

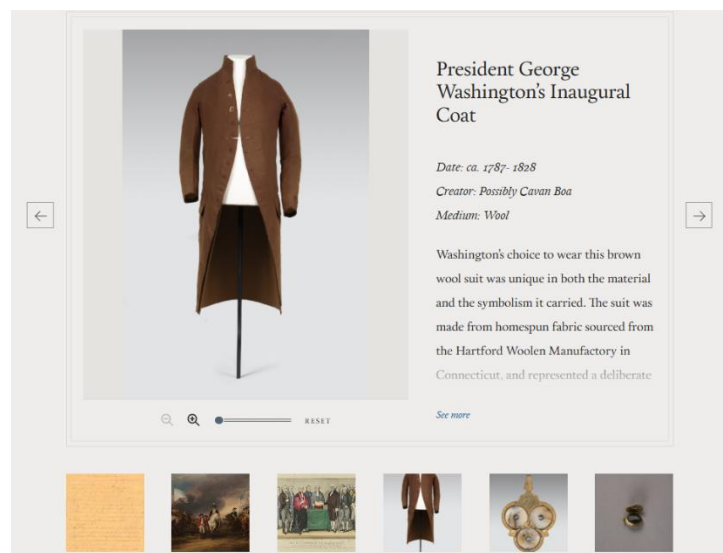


## NEW Digital Exhibit

# Explores the Lives of Six Presidents Through Fashion

Created in Partnership with New York University

September 16, 2025 (Washington D.C.) – The White House Historical Association debuts a new digital exhibit today in partnership with New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. [\*Suited to Lead: The Lives of Six Presidents Through Fashion\*](#), explores how fashion shaped the personal and political identities of George Washington, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Jimmy Carter.

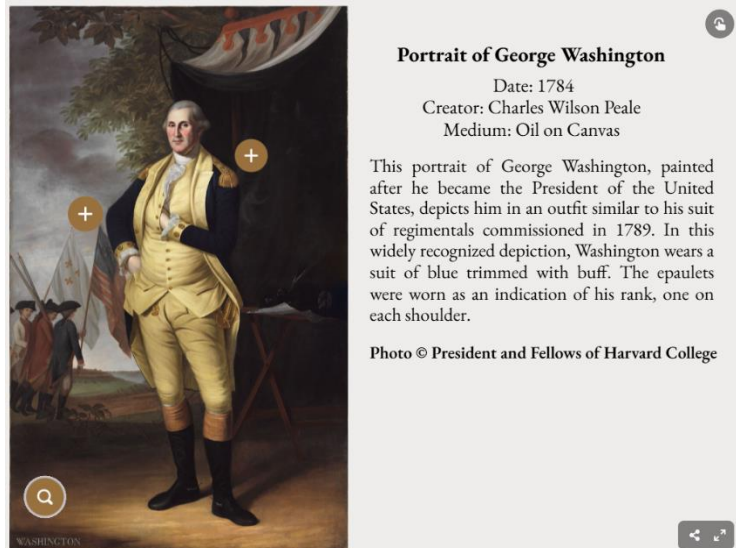


The exhibit is the result of a semester long internship offered by the White House Historical Association to support the work of an NYU Costume Studies student. The 2025 internship recipient, Fiona Hibbard, worked closely with the Association’s David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History and its Digital Library team.

Hibbard’s exhibit, *Suited to Lead: The Lives of Six Presidents Through Fashion*, considers how dress functioned as a tool of self-expression for particular presidents, and how their choices in

dress reflected their preferences, societal expectations, and positions. The digital exhibit explores dress before, during, and after the presidencies of the six presidents.

During her internship, Hibbard conceptualized and worked with the Digital Library team to create a new tool for digital exhibits, called interactive images. These images contain “hot spots” that, when accessed, display secondary images in pop-up windows that provide additional information.



#### Portrait of George Washington

Date: 1784

Creator: Charles Wilson Peale

Medium: Oil on Canvas

This portrait of George Washington, painted after he became the President of the United States, depicts him in an outfit similar to his suit of regimentals commissioned in 1789. In this widely recognized depiction, Washington wears a suit of blue trimmed with buff. The epaulets were worn as an indication of his rank, one on each shoulder.

Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

“In my research for this exhibit, I began to see these presidents in a new light. Through reading their personal journals, hearing descriptions from those close to them, and seeing the way they were portrayed in their time, I came to understand how they saw themselves as individuals and how they wanted others to see them. In curating *Suited to Lead*, I wanted to move beyond caricatures and stereotypes and invite others to share the experience of getting to know these presidents through one of their most personal expressions - the way they dressed,” said Hibbard. “To accomplish this, however, I felt it important to offer more visual details that just one photo could provide, hence the interactive photo tool used in three of the profiles.”

Fiona Hibbard is a dual degree Costume Studies MA/MLIS student at New York University in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Hibbard’s interest in American dress and history was influenced by her time at the Whaley Historic House Museum in Flint, Michigan, where she curated an exhibit on the fashion of the Whaley women.

Hibbard’s internship spans January through mid-September, 2025.

Hibbard will be a guest on the Association’s [White House History Live](#) virtual program which delves into the stories that make up the history of the Executive Mansion. Hibbard will share an in-depth look at her exhibit on **Tuesday, September 16 on Facebook Live at 5:30 PM EST.**

For more information on the White House Historical Association, please visit [www.whitehousehistory.org](http://www.whitehousehistory.org).

### **About NYU Costume Studies**

Since 1979, NYU Steinhardt's MA Program in Costume Studies has focused on the history of dress and textiles in its broadest aesthetic and cultural context. It was the first curriculum in the U.S. to educate specialists in this field. With a core of courses on the history of fashion and textiles, the program trains students in the research and analysis of the fascinating phenomenon of dress.

### **About The White House Historical Association**

First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy envisioned a restored White House that conveyed a sense of history through its decorative and fine arts. In 1961, the White House Historical Association was established to support her vision to preserve and share the Executive Mansion's legacy for generations to come. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association's mission is to assist in the preservation of the state and public rooms, fund acquisitions for the White House permanent collection, and educate the public on the history of the White House. Since its founding, the White House Historical Association has contributed more than \$115 million in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit [www.whitehousehistory.org](http://www.whitehousehistory.org).

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