



# Acts of Congress 1789: Includes the Constitution and the Bill of Rights

*George Washington, Mount Vernon Ladies' Association*

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Mount Vernon introduces replica of *Acts of Congress*, exquisite copy of history-making volume unveiled for library opening.

It was a book that made history, owned and treasured by the man whose ideas and values shaped the founding of a nation. Purchased for \$9.8 million by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, George Washington's personal copy of the *Acts of Congress* captured headlines around the globe in 2012 when it set a new auction record, returning to the hands of the organization that safeguards his life and legacy.

This fascinating volume is now back home at Washington's Virginia estate, and the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association has designed a stunning reproduction—a must-have for history lovers who were captivated by the story of the book's remarkable rescue and return.

In his own personal copy of the Constitution, included in the *Acts*, George Washington carefully took note of the roles and responsibilities he would undertake as the first democratically elected leader of a republican government. It was not an office he sought, but one that he accepted, bending to his country's voice "with veneration and love." He received the vote of all sixty-nine electors making him the only unanimously elected president. The precedents that Washington established as the leader of a new nation have endured for more than 225 years, and so, too, has his personal copy of the document that served as his guide.

First published in September 1789, the original volume is in remarkable condition. On the cover, still shiny gilt letters spell out the title of the book's owner, "President of the United States," while a decorative gold pattern adorns its spine. The inside cover bears Washington's bookplate, a personal touch that he reserved for his most cherished volumes, and the title page bears his signature. He brought the book back to his Mount Vernon estate upon retiring from the presidency in 1797, and it remained there until his death.

Since its purchase by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, tens of thousands of Washington admirers have viewed the *Acts* in temporary exhibitions at Mount Vernon and at all thirteen presidential libraries. Marveling at the book's significance to the founding of the United States and at the insights it offers into the mind of its first leader, they have expressed a desire to thumb through its fragile pages to read more of Washington's notes. This new reproduction book will enable them to do so, and to discuss and reflect upon the significance of the words with friends, family, students, and colleagues.

To replicate the original volume in an authentic manner, each component of the 106-page-book is painstakingly designed to match the original. The pages are yellowed slightly to show the effects of passing centuries. Ink smudges and flourishes mimic the imperfect printing processes of the 18th century. The leather cover is aged to appear slightly worn, and the variations in its gold accents mirror the ones found on Washington's volume. The replica also copies, line for line, Washington's margin notes—the penciled words and neat bracket drawings that point to the duties that he considered most important.

The book's release coincides with the opening of The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of

George Washington at Mount Vernon in fall 2013.

This slipcased collection includes a companion booklet by George Washington authority and historian Tom Allen, which outlines the genesis of Washington's personal copy of the Acts of Congress and its journey returning to Mount Vernon.

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