

# The Untold Story: George Washington And The Presidential Title Controversy Of 1789

When it comes to the founding fathers of the United States, George Washington stands tall. He was not only the country's first president but also played a crucial role in shaping the nation's identity. However, what many people don't know is that Washington's journey to becoming the president was not without its challenges and controversies. One such controversy was the debate surrounding the presidential title in 1789. In this article, we will explore this fascinating chapter in American history and shed light on the lesser-known aspects of George Washington's leadership.

## The Birth of a Nation

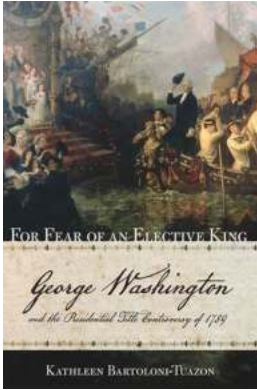
The year was 1789, and the United States was still in its infancy. The Founding Fathers had just drafted the Constitution, establishing the framework for the new nation. But they left a crucial detail undecided - what should the leader of this young country be called? This question sparked intense debates among the framers, each with their own ideas and apprehensions.

Some proposed that the leader should be called "His Highness, the President of the United States." This title would align the American presidency with European monarchies, granting the leader a sense of grandeur and authority. However, others were vehemently against such an association and favored a title that represented a more republican form of governance.

### **For Fear of an Elective King: George Washington and the Presidential Title Controversy of 1789**

by Kathleen Bartoloni-Tuazon (Illustrated Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5



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Amidst this ongoing debate, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, George Washington, emerged as a vital figure. As a respected military leader, Washington had the trust and admiration of the American people. His opinion on the matter carried great weight and would ultimately influence the decision.

## **Washington's Humble Stance**

Contrary to what some may expect, George Washington was not one to embrace titles and pomp. Throughout his life, he displayed a deep sense of humility and sought to avoid anything that resembled monarchical excess. It was in this context that Washington expressed his preference for a more modest title.

In a letter to his friend, the Marquis de Lafayette, Washington wrote, "The title of 'His Highness' or 'His Majesty,' which were vigorously supported by some members of Congress, did not meet my expectations. It is my firm belief that a simpler title that reflects the republican values of our nation would be more appropriate."

Washington's stance resonated with many of the framers who sought a break from European traditions and a new beginning for America. It also established an

important precedent for future presidents, emphasizing the role of a civilian leader rather than a royal monarch.

## **The Presidential Title Dilemma**

As the debates continued, compromise became necessary to ensure the completion of the Constitution. Eventually, the framers settled on a title that balanced both the need for respect and the desire for simplicity. The chosen title was "President of the United States."

This decision was a significant turning point in American history. It set the stage for a presidency that would be distinct from European monarchies while acknowledging the importance of a respected leader. The title, "President of the United States," encapsulated the spirit of a democratically elected position and became a symbol of American exceptionalism.

## **Legacy of Washington's Leadership**

George Washington's choice to advocate for a simple title demonstrated his commitment to the principles upon which the United States was founded. His decision played a pivotal role in shaping the office of the president and influenced future generations of leaders.

Furthermore, Washington's humility extended beyond the issue of the presidential title. Throughout his presidency, he actively sought to establish a government that prioritized the needs and aspirations of the American people. His leadership helped forge a sense of unity and set the tone for future presidents to prioritize public service.

Today, as we reflect on the historical significance of the presidential title controversy of 1789, we can appreciate the profound impact that George

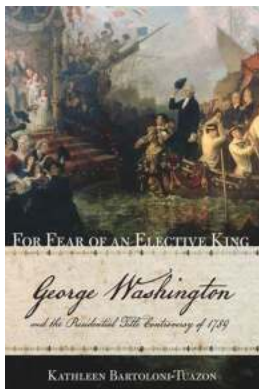
Washington had on the nation. His humility, respect for democratic principles, and commitment to the well-being of the American people continue to inspire leaders to this day.

## The Unforgettable Legacy

George Washington's presidency was marked by numerous challenges, triumphs, and controversies. The presidential title controversy of 1789 stands as a testament to Washington's character and his unwavering dedication to the values of the fledgling nation. His choice to prioritize simplicity over grandeur set the stage for a presidency that would reflect the ideals of the American people.

As we look back on this significant moment in history, let us not forget the lessons we can learn from George Washington's leadership. His commitment to unity, humility, and the betterment of the country continues to serve as an example to leaders around the world.

So, the next time you hear someone mention George Washington, remember that there is more to his story than just being the first president of the United States. He was a visionary leader, guiding the nation through uncharted waters, and playing a key role in the establishment of the presidential title we know today.



### For Fear of an Elective King: George Washington and the Presidential Title Controversy of 1789

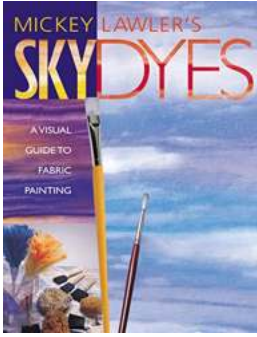
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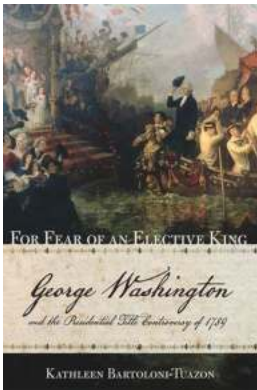


In the spring of 1789, within weeks of the establishment of the new federal government based on the U.S. Constitution, the Senate and House of Representatives fell into dispute regarding how to address the president. Congress, the press, and individuals debated more than thirty titles, many of which had royal associations and some of which were clearly monarchical. *Fear of an Elective King* is Kathleen Bartoloni-Tuazon's rich account of the title controversy and its meanings. The short, intense legislative phase and the prolonged, equally intense public phase animated and shaped the new nation's broadening political community. Rather than simply reflecting an obsession with etiquette, the question challenged Americans to find an acceptable balance between power and the people's sovereignty while assuring the country's place in the Atlantic world. Bartoloni-Tuazon argues that the resolution of the controversy in favor of the modest title of "President" established the importance of recognition of the people's views by the president and evidence of modesty in the presidency, an approach to leadership that fledged the presidency's power by not flaunting it. How the country titled the president reflected the views of everyday people, as well as the recognition by social and political elites of the irony that authority rested with acquiescence to egalitarian principles. The controversy's outcome affirmed the republican character of the country's new president and government, even as the conflict was the opening volley in increasingly partisan struggles over executive power. As such, the dispute is as relevant today as in 1789.



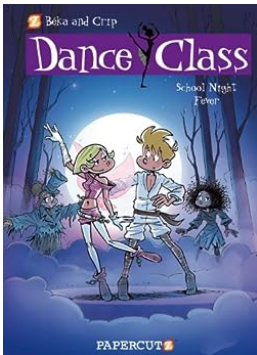
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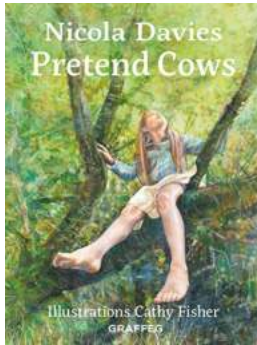
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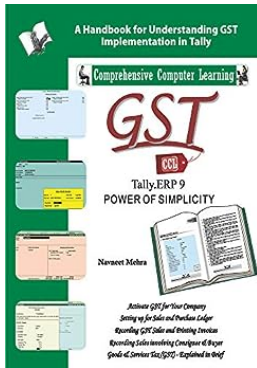
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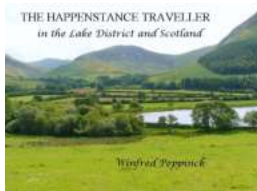
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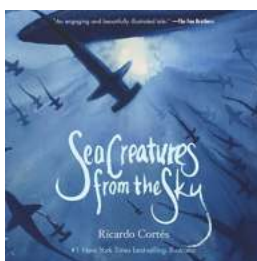
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