

American Minute with Bill Federer Conspiracy to Overthrow Government thwarted by George Washington

After the victory over the **British** at **Yorktown**, many of the **Continental soldiers** grew disillusioned with the new American government, as they **had not been paid in years**.

The **Continental Congress** had no power to tax to raise money to pay them.



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WILLIAM J. FEDERER

A disgruntled group of officers in New York met and formed a **Newburgh Conspiracy**.

They plotted to march into the Capitol and force Congress to give them back pay and pensions.



With some British troops still remaining on American soil, a show of disunity could have easily renewed the war.



On March 15, 1783, **General George Washington** surprised the conspiracy by showing up at their clandestine meeting in New York.



Taking a letter from his pocket, **Washington** fumbled with a pair of reading glasses, which few men had seen him wear.

He gave a short but impassioned speech, urging them to oppose anyone "who wickedly attempts to open the floodgates of civil discord and

deluge our rising
empire in blood":

Dear Sir
I have the honor to receive your letter of the 15th inst. and am glad to hear that you are well and that you are still in the service of your country. I am sure that you will continue to be so for many years to come. I am, Sir, your obedient servant.

"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 ..."



Washington
continued:

"And let me conjure you, in the name of our



common Country,
as you value your
own sacred honor

...

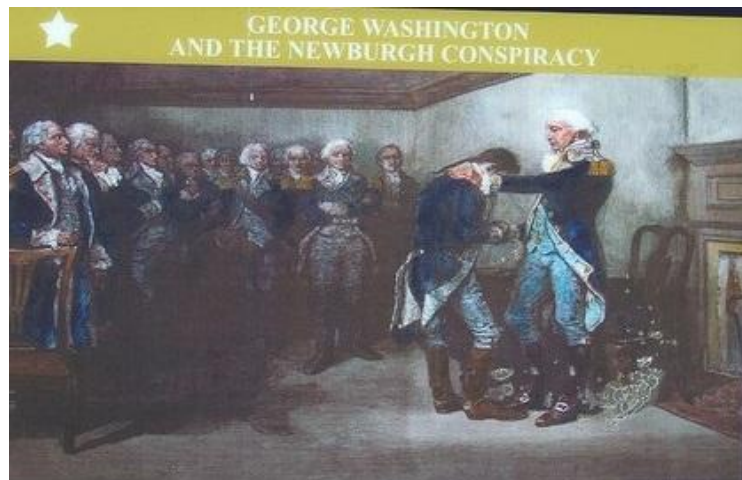
to express your
utmost horror and
detestation of the
Man who wishes
... to overturn the
liberties of our
Country, and **who
wickedly**

attempts to open the flood Gates of Civil discord, and deluge our rising Empire in Blood.

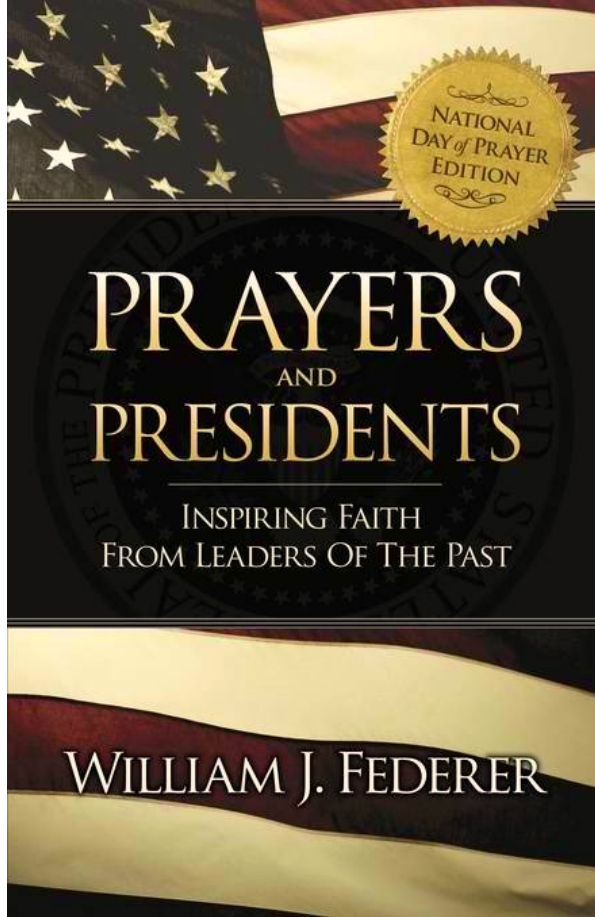
By thus determining ... you will defeat the insidious designs of our Enemies, who are compelled to resort from open force to secret Artifice.

You will give one more distinguished proof of unexampled patriotism and patient virtue ...

You will ... afford occasion for Posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to Mankind, 'had this day been wanting, the World had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining.'"

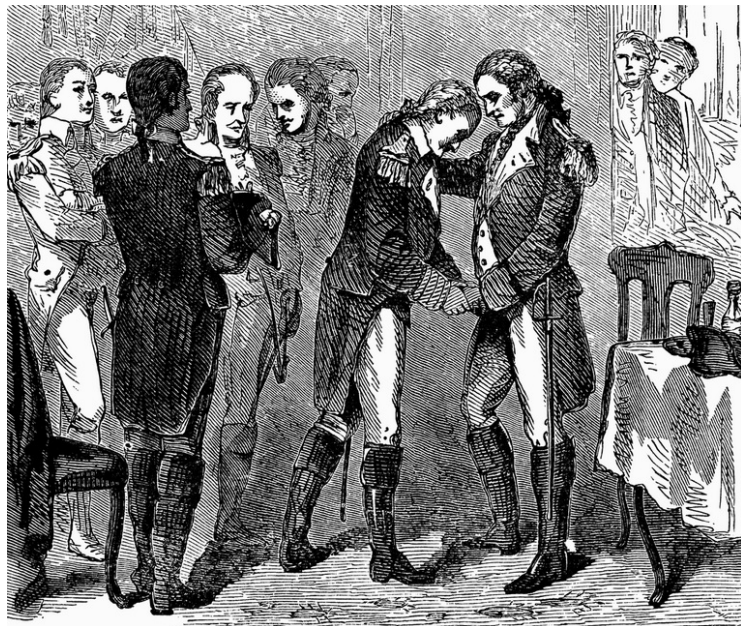


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Many present were moved to tears as they realized the sacrifice

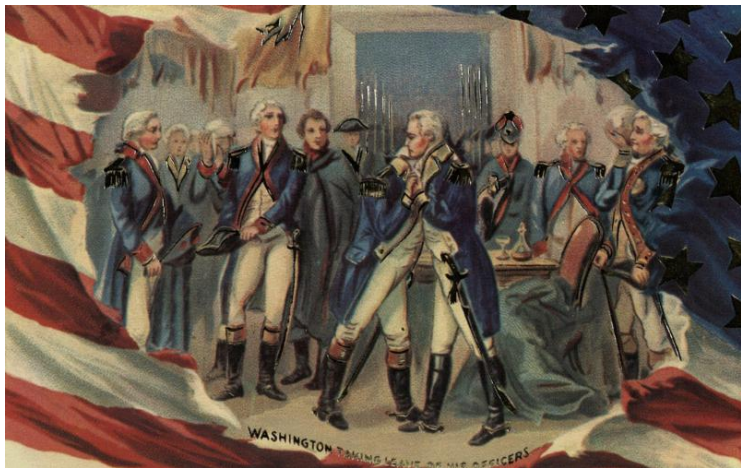
Washington had made in order to give Americans the opportunity of beginning a new nation completely free from the domination of a king.



With this one act by **George Washington**, the conspiracy collapsed.



Major General David Cobb, who served as aide-de-camp to **General George Washington**, wrote of the **Newburgh affair** in 1825:



"I have ever considered that the United States are indebted for their republican form of government solely to the firm and determined **republicanism** of **George Washington** at this time."

The crisis was resolved when **Robert Morris** issued \$800,000 in personal notes to the soldiers, and the



Continental Congress gave each soldier a sum equal to five years pay in highly speculative government bonds.

The bonds were redeemed by the new Congress in 1790.

Six months later the **Treaty of Paris** was signed, officially ending the war.



George Washington wrote to **General Nathanael Greene**, February 6, 1783:

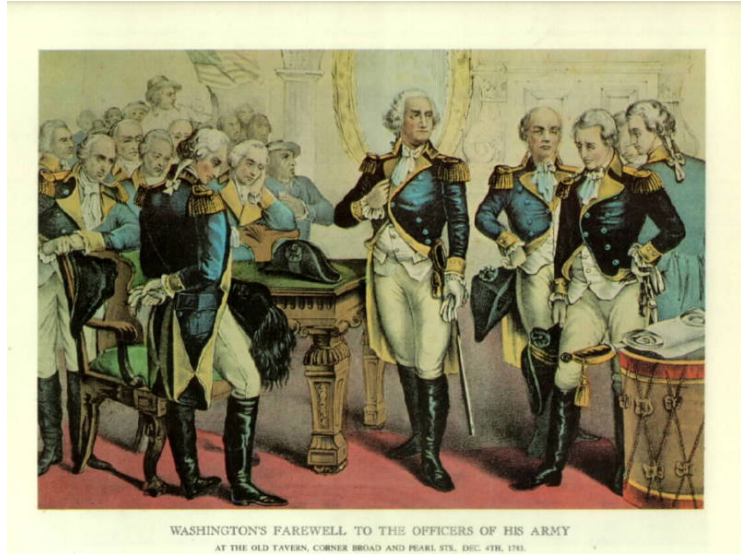
"It will not be believed that such a force as Great Britain has employed for eight

years in this country could be baffled in their plan of subjugating it

by numbers infinitely less, composed of men oftentimes half starved; always in rags, **without pay**, and experiencing, at times, every species of distress which human nature is capable of undergoing."

General George Washington

issued his **Farewell Orders**, November 2, 1783, from his Rock Hill headquarters near Princeton, New Jersey:



"Before the **Commander in Chief** takes his final leave of those he holds most dear, he wishes to indulge himself a few moments in calling to mind a slight review of the past

...

The singular **interpositions of Providence** in our feeble condition were such, as could scarcely escape the attention of the most unobserving;

while the unparalleled perseverance of the Armies of the United States, **through almost every possible suffering and discouragement** for the space of eight long years, was little short of a **standing miracle ...**"

Washington continued:

"To the Armies he has so long had the honor to Command, he can only again offer in their behalf his recommendations



to their grateful country, and **his prayers to the God of Armies.**

May ample justice be done then here, and may the choicest of **Heaven's favors**, both here and thereafter, attend those who, **under Divine auspices**, have secured innumerable blessings for others."



In New York, December 4, 1783, in Fraunces Tavern's Long Room, **General George Washington** bade a tearful **farewell** to his **Continental Army officers**:

"With a heart full of love and gratitude, I now take leave of you. I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and honorable."

On December 23, 1783, **Washington resigned his commission**, addressing Congress assembled in Annapolis, Maryland:



"I resign with satisfaction the appointment I accepted with diffidence; a diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task;

which however was superseded by a confidence in the

rectitude of our cause, the support of the supreme power of the Union, and **the patronage of Heaven ...**

Having now finished the work assigned to 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 any leave of all the employments of public life."



At a time when kings killed to get power and kings killed to keep power, **George Washington's** decision to give up power gained world-wide attention.

Earlier in 1783, the American-born painter **Benjamin West** was in England painting the portrait of **King George III**.

When the **King** asked what **General Washington** planned to do now that he had won the war.



West replied:

"They say **he will return to his farm.**"

King George exclaimed:

"If he does that, **he will be the greatest man in the world.**"



Poet **Robert Frost** wrote:

"I often say of **George Washington** that he was one of the few men in the



whole history of the world who was not carried away by power."

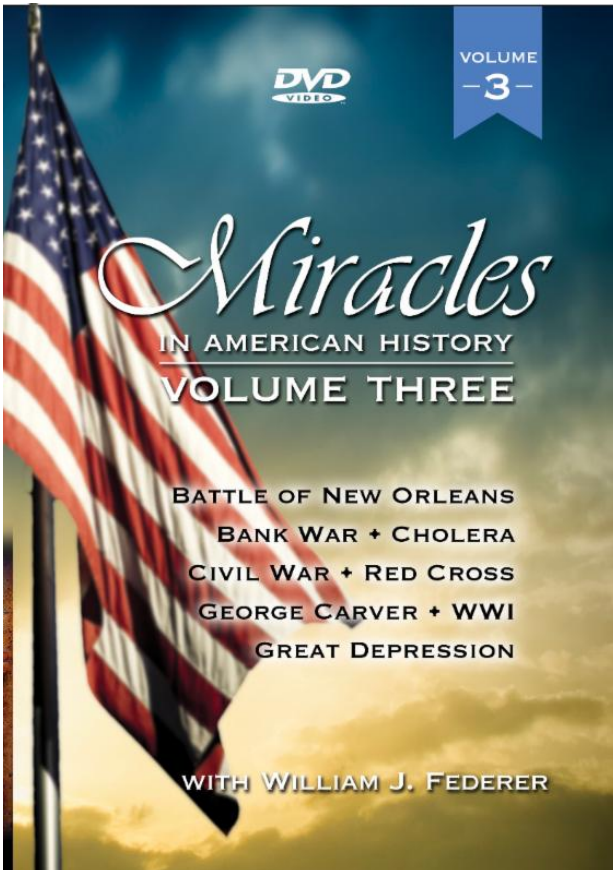
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