

WASHINGTON AS PRESIDENT

George Washington set out from Mount Vernon on April 14, 1789. He was going to the country's capital, **New York City**. In all the cities and towns along the way, parades and cheering crowds greeted him. In February he had been elected the first President of the United States.

Eight days later, he arrived in New York City. Washington wore a plain brown suit made of American cloth. He placed his left hand on an open Bible. Then he took the President's oath of office on April 30, 1789. He swore to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." Presidents today still take the oath of office.

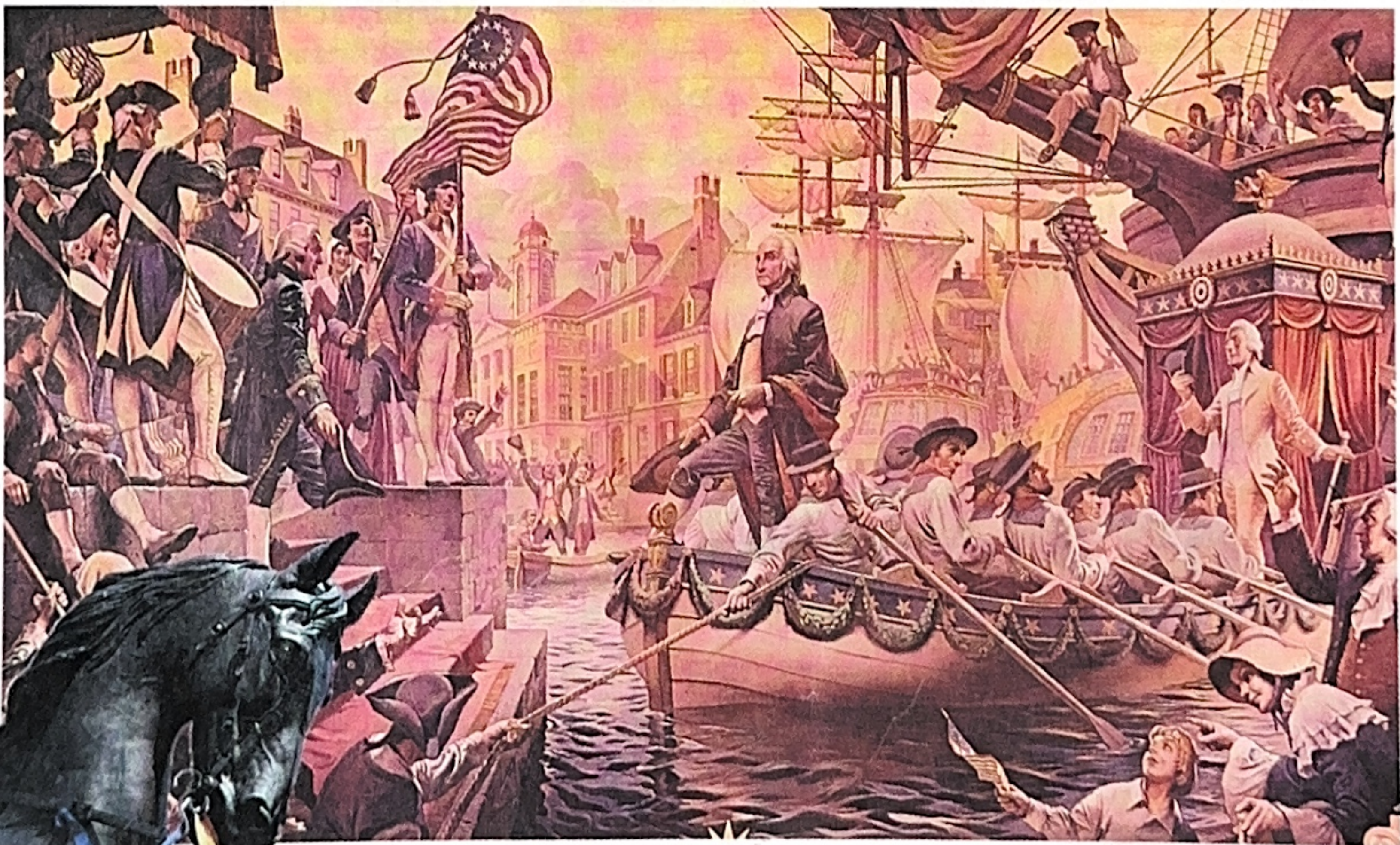
The President's Cabinet

To help the President, Congress set up three government departments. A **secretary** heads each.

The Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, made decisions about how the federal government spent money. Thomas Jefferson, the Secretary of State, handled dealings with other countries. The Secretary of War, Henry Knox, took charge of the country's defense. The Attorney General made sure that the country's laws were obeyed. Together these important officials were called the **Cabinet**.

Political Parties

Alexander Hamilton believed the country's future lay in trade and



Washington (above) arrived in New York City to be sworn in as President at Federal Hall. This statue of Washington (left) is part of a monument in Boston, Massachusetts.





This watercolor shows President Washington and the First Lady, Martha Washington.

industry. He argued for a strong federal government. Thomas Jefferson saw a country of many self-sufficient farmers. He argued that the best government was one that governed the least.

These different views in the Cabinet led to the first **political parties**. A political party is a group of people who share similar ideas about government.

First in War and Peace

George Washington served two terms, or eight years, as President. In 1797 he retired from office. He returned to Mount Vernon, where he died in 1799. Henry Lee said that Washington was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

WHY IT MATTERS

The debate over the Constitution helped establish the tradition of fighting with words rather than with weapons. Each side told its views in newspapers and speeches.

The Constitution has become one of the world's most important documents. The United States was the first nation to have a constitution written by the people.

✓ Reviewing Facts and Ideas

SUM IT UP

- In 1787 the debate over the Constitution began when the states voted whether or not to ratify it. By 1789 nine of the 13 states had ratified the Constitution.
- The Bill of Rights was ratified by the states in 1791.
- George Washington was the first President of the United States.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What was the Federalists' point of view about the Constitution?
2. How did Thomas Jefferson's and Alexander Hamilton's views differ?
3. **FOCUS** What compromise did Federalists make to have the Constitution ratified?
4. **THINKING SKILL** Why do you think its writers decided to make amending the Constitution a slow process?
5. **WRITE** Write a statement to show why you are for the Bill of Rights.