

Paul K. Longmore. The Invention of George Washington (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), 352 pages.

BY TRACING George Washington's deliberate development from colonial planter and soldier to republican icon, Paul Longmore answers the riddle of Washington's simultaneous fame and aloofness, arriving at a portrait of Washington as a self-fashioning representative of his turbulent time. As a young Virginia planter, Washington aspired to virtues associated with the colonial gentry, but as the British system of patronage threatened his own ambitions, he adopted the radical Whig patriotism that would lead him to take up arms. As a national hero of the Revolutionary War, and in accepting the presidency, Washington defended civilian control of the military and other ideals of republican government because his own image was inextricably tied to their success. *The Invention of George Washington*, first published in hardcover in 1988, explores the character of our first president in modern terms, but as Longmore shows, Washington's assiduous cultivation of his own public image does not ultimately diminish his extraordinary achievements as general and statesman.

#### Reviews

“Paul Longmore has examined the origins of the national image of George Washington, an image that still seems to hide the man. (How could anyone have been that good?) It was not, Longmore shows, the work of Washington's admirers, nor yet of any 18th-century equivalent of the press agent. Washington deliberately created his image himself.”

– Edmund S. Morgan, *The New Republic*

“Longmore's well-written and thoroughly researched work explains George Washington's career in terms of his lifelong ambition for public recognition, his conscious embodiment of colonial Virginia's honor-based culture, and his adherence to the Whig ideal of true patriotism. . . . Longmore also convincingly demonstrates that, contrary to previous scholarship, Washington was as politically sophisticated and well-read in history and politics as other Founding Fathers.”

– *Choice*

#### The Author

Paul K. Longmore is Professor of History at San Francisco State University.

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