

## **UWO part of Oshkosh library's George Washington exhibit lineup**

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/17723/uwo-part-of-oshkosh-librarys-george-washington-exhibit-lineup/>

How fitting that a revealing, traveling historical exhibit on George Washington will take up temporary residence at 106 Washington Ave., location of the Oshkosh Public Library.

Then again, how many thousands of Washington Avenues are there in the United States – each one an often-overlooked tribute to a historical icon of massive proportions?

“Without (George Washington’s) ability to command respect from squabbling rebels, and his willingness to just plain endure a long war filled mostly with defeats, I think it is fair to say that the U.S.A. would not have become independent in the late 1700s,” said Gabriel Loiacono, assistant professor of history at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Loiacono will lead a public talk on April 12 as part of the Oshkosh Public Library’s more-than-month-long lineup of events connected to the traveling exhibit “The Many Faces of George Washington.” The exhibit opens with a reception under the library dome on Sunday, March 25 and runs until May 7. It’s the first showing of the exhibit in Wisconsin.

U.S. Senator Ron Johnson and U.S. Rep. Tom Petri are participating in the public, March 25 opening program and reception. Rep. Petri’s wife, Anne Neal Petri, Vice Regent for Wisconsin with the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, a co-sponsor of the traveling exhibit showing along with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, was instrumental in helping bring the exhibit to Oshkosh.

The Friends of the Oshkosh Public Library will provide refreshments during the reception which, the library has announced, will include “music and other surprises... to the colonial flavor of the event.”

Library coordinators have planned a multi-week lineup of local, state and national Washington historians and experts and film screenings to complement the exhibit’s large, vibrant, panel displays highlighting the story of Washington’s evolution from farmer to president.

“We all learned about Washington as children, but when you study his life in more detail, the significant contributions he made during the early days of the republic and as our country’s first president are phenomenal,” said Janice Dibble, the library’s Head of Reference & Adult Services, in the library’s announcement detailing the exhibit’s event-lineup. “It is very exciting to be chosen to share this exhibit with the community.”

Loiacono will present, “What Was Washington Thinking? A Brief Tour of Washington's Mind from the French and Indian War to his Retirement from the Presidency,” on Thursday, April 12 at 7 p.m. at the library.

The talk is billed as an overview “of Washington’s mind - his concerns, hopes, and ideals - from his youth as an exceptionally tall and lucky young soldier, to his old age as the widely respected first President of the United States.”

“He was, warts and all, a crucially important guy in American history,” Loiacono said.

“(Washington) was certainly not perfect, and could have done some things better,” he said. “At the same time, some of his virtues were just what the rebels and the vulnerable new republic needed at those moments. In particular, he should be admired for his unwillingness to use his popularity to take more power, as Napoleon would do shortly after Washington stepped down from power.”

Loiacono is not the only UW System historian involved in the exhibit-connected events. On Monday, April 2, at 4:30 p.m. John Kaminski, Ph.D., director, The Center for the Study of the American Constitution at UW-Madison will present “George Washington: A Great and Good Man” at the library.

Kaminski will also examine the respect Washington earned as both the “glue that held the fragile, young American republic together, both in war and peace” and as “a good man who could be completely trusted in the leadership roles in which he served.”

Learn more:

- [“The Many Faces of George Washington,” at the Oshkosh Public Library, March 25 through May 7](#)