



The Papers of George Washington: August 1792-January 1 (Presidential Series)

George Washington

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Volume 11, which covers the closing months of Washington's first presidential term, opens with Washington at Mount Vernon, tending to both public and private affairs. The implementation of a federal excise tax on domestically produced whiskey provoked opposition that became violent in western Pennsylvania, eliciting Washington's proclamation of 15 September 1792 that called for U.S. citizens to comply peacefully with the law. Returning to Philadelphia in October 1792 for the second session of the Second Congress, Washington encountered a continuing variety of challenges during the fall and early winter. Preparations for war with several of the Indian nations in the Northwest Territory intensified under the leadership of General Anthony Wayne. At the same time, the federal government sponsored a number of peace initiatives to the hostile Indians and attempted to enlist the Iroquois and other Indians as intermediaries in the peace process. Washington also faced problems with Indians in the Southwest Territory and on the frontiers of the southern states who were deeply angered by American incursions on their lands, a hostility that Washington and other American officials believed was encouraged by Spanish agents among the Indians. Washington deplored the growing political factionalism within the United States. He attempted to assuage the increasingly bitter political differences between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, and he also urged Jefferson to delay his resignation as secretary of state. Although Washington continued to long for retirement and a permanent return to Mount Vernon, he reluctantly agreed to serve a second term as president after assuring himself that the public mood of the country favored his staying in office and that his leadership was essential to the success of the new government. The continuing revolution in France and the abolition of the French monarchy provoked a reevaluation of U.S.-French relations by Washington and his cabinet. The current war in Europe, moreover, mandated careful monitoring as Washington sought to maintain the neutral position of the United States. Finally, Washington continued to direct the development of the Federal City and to oversee the management of his estate at Mount Vernon.



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