkings and near-complete re-engravings. The same is true of the *Display*, which now counts at least half a dozen recorded state changes.

It should also be noted that unsigned Doolittle works are known (see, for instance, *The Looking Glass for 1787*).

The New Haven Colony Museum holds the type exemplar first state of our print, which links Doolittle's place of work to the engraving, albeit tenuously.

In his important study of early Washington imagery, Monsky connects our engraving with Doolittle:

*There is one last specific result to be noted in this chain of influences. The 1785-89 engraving [the present one] appears to have had, in turn, an influence on Amos Doolittle's famous and widely reproduced work entitled "A Display of the United States of America" (fig. 6). Although the images in the Doolittle print and the 1785-89 engraving are completely different, the language in the legends, including the use of capitalization, are very close. The Doolittle print reads: "GEORGE WASHINGTON. President of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA. The Protector of his COUNTRY and the Supporter of the rights of MANKIND.'" - John R. Monsky, "From the Collection: Finding America in Its First Political Textile", *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter 2002), pages 239-264.*

The Scene

The engraving is an unabashedly patriotic representation of George Washington as Commander in Chief of the American Armies. Washington is shown on horseback, full figure in uniform, with cocked hat sporting a prominent cockade or rosette, the symbol of the Continental Army; his right arm is extended and wielding a drawn sword. The horse is rearing and advancing to the left. A military encampment comprising four white tents can be seen in the left-hand background; a few weed-like plants embellish the foreground; hills can be seen in the distant background, as a line of crudely-engraved soldiers with bayonets march within a battlefield. The entire scene is encircled by a line border which is surrounded by laurel leaves. The text, circumscribed within the border, styles Washington "The Protector of his COUNTRY, The Supporter of LIBERTY, And the Benefactor of Mankind." In sum, Washington is presented here as the very embodiment of selfless service to the ideals of the American Revolution.

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A Festive Banner for Public Use and Display

A comparison of extant examples of this engraving suggests that large numbers of impressions were made from a single copperplate. We have detected various printing artifacts across the known impressions, supporting the argument that the same plate was used to produce the surviving 18th-century examples. Since we can be quite confident that hundreds of impressions were originally printed from this single plate, perhaps over a brief period of intense use, how may we account for the extraordinary rarity of surviving examples of the engraving?

The answer can be found by looking to the engraving itself for clues about its original use or purpose. The unusual circular design, with its substantial blank areas on a good-sized rectangular sheet, does not immediately suggest a high-priced print that was intended to be framed up in the home. At the same time, the engraving is too large to have been issued as a personal keepsake for private indoor contemplation or display. Surviving examples almost always exhibit extensive fold marks, indicating that the engraving was not initially cherished as a luxury item, but was rather treated like a contemporary handbill or broadside. The fact that the engraving is unsigned connotes a hastily printed, inexpensive item intended for some fleeting use, and not something a print seller would keep in stock. The format and laudatory verbiage ("The Protector of his COUNTRY, The Supporter of LIBERTY, And the Benefactor of Mankind") certainly suggests a placard for public display or festive use. Such a paper banner would have been distributed in fairly large numbers for use by people along a parade route or similar celebration honoring "The Commander in Chief." Ephemeral productions intended for outdoor use would not have survived in great numbers. Only the rare few examples that were preserved as keepsakes by prescient parade goers, perhaps folded up and placed in a pocket, could have stood a chance at surviving.

We know that Washington was publicly feted with parades and celebrations from a fairly early date. In a fascinating study of popular politics in the early American republic, Simon P. Newman has pointed out that parades and festivities were often staged in Washington's honor during his lifetime, especially in the decade after Yorktown, ca. 1781-1789. Many of these celebrations were held before Washington's ascendancy to the presidency.

...From the small and relatively private celebrations of his birthday in Virginia to the larger parades and festivals staged in his honor in the decade after Yorktown, Washington found himself the object of considerable popular celebration... - Newman, Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic, pages 46-47.



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Given the wording on the engraving, which refers to Washington as "His Excellency" and "Commander in Chief" - and notably lacking the word "President" - we propose three possible festive events during Washington's military career as likely moments for the production of the engraving:

- Battle of Yorktown in October 1781; this decisive engagement led to the British surrender, paving the way to the Treaty of Paris. Celebrations followed.
- Washington's triumphant entry into New York City on Nov. 25, 1783, right after British forces evacuated from the city. Large crowds of New Yorkers lined the streets to watch Washington and hundreds of American soldiers parade down to lower Manhattan.
- Washington's resignation of his military commission as Commander in Chief of the American Army, Annapolis, December 23, 1783. Celebrated in various cities.

A tantalizing account of a specific celebration in honor of Washington's resignation, staged in Philadelphia in November 1783, confirms the spectacular nature of these cavalcades, which almost certainly involved the public's participation, likely through the display of ephemeral banners or flags:

*...in November of 1783, the city fathers wanted to celebrate the occasion of Washington's resignation of his military commission and the peace treaty with Britain, they commissioned Charles Willson Peale to construct of triumphal arch. On one pedestal of the arch Peale depicted Washington as Cincinnatus crowned with laurel returning to a laurel-wreathed plough. To strengthen the identification with Republican Rome, Peale placed the letters S. P. Q. P. - Senatus Populusque Pennsylvanius - over the spandrel of the central arch. In the spectacle planned for the celebration, a gigantic figure of Peace, bearing a torch, was to appear above the arch. At her signal a burst of rockets was to be fired into the sky. Unfortunately a prematurely fired rocket set the whole arch, which was made of paper and cloth that were oiled and varnished, aflame. - Phoebe Lloyd Jacobs, "John James Barralet and the Apotheosis of George Washington," *Winterthur Portfolio* 12 (1977), pages 120-121.*

The use of oiled paper in these public displays of adulation brings up the exciting possibility that our engraving could be a rare surviving example of a "transparency" print. These ultra-ephemeral pictorial adornments (often described in contemporary descriptions as paintings) were typically colored engravings on paper which were treated with oil or varnish to enhance their transparent qualities. Transparencies were often displayed in windows, backlit by lamp or candlelight, or otherwise incorporated into public spectacles. Given that such productions were highly susceptible to damage and deterioration, very few (if



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any) have survived. The evidence that they existed at all comes mainly from contemporary reporting in periodicals.

*In the early American republic, the technology [of transparencies] became a favored vehicle of political expression and a standard feature of the ubiquitous public and private celebrations that, as David Waldstreicher has argued, contributed to the formation of both national sentiment and partisan affiliation. Whether furnishing the four sides of the Stamp Act obelisk, adorning the windows of Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia home to celebrate allied victories during the Revolutionary War, or **shining forth from the parade route when Washington resigned his military commission**, transparencies served as more than mere decorations. They focused the attention of gathered crowds and, coupled with orations, toasts, and other texts, provided shared narratives to frame the meaning of patriotism...By the 1790s, transparencies had been brought indoors. Extracted from the realm of public festivities, though possibly still carrying some of those associations, illuminated paintings became a driving force in Philadelphia's thriving world of commercial visual commerce. - Laura Auricchio, "Two Versions of General Washington's Resignation: Politics, Commerce, and Visual Culture in 1790s Philadelphia." *18th Century Studies*. Vol. 44, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pages 383-400.*

Paul Revere also made transparencies - his work likely adorned a transparent obelisk, erected under Boston's Liberty Tree in 1766, to celebrate the repeal of the Stamp Act. The obelisk, which tragically burned during the festivities, was recreated for a recent exhibition organized by the American Antiquarian Society, *Beyond Midnight: Paul Revere*. Revere also reportedly displayed window transparencies to commemorate the first anniversary of the Boston Massacre, in March 1771. The exciting possibility that our engraving was intended as a transparency, or otherwise connected to Paul Revere, certainly deserves further research.

Dating the Print:

In his biography of Washington, Joseph Ellis explains the significance of the honorific "His Excellency," stating that this style of address began to be applied to Washington early during the hostilities of the Revolution:

Another significant development occurred on his way to Cambridge, an event less conspicuous than the Battle of Bunker Hill but with even more far-reaching implications. Both the New York and



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Massachusetts legislatures wrote congratulatory letters addressed to "His Excellency," which soon became his official designation for the remainder of the war... In October 1775, the African-born slave and poet Phillis Wheatley sent Washington her lyrical tribute [titled His Excellency George Washington], which concluded: "A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine / With gold unfading, Washington! Be thine!" - Ellis, His Excellency George Washington, page 77.

It is interesting to note that once Washington became president, the style *His Excellency* was quickly abandoned. John Adams disparaged its use as not dignified enough for the President of the United States. Adams believed the president would be demoted, classed with colonial governors or with functionaries from German princedoms if he were to use the style of *Excellency*. The presence of *His Excellency* in the caption of the present engraving points all but definitively to a pre-presidential time of production.

The inclusion of "May his name never be forgotten" has led some (e.g. Wendy Wick Reaves) to suggest that the print could be commemorative, that is, produced after Washington's death in 1799. More recently, John R. Monsky, in his analysis of Washington iconography on early textiles, has pointed out that this is unlikely to be the case, as Washington is referred to herein as "Commander in chief of the American Armies," a title he held from June 15, 1775 to December 23, 1783. The fact that Washington is styled here "His Excellency" and "Commander in Chief of the American Armies" and not the President, strongly suggests a pre-1789 production date.

Monsky himself ventures 1785-1789 as the possible date range of production for our engraving:

*The Kerchief and the 1783 handkerchief in turn had their own impact on additional works. One such work is an engraving shown as the frontispiece of Carl W. Drepperd's Early American Prints, **which has long puzzled print experts** (fig. 5). **Probably produced between 1785 and 1789**, its maker and exact date are unknown. Wick dates it between 1785 and 1800, **but it would appear to have been designed before 1789 because it refers to Washington as a general, not president.** Wick believes that the 1783 handkerchief influenced the engraving, but it could be equally argued that the Kerchief may have had an influence on the engraving as well, as the particular language surrounding Washington and the reeling horse are derivative of the [ca. 1776] Kerchief, not the 1783 handkerchief. The legend around Washington in the engraving reads: "His Excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON Esqr. Commander in chief of the AMERICAN ARMIES. The Protector of his COUNTRY. The Supporter of LIBERTY. And the Benefactor of Mankind. May his name never be forgotten."*



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In the above passage Monsky refers to a ca. 1776 American-made textile (kerchief) with a remarkably similar equestrian depiction of Washington within a circular design - apparently derived from a 1775 mezzotint published by C. Shepherd - showing Washington on a rearing horse. The similarity is so close that it would be hard to dispute the obvious: that the kerchief served as the model for the engraving.

Based on the language in the print, the relatively young visage of Washington in the early states (more indeterminate in the later states), and the pervasive active military imagery, we suggest that the print was first made during the latter part of the American Revolution or shortly thereafter, from 1781 to 1785.

A single copperplate was used in Wick 99 and Wick 100.

Several variants of this engraving have been previously described by Wick, who assigned two separate entry numbers describing the two basic styles. The two styles of the engraving are easily distinguishable by differences in Washington's countenance and haircut, as well as in the tents seen in the background, the saddle pistol and myriad other smaller details that indicate the visual evolution of the plate. By careful comparisons among known extant examples of the engraving, we have noted tell-tale printing artifacts present across all early impressions (i.e. those made in the 18th century). This finding proves that the impressions were made from the same reworked and modified copperplate. The rarity of the print and the relatively poor quality of available digital images makes it difficult to enumerate a specific series of proposed states, but nearly every known genuine print seems to be an exemplar of a different state.

The "Miller Mill" and so-called Counterfeits

Stanislaus Vincent Henkels, in his extensive 1906 catalogue of the James T. Mitchell Collection of engraved portraits of Washington, described a purported counterfeit of this image as emanating from the "Miller Mill," apparently referring to a producer of replicas of rare historical engravings, "whose copper was not large enough, and about 1/2 inch of leaf border is missing at the top." These late versions were made in the later 19th century or even early 20th century. The experienced eye will readily note these productions as much later impressions.

... one of those which have emanated from the Miller Mill, whose copper was not large enough, and about 1/4 inch of leaf border is missing at top. It is a clever imitation, and can be distinguished from this genuine impression by the above mentioned discrepancy.

The 1904 Hart Catalogue also mentions the later so-called counterfeit version of this print: _____

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...there is a recent imitation of it, more in outline than [the original, entry no.] 725, with some changes in the border of saddle cloth and rosette on hat. The inscription is in letters of slightly different form, finished with pencil, and without punctuation. It is issued upon old hand-made paper with a plate mark, and is well calculated to deceive even the wary. - Hart Catalog, 725.

Conclusion

The text, *His Excellency GEORGE WASHINGTON Esqr Commander in chief of the AMERICAN ARMIES*, stands as strong evidence of a pre-1789 production date. There is significant evidence pointing to a date of production as early as 1781, in the wake of the Yorktown victory. While we cannot definitively assign a maker to the engraving, circumstantial evidence suggests either Amos Doolittle or Paul Revere as candidates. We can be reasonably certain that this engraving was an ephemeral production intended for public display or for an outdoor celebration. It is likely that such a celebration was held during Washington's lifetime, that is, specifically during his time as Commander in Chief of the American Army, and before he became President.

Rarity

As far back as the 1906 Catalogue of the Mitchell Collection of engraved portraits of Washington, this engraving has been noted for its extreme rarity. The Carson catalog calls it "Excessively rare. The only copy that has come under my observation." The New Haven Colony Historical Society has the example described in Wick 99. The New York Public Library holds the example described in Wick 100. No copies are located in OCLC.

Not in Baker, William S. *The Engraved Portraits of Washington* (1880).

A Census of Known Examples of 18th-Century Impressions:

- New Haven Colony Historical Society. This impression forms the basis of Wick entry no. 99.
- New York Public Library. The basis of Wick entry 100.
- Rosebrook Collection. Christie's, Sept. 22, 2014. Similar to Wick 99.
- Jack Warner Foundation. Christie's, Sep. 20, 2017. Similar to Wick 100.

The following citations may duplicate the above examples:



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- Hampton L. Carson. Described in 1904 catalogue of his collection. "Rudely colored." 11 7/16 inches in diameter.
- James T. Mitchell. Described in 1906 catalogue of his collection. 11 6/16 inches.
- Old Print Shop. Described in *Old Print Shop Portfolio*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Nov. 1954) and Vol. 36, No. 2. 11 3/4 inches in diameter. Paper size 13 x 12 1/4 inches. Similar to Wick 99.
- Example illustrated as frontispiece to Carl W. Drepperd's *Early American Prints* (1930), with caption "Courtesy of Mrs. Catherine Murdock, Le Roy, N. Y." Similar to Wick 99. Whereabouts unknown.

Detailed Condition:

Circular copperplate engraving on laid paper. Plate mark measures 11 3/4 inches in diameter. Sheet trimmed closely on left and right sides, shaving a bit of the decorative border. Paper age-toned. Evidence of old staining. Withal, quite good given the rarity and age of the example. Manuscript notation in lower left corner of sheet, in a 19th- or early 20th-century hand: "Handed down in Scofield Family since Revolutionary Days." Original hand color.