

REPRODUCTION OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S SWORD



This is a reproduction of George Washington's Bailey Silver and Ivory-Hilted Cuttose made on site at Rock Island Arsenal in 1963 for the Kennedy Administration. A cuttose was a type of hanging sword used for hunting and weaponry in the 18th Century.

The original was cast by the General's favorite cutler between 1778 and 1779, as accounts differ. John Bailey, a British-born immigrant, moved his shop from New York to follow his beloved Continental Army as they traveled eastward in the later years of the Revolutionary War.

Swords worn by noblemen and high-ranking army officers during this era were part of ceremonial dress and as much a fashion statement as a weapon, and John Bailey's design proves this to stunning effect. The sword is 36.25 inches long and weighs about 4 pounds. The handle grip is made of green-dyed ivory swirled with silver strips. It has a gracefully curved steel blade and two fullers, or grooves, running down the middle to decrease its weight. The quillons, an S-shaped position between the handle and the blade, are designed as serpent heads. The scabbard, the holder shown above the sword, is made of silver and hand-tooled leather. As the head of the Continental Army, General Washington did not likely draw blood with his original sword.

George Washington's nephew, Captain Sam Washington, chose this sword as his inheritance among his uncle's collection. Instead of keeping it within his family, as was the custom of the day, he donated it to the US Government in 1843. The original is at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

President Kennedy commissioned nine replicas to give as gifts to visiting heads of state. Retired metal workers from the Arsenal made a silicone cast of the sword and reproduced them here. One of the replicas stayed at Rock Island Arsenal where you can see it at the Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

It is interesting to note below that the famous painting of Washington Crossing the Delaware depicted the General wearing a sword that had not yet been commissioned.

Washington crossed the Delaware in 1776. Perhaps we can forgive the artist his oversight for such a beautiful rendering of the sword.



George Washington at Trenton
by John Faed 1856/Wikispaces



Crossing the Delaware by Emanuel Leutze
1851/Wikispaces

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John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum/Information Sheet

Object Record, National Museum of American History, George Washington's Battle Sword and Scabbard