LETTER · JULY 4, 2026

I Could Have Been Your King

A letter to the Americans of the 250th year, on what it took to make this country yours — from the man who refused to make it his.

GEORGE WASHINGTON · AS IMAGINED FOR THE ANNIVERSARY

A note before reading: the narration that follows is imagined. Every passage set apart and marked "His own words" is authentic and documented, drawn from Washington's letters, addresses, and papers, with each source linked. The thoughts between them are our best honest reconstruction of the man behind the words.

TO THE READER · 2026

You Have Kept It Longer Than We Dared Hope

Two hundred and fifty years. When we pledged our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor in Philadelphia, there were men among us who doubted the country would survive the winter, let alone the century. I confess I was sometimes among them. And yet here you are, the better part of four hundred million of you, quarreling and building and worshiping and voting across a

continent we knew mostly as wilderness and rumor — still one people, still under the Constitution I watched signed with my own eyes.

You are celebrating this year, as you should. But I find that anniversaries tempt a people toward two errors. The first is to believe the country was inevitable — that liberty was your birthright, delivered whole, requiring nothing but gratitude. The second is to believe the founders were marble — that we knew what we were doing, that we never trembled, never doubted, never came within a single evening of losing everything.

Neither is true. So let me tell you what actually happened, as I lived it. Let me tell you what it took to make this country your own — and why, when it was within my grasp to make it mine, I would not.

1732–1763

I Was Born a Subject of the King

Understand first that I was not born a revolutionary. No one was. I came into the world a loyal subject of King George the Second, in the colony of Virginia, and for the first forty years of my life I wanted nothing so much as to rise within the British world, not to overturn it.

As a young man I wore the King's uniform and fought the King's wars. I marched with General Braddock against the French in 1755, and when the ambush came on the Monongahela and the general fell dying, I rode through the slaughter carrying his orders while men dropped on every side of me.

HIS OWN WORDS

> *"But by the all powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had 4 Bullets through my Coat, and two Horses shot under me, and yet escaped unhurt."*
>
> Letter to John Augustine Washington, July 18, 1755 · Founders Online, National Archives

I tell you this not to boast of Providence's favor, but so you understand what I wanted in those years: a royal commission. A permanent rank in the British army. I petitioned for it. I was refused — a colonial, however useful, was not quite a gentleman in the eyes of London. I swallowed the insult, resigned my Virginia command, married, and went home to Mount Vernon to farm.

I tell you this also so you understand something about your country: it was founded by disappointed Englishmen. We did not begin by dreaming of a new nation. We began by asking for the ordinary rights of Englishmen, and discovering, slowly and painfully, that we would never be granted them.

1763–1775

The Slow Turning of a Loyal Man

The break did not come in a day. It came the way a rope frays — strand by strand, each one small enough to ignore until suddenly nothing is holding.

After the French war, Parliament looked across the ocean at us and saw not fellow subjects but a source of revenue. The Stamp Act in 1765. The Townshend duties in 1767. Each time we protested, and each time the answer from London was the same: you will be taxed by a body in which you have no voice, governed by men you did not choose, and judged by courts answerable to the Crown alone.

I want you to grasp what this meant to a man like me, because it is the seed of everything that followed. The quarrel was never truly about the price of tea or the cost of a stamp. I was among the wealthiest men in Virginia; I could afford the taxes a hundred times over. The question was whether an American owned anything at all – his property, his labor, his future – or whether he merely held it at the pleasure of men three thousand miles away who had never asked his consent and never would. If Parliament could take a shilling without our consent, it could take everything without our consent. The amount was nothing. The principle was everything.

By 1774 I had stopped believing petitions would save us. I helped draft resolves in my own county declaring our rights, and I rode to Philadelphia for the first Continental Congress, a delegate from Virginia in a plain civilian coat. By the spring of 1775, when the news came up from Massachusetts – militiamen and redcoats firing on one another at Lexington and Concord, war begun whether we wished it or not – I attended the second Congress wearing my old uniform. I suppose every man in that chamber understood what I meant by it.

JUNE 1775

The Day They Handed Me an Army That Did Not Exist

On the fifteenth of June, 1775, the Congress voted to appoint me commander in chief of the Continental forces. I left the room while they voted, as decency required, and when I returned the thing was done.

I will tell you plainly what I was thinking, because the marble statues never do. I was thinking that I might fail. I told the Congress to their faces that I did not

believe myself equal to the command. That was not false modesty; it was arithmetic. They were asking me to take a crowd of New England farmers besieging Boston — brave men, but without uniforms, without discipline, without powder enough for a single sustained battle — and lead them against the most powerful military empire on the face of the earth.

And I was thinking of something else, something a man did not say aloud in that hopeful room: that I was now, in the eyes of the law of England, the chief traitor of the continent. If we failed, the others might hope for pardon. I could not. The man who commands a rebellion does not surrender his sword and go home to his farm; he goes to the gallows. From the day I accepted that commission, the war could end only two ways for me — in an independent America, or at the end of a British rope.

I refused any salary for the work. I asked only that my expenses be paid. If I was to risk hanging, I wished it known to every man on the continent that I was not doing it for money.

1776–1781

What the War Actually Was

Your paintings remember the war as crossings and surrenders, flags and trumpets. Permit an old soldier to correct the record. The war, for most of its eight years, was a desperate effort merely to keep an army alive — fed, shod, paid, and persuaded not to walk home.

In the summer of 1776, even as the Declaration was read aloud to my troops in New York, the largest fleet Britain had ever sent across an ocean was anchoring in the harbor. By August they had beaten us badly on Long Island, and only a night

retreat through fog – boats muffled, orders whispered – saved the army from capture entire. We lost New York. We lost Fort Washington and three thousand men with it. We retreated across New Jersey with the army dissolving around me like salt in the rain, enlistments expiring, militia vanishing, the Congress fleeing Philadelphia. In December of 1776 I wrote to my brother that I thought the game was pretty nearly up.

It was in those weeks that Mr. Paine wrote the words my officers read to the men by firelight: these are the times that try men's souls. And it was in those weeks that I learned the lesson that governed every campaign I fought afterward: I did not need to defeat the British army. I needed only to preserve the American one. So long as an army existed, the Revolution existed. The cause lived not in any city – we lost the cities – but in that ragged column of men who kept marching.

So we crossed the Delaware on Christmas night in a storm of sleet, with ice grinding against the boats, and took the garrison at Trenton before breakfast. A small victory by the measure of European wars. By the measure of hope, it was everything: proof that we could strike and win, delivered at the exact hour the cause was bleeding to death.

Then came the other winters. You know the name Valley Forge; I wish you knew the sight of it. Twelve thousand men in log huts, a quarter of them without shoes, tracks of blood in the snow from bare feet, and an army of amputations and typhus and quiet graves – more of my men died of disease and want in that encampment than the British killed in many a battle. The men starved not because America had no food, but because the Congress had no power to obtain it. Thirteen sovereign states, each jealous of its purse, could watch their only army freeze and find no lawful means to prevent it. Mark that well; I will return to it.

What held the army together through that winter was not me. It was the men — and it was the drillmaster Steuben teaching them to be soldiers, and the women who followed the camps and nursed the sick, and the farmers who took worthless paper money for grain, and France, whose treaty of alliance reached us that spring and turned a colonial revolt into a world war Britain could not win everywhere at once.

Five more years. Five years of marches and stalemates, of mutinies over pay that I do not blame the men for, of the treason of Arnold — a wound I will carry into eternity — until at last, in October of 1781, the pieces fell into place at a tobacco port in Virginia called Yorktown: a French fleet sealing the Chesapeake, French regulars and my Continentals digging trenches side by side, and General Cornwallis with seven thousand men and his back to the sea. When his army marched out to lay down its arms, their bands played, and men on both sides wept, and I sat my horse and showed nothing, because that is what command requires.

But understand: the war did not end at Yorktown. The treaty was two years away. The British still held New York. And the most dangerous moment of the entire Revolution — the moment your country came nearest to dying in its cradle — was still ahead of us. It did not come from the British at all. It came from us.

MAY 1782

The Letter That Asked Me to Wear a Crown

In May of 1782, with the fighting ended but the peace unsigned, a letter reached my headquarters at Newburgh on the Hudson. It came from Colonel Lewis

Nicola, a respected officer, a serious man — which is what made it terrible. He wrote on behalf of sentiments circulating in the army. The Congress was bankrupt and contemptible, he argued; republics were weak and ungrateful; the war had proved that only strong rule could govern; and the army possessed both the strength and the man to provide it. He proposed, in language only thinly veiled, that I should be king.

I want you to sit with that for a moment, you who have lived your whole lives in a republic and perhaps think its survival was assured. Every revolution before ours had ended this way. Caesar crossed the Rubicon at the head of a loyal army; Cromwell dismissed his Parliament at the point of pikes. The men in that camp were owed years of back pay by a Congress that could not raise a dollar. They were loyal to me personally in a way they would never be loyal to thirteen squabbling legislatures. The path Nicola described was not fantasy. It was the well-worn road of history, and I was standing at its head with an army at my back.

I answered him the same day.

> **HIS OWN WORDS**
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> *"Be assured Sir, no occurrence in the course of the War, has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the Army as you have expressed... Let me conjure you then, if you have any regard for your Country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your Mind."*
>
> Reply to Colonel Lewis Nicola, May 22, 1782 · Founders Online, National Archives

Why did I refuse? You have asked the question for two and a half centuries, and I will answer it as honestly as I can.

Not because I lacked ambition. I had ambition enough for any man, and I knew my own weakness for it; I had spent a lifetime governing a temper and a pride that were, I assure you, considerable. But I had spent eight years telling farm boys they were bleeding for something that had never existed before – a government of laws and not of men, resting on the consent of the governed. If, at the end of it, the general simply took the throne, then every one of those deaths was a fraud. We would have fought the longest war in our history to replace George the Third with George the First of America, and proved to every tyrant in Europe that men are incapable of governing themselves – that all the talk of liberty is merely what ambition says before it is strong enough to stop pretending.

A crown would have made me great, perhaps. It would have made the Revolution meaningless, certainly. That was the whole of the arithmetic.

MARCH 1783

Newburgh: The Evening We Almost Lost Everything

The Nicola letter was one man writing. Ten months later it was the officer corps assembling, and that was a different order of danger.

By March of 1783 the army's grievances had ripened into conspiracy. An anonymous address circulated through the camp at Newburgh – well-written, which alarmed me more, for it meant serious men were behind it – calling on the officers to meet, and proposing in plain terms that if the Congress would not pay

them, the army should refuse to disband, or turn its arms against the civil power itself. Men in Philadelphia, I had reason to believe, were quietly encouraging it, thinking a little military pressure might be useful to their politics. They were playing with a fire that has consumed every republic that ever let it kindle.

I forbade the irregular meeting and called one of my own, for the fifteenth of March. They did not expect me to attend in person. I walked into that hall — we called it the Temple — and faced the assembled officers of the army I had led for eight years, and I saw in their faces something I had never seen there before: anger at me. I gave them my answer to the anonymous address: that its author counseled either deserting the country before the peace was secure, or turning swords against the civil authority, and that any man who wished to overturn what we had bled for deserved the contempt of the army he was trying to seduce.

> **HIS OWN WORDS**
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> *"...let me conjure you, in the name of our common Country, as you value your own sacred honor, as you respect the rights of humanity, and as you regard the Military and National character of America, to express your utmost horror and detestation of the Man who wishes, under any specious pretences, to overturn the liberties of our Country, and who wickedly attempts to open the flood Gates of Civil discord, and deluge our rising Empire in Blood."*
>
> Speech to the Officers of the Army, Newburgh, March 15, 1783 · Founders Online, National Archives

The speech did not move them. I could feel it. The arguments were sound and the faces were stone, and I understood, standing there, that the Revolution might

actually end in that room — not on a battlefield, but in a mutiny of exhausted, cheated, honorable men.

Then I drew out a letter from a member of Congress, to read them proof that the civil power was at least attempting justice. The hand of the letter was small. I hesitated over it, and then I reached into my pocket for something almost none of them had ever seen me use, and I said — the words were not planned; they were merely true:

> **AS WITNESSES RECORDED IT**
>
> ***"Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind, in the service of my country."***
>
> Remark recorded in officers' accounts of the Newburgh meeting, March 15, 1783 · Mount Vernon, Digital Encyclopedia

And the room broke. Officers who had stood unmoved through all my arguments were suddenly weeping. I finished reading the letter, though I doubt a man present could repeat its contents, and I left, and the officers voted their loyalty to the Congress, and the conspiracy died in an afternoon — killed not by a regiment, but by a pair of spectacles and eight years of shared suffering.

I have heard it said that this was theater. Believe what you will; the gray hair and the failing eyes were real either way. What I know is this: on that afternoon, the army of the United States — angry, unpaid, and entirely capable of taking what it was owed — chose to submit to a civilian government too weak to compel it. No army in history had done such a thing of its own free will. Yours did it first. Every peaceful transfer of power you have enjoyed for 250 years descends from that single afternoon in a wooden hall on the Hudson.

JUNE–DECEMBER 1783

Giving the Sword Back

With peace signed, two tasks remained to me, and I considered them as much a part of the war as Trenton or Yorktown. The first was to tell the states the truth before I lost the standing to say it. In June I sent a circular letter to all thirteen governors — my farewell, as I then supposed, to public life. I told them the war had been won but the country had not yet been made, and that what remained was harder than fighting.

> HIS OWN WORDS
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> *"It is indispensable to the happiness of the individual States, that there should be lodged somewhere, a Supreme Power to regulate and govern the general concerns of the Confederated Republic, without which the Union cannot be of long duration."*
>
> Circular to the States, June 8, 1783 · The Founders' Constitution, University of Chicago Press

The second task was the one I had been waiting eight years to perform. On the twenty-third of December, 1783, I came before the Congress, then sitting at Annapolis, in the uniform I would never wear again. The gallery was full; the members sat with their hats on, as equals receiving a servant, which was precisely the point and precisely as I wished it. My hands shook as I read — the members saw it; I could not help it — and my voice failed me entirely at the passage commending the army to the country's justice.

> HIS OWN WORDS

> *"Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of Action; and bidding an Affectionate farewell to this August body under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my Commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life."*
>
> Address to Congress on Resigning His Commission, Annapolis, December 23, 1783 · Founders Online, National Archives

I drew the commission from my coat — the same paper the Congress had handed me in 1775 — and gave it back, and bowed, and walked out of the hall a private citizen. I was home at Mount Vernon by candlelight on Christmas Eve.

They tell me that in London, when the King asked the American painter Benjamin West what I would do now that I had won, West answered that I meant to return to my farm — and that the King replied: *"If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world."* I cannot vouch for the story; I was not in the room. But I understand why it has lasted. In all the history George the Third knew, the man who wins the war keeps the power. That is simply what victory means, and had always meant. The entire American idea — the thing you are celebrating this year — is contained in the breaking of that rule.

The power was never mine to keep. The Congress had lent it to me; I returned it. Your country was founded on the strange and fragile proposition that power is always borrowed, never owned — borrowed from the people, returned on schedule, and accounted for in between. I could think of no way to teach that proposition except to perform it.

1786–1787

Called Back: The Country We Almost Lost in Peacetime

I had three years of the life I wanted — my fields, my river, my accounts, my guests — and I watched, with growing dread, the thing I had warned the governors about come true. The Confederation was failing. The Congress could not tax, could not pay the war debt, could not compel the states to honor the treaty, could not even assemble a quorum for weeks at a stretch. Thirteen states printed thirteen currencies, taxed one another's commerce like foreign enemies, and ignored every requisition. We had won a country and were governing it with a rope of sand.

I wrote to John Jay in the summer of 1786 what I had come to believe:

> **HIS OWN WORDS**
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> *"I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation, without having lodged somewhere a power which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner, as the authority of the different state governments extends over the several States."*
>
> Letter to John Jay, August 15, 1786 · Founders Online, National Archives

That autumn, the proof arrived in arms. In Massachusetts, farmers ruined by debt and taxes — many of them my old soldiers, men who had stood the line at Saratoga — rose under Captain Daniel Shays, closed the courts, and marched on the federal arsenal at Springfield. The rebellion itself was put down. What could not be put down was what it revealed: the United States government had been unable to raise the money or the men to defend its own arsenal. Liberty without order, I now saw, dies as surely as order without liberty — it only dies in a different posture.

So when Virginia named me a delegate to a convention at Philadelphia, to meet in May of 1787 and amend the federal system, I faced the hardest private decision of my life. I had told the world I was retired. I had staked my honor — and honor, to my generation, was not vanity; it was the collateral a man posted against his own conduct — on the promise that I sought no further power. To return now was to risk the verdict that the resignation at Annapolis had been a performance after all. I went anyway, and I will not pretend the choice was easy. To my friend Madison I wrote what I hoped the convention would dare:

> **HIS OWN WORDS**
>
> ***"My wish is, that the Convention may adopt no temporizing expedient, but probe the defects of the Constitution to the bottom, and provide radical cures; whether they are agreed to or not."***
>
> Letter to James Madison, March 31, 1787 · The Founders' Constitution, University of Chicago Press

They elected me president of the convention, which obliged me to silence, and so for four months of a brutal Philadelphia summer I sat in the chair and said almost nothing while better-read men — Madison and Wilson and Sherman, Franklin presiding over us all like a benevolent oracle — argued the architecture of a government no people had ever attempted: power divided between nation and states, and divided again among three branches, every piece set to watch every other piece, on the theory that men are not angels and must not be governed as if they were.

I will tell you a thing the histories pass over quickly. When the convention came to design the presidency, the question hanging over the chamber was whether any republic could trust a single executive at all — and the delegates, by their own later

admission, were able to risk it partly because every man in the room expected the first occupant of the office to be the silent figure in the chair. They were not designing the office for an imagined tyrant; they were designing it for a man who had already given power back once. I felt the weight of that, every day of that summer. The Constitution's boldest gamble was, in some measure, a wager on my character, and I knew that if I ever betrayed it, I would be amending the document more surely than any congress could.

I signed it on the seventeenth of September, 1787, and went home, and watched the states fight over ratification for a year. To Lafayette, who fretted in France over the new government's powers, I wrote my honest assessment:

> **HIS OWN WORDS**
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> *"[T]he general Government is not invested with more Powers than are indispensably necessary to perform the functions of a good Government; and, consequently, that no objection ought to be made against the quantity of Power delegated to it."*
>
> Letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, February 7, 1788 · Founders Online, National Archives

1789–1797

President, Not King

In the spring of 1789 the electors chose me unanimously, and I rode north from Mount Vernon to be inaugurated in New York with, I wrote at the time, the feelings of a culprit going to his execution. I do not exaggerate for effect. I was fifty-seven. I was being asked to invent an office. There was no government waiting for me — no departments, no courts, no precedents, no revenue. There

was a Constitution of four pages and a continent waiting to see whether it was a government or merely another pamphlet.

On the balcony of Federal Hall I took an oath of thirty-five words — the same words, I am told, every one of my successors has spoken since — and inside, to the Congress, I said what I believed was truly at stake. Not my administration. Not even the Constitution. Something larger:

> **HIS OWN WORDS**
>
> *"[T]he preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the Republican model of Government, are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people."*
>
> First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789 · Founders Online, National Archives

An experiment. Mark the word; I chose it with care. Not a triumph, not a destiny — an experiment, which is a thing that can fail, conducted before the eyes of a watching world that expected it to.

Everything I did in those eight years, I did knowing it would be done again by men I would never meet. The Senate wished to style me "His Highness the President of the United States of America, and Protector of their Liberties." I let it be known that "Mr. President" would do. It sounds a small thing. It was not. Titles are how monarchy reenters the house — through the vocabulary, long before it arrives through the law.

> **HIS OWN WORDS**

> *"I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent."*
>
> Letter to Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, January 9, 1790 · Founders Online, National Archives

And so: I appeared before the Senate to seek advice in person exactly once, found it unworkable, and never returned — and the executive and the legislature have corresponded at arm's length ever since. I deferred to the Congress in lawmaking and reserved the veto for constitutional objection, not mere disagreement. I submitted the executive to the courts' judgments. I put down an armed tax revolt in Pennsylvania with overwhelming force and then pardoned the convicted, because the government had to prove it could enforce the law and prove it did not hunger for blood, in the same gesture.

And then I did the thing I had been planning, in one form or another, since Annapolis. They would have elected me a third time; of this I have little doubt, and the flatterers assured me of it daily. Some urged that I serve for life — that the office and the man had become the same thing. That was precisely the disease. If the presidency could not survive the departure of its first occupant, then we had built nothing; we had merely crowned a king and called him by a republican name, and the experiment would die with me in office, whenever and however I died. So in September of 1796 I published a farewell to the country, declining to be considered, and in March of 1797 I stood as a private citizen in the crowd at Philadelphia and watched John Adams take the oath — power passing peacefully from one elected man to another, by ballots alone, for the first time in the modern world. Of all my victories, I count that morning the greatest, and I was, for once, merely a spectator at it. That, you understand, was the victory.

In the farewell I left you such warnings as forty-five years of public life had taught me. Beware the spirit of party, which inflames region against region and tempts men to prefer victory over their countrymen to the country itself. Beware entangling the republic's fate in the quarrels of foreign powers. And beware the slow appetite of power itself:

> **HIS OWN WORDS**
>
> *"The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism."*
>
> Farewell Address, September 19, 1796 · The Avalon Project, Yale Law School

I had refused a crown offered by an army, and refused again a crown offered by affection and habit. The second refusal mattered more. Any people can resist a tyrant they hate. The harder task — the task I leave to you, perpetually — is to refuse unlimited power even to the leaders you love. *Especially* to the leaders you love. No free constitution was ever destroyed by a man the people despised.

TO THE READER · 2026

What I Ask of You at 250

I died at Mount Vernon in December of 1799, of a throat infection and the enthusiastic medicine of my era, ten days short of the new century. I never saw the country grow beyond sixteen states. Everything since — your wars and your inventions, your shames and your reckonings, the amendments by which you have struggled, generation after generation, to extend the promises of 1776 to all

whom they always should have covered — all of it you have done without us. That is as it should be. We gave you a beginning, not a finish.

So here is the history lesson, gathered to a point. What did it take to make this country your own?

It took farmers deciding that a principle was worth more than their lives, and then proving it for eight winters. It took an army that starved rather than dissolve, and then — harder still — an army that disbanded rather than rule. It took men who had every reason to distrust one another sitting in a closed room through a Philadelphia summer, conceding, compromising, and producing a frame of government none of them fully liked and all of them signed. It took a general who gave the sword back, and a president who went home — and I must tell you honestly that these were not feats of superhuman virtue. They were habits, practiced until they held: the habit of regarding power as borrowed, office as temporary, and the people — not any man, not any party, not any family — as the only sovereign this country would ever have.

The country was never mine. I declined to make it mine; that is the one decision of my life I never once revisited in doubt. But neither is it merely yours to enjoy. It is yours the way a farm is yours: yours to work. The title deed is 250 years old, but the ownership is renewed only in the doing — in the voting and the serving, the arguing and the conceding, the jealous watching of every officeholder including the ones you cheered for, and the stubborn, unglamorous keeping of the habits that hold republics together.

Doctor Franklin, leaving our convention, was asked what we had made for the country, and answered: a republic, if you can keep it. You have kept it for 250 years — longer than any of us dared promise, through trials we did not foresee and could not have survived in your place. I am asked why I gave up being king of

America. You have lived the answer all your lives, perhaps without noticing it. I gave it up because a king would have made the country his. I wanted it to be yours.

It is. Happy anniversary. Keep it.

— G. Washington

About this article. The first-person narration above is a work of historical imagination written for the 250th anniversary of American independence. All passages marked “His own words” are authentic, documented quotations from George Washington’s papers, letters, and addresses; each is linked to its source at Founders Online (National Archives), The Founders’ Constitution (University of Chicago Press), The Avalon Project (Yale Law School), or Mount Vernon. The spectacles remark at Newburgh and George III’s remark to Benjamin West are contemporaneously reported rather than written by Washington, and are labeled accordingly. All quoted documents are in the public domain.