

James Gallagher as George Washington, 1992

David Graham (b. 1952)
dye coupler print on paper
H. 19 x W. 18.5 inches
Collection of the Bucks County Intermediate
Unit #22



Biography

David Graham is a photographer, which means he is an artist who uses a camera to make his art. In his photographs, he likes to show the United States in many different ways. Some of his work is funny, and some of his work is serious. In his photographs, he has shown old empty buildings, giant doughnuts, and people dressed up as famous people from history.

David Graham went to college at the Philadelphia College of Art, now called the University of the Arts. He started out with a regular camera. Now, he uses a large format camera, so the pictures he takes are very big. He traveled across America with this camera to make pictures for a book called *American Beauty*. He has made many other books showing how Americans live. He has also created work for books with other authors, and for magazines.

David Graham lives in Newtown, Pennsylvania. He is a professor at the University of the Arts, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Who is the man in the picture?

The real man in the photograph is James Gallagher. He lives in Bucks County. He likes to dress up in costumes. He pretends to be from Revolutionary War times. In this photograph, he is dressed up as George Washington.

Every Christmas morning many people who like to dress up in costumes from Revolutionary War times meet in Washington's Crossing, Pennsylvania. They pretend to be from George Washington's army. They get in boats, and row across the Delaware River. Washington and his men made this same trip on Christmas Day in 1775. You can go to Washington's Crossing at about 1:00 in the afternoon every Christmas Day and watch the people cross the river.

George Washington was from Virginia. He liked being in the army. In 1775, he was elected Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. That means he was in charge of all the soldiers and all the battles. In 1787, he was elected the first President of the United States. He retired at the end of his second term.

Three years later, he died of a throat infection. The nation mourned the loss of their first president.



Why does the man have his hand beneath his shirt?

There is a really famous painting by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze called *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851). You can see this painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, www.metmuseum.org. In this painting, George Washington is in a boat with other soldiers and many horses. George Washington is standing up, looking toward New Jersey. He is using his left hand to hold his cape closed against the wind. His right hand is resting on his bent knee. David Graham might have placed the hand of James Gallagher to look like the pose in this famous painting.

David Graham might also have been copying the pose held by another soldier from the period, Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon was French. He won a scholarship to a French school in 1783, where he studied being a soldier. He became the Emperor of France. He made laws that are part of the freedom of France to this day. He also helped education, science, reading, writing, and the arts. On the other hand, he used spies and secret police to help rule France. When Napoleon was the ruler of France, no one was allowed to speak out against him.

Napoleon is famous for posing with his hand inside his shirt. No one knows exactly why these poses became popular, but there are several theories. You decide which is the most believable!

- The pose was a popular one for portraits created in the eighteenth century.
- The pose was a way to show that the sitter was calm, comfortable and relaxed.
- Napoleon died of arsenic poisoning, which hurt his stomach.
- Napoleon had psoriasis, a disease that caused severe itching.
- This portrait became famous, so we came to picture Napoleon this way.
- His hand was cold.
- There was something wrong with Napoleon's hand, and he didn't want anyone to see it.
- Napoleon wanted to save artists some time.

Where is the man standing?

James Gallagher, or George Washington, is standing inside a barn. The artist, David Graham, has created a setting in the barn with objects that look like they are taken from boat docks, boats and shipyards. There are wooden planks that look like a pier or the deck of a boat. There are angled ladders, ropes and chains. There are I-beams sticking out of the rear wall. They look like a boom on a sailboat. The hook overhead looks like the type of hook that would connect a sail to a mast. The stairs make us think of the upstairs and downstairs of a large ship. The ladders may lead our eye to a crow's nest. If all this is true, where is James Gallagher as George Washington standing? He may have one foot in the boat, and one foot in the water!

What is the meaning of the sign, "KEEP OFF BOATS"?

David Graham makes portrait photographs. He likes to show us a funny view of American history. In *James Gallagher as George Washington*, he shows a chubby man dressed as George Washington. He has added a sign that says, "Keep



off the Boats”. It is a warning. What would George Washington have done if he never went on a boat? Maybe the artist is warning us of the dangers of the future. Maybe the artist is warning us to stay away from war. Maybe the artist is warning us to stay away from things that we do not know much about. Or maybe the sign is a simple joke – of course George Washington can’t keep off the boats – he is an American general fighting the British during the American Revolution! There is water all around him– the Delaware River, the Potomac River and the Hudson Rivers were all scenes of major American Revolutionary battles.

What does CADY 5000 mean?

CADY is the name of the manufacturer who made the I-beam hanging over George Washington’s head in this photograph. I-beams are steel beams with an I- or H-shaped cross-section. I-beams are widely used in the construction of bridges, large buildings and ships, among other things. They are extremely strong. They are available in a variety of sizes. The number 500 on the I-beam in this photograph may refer to the strength or measurement of this particular I-beam.

Learn More

There are several ways to look at, study and interpret photographs. The following activity sheets, located below, will help you learn these skills. They will also help you learn more about the work of photographer David Graham.

“Preserving your Photographs”

“Every Picture Tells a Story”

“Critical Analysis 1”

“Critical Analysis 2”

“The Shape of a Picture”

“Cultural Landscapes”

“Reading a Photograph”

Look for I-beams in your neighborhood, school, and town. Look for them when you travel. You will be surprised how many places you see every day that use I-beams in their construction.

Plan a family vacation to visit one of the rivers in the United States where George Washington led a famous battle. Learn more about George Washington and the American Revolution before you go.

To plan a visit to Washington’s Crossing Historic Park in Pennsylvania, research www.ushistory.org/washingtoncrossing.

To plan a visit to Valley Forge National Historic Park in Pennsylvania, research www.nps.gov.

Learn about the life and times of Washington and his fellow citizens when you visit Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. Learn more at www.history.org.



Visit the Fort Ticonderoga National Historic Landmark in New York State and come away with a deeper understanding of American history. Learn more at www.fort-ticonderoga.org.

Learn about the view camera in the activity “The View Camera,” below, used by David Graham for many of his photographs.

Related Images

You can see Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze’s, *George Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, at the website of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: www.metmuseum.org

There are many famous portraits of George Washington. One of them, painted by Rembrandt Peale in 1853, is hanging in the James A. Michener Art Museum. You can see others at the website of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.:
The Landsdowne Portrait (1796) by Gilbert Stuart
The Athenaeum Portrait (1796) by Gilbert Stuart
www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2005/stuart/philadelphia.shtm

View the special exhibition *George and Martha Washington: Portraits from the Presidential Years* at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC.
www.npg.si.edu/exh/gw/gwexh.htm

To see two very famous portraits of the Emperor Napoleon, you may visit the National Gallery of Art or the Royal Academy of Arts in Great Britain.

Jacques-Louis David, *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries*, 1812, National Gallery of Art.
www.nga.gov/kids/napoleon/nap1.htm

Website of the Royal Academy of Arts, Great Britain
static.royalacademy.org.uk

To see Napoleon etchings from the James Smith Noel Collection, go to:
www.jamessmithnoelcollection.org

Related Links

To learn more about paintings of Emperor Napoleon, go to the website of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/search_www.cgi?q=napoleon&cmd=search

Read the *Pittsburgh Tribune* review of the James Gallagher exhibition “Colors of America”, March 27, 2007.
www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/search/s_559172.html



Learn more about the annual Delaware River crossing at the website of Washington's Crossing Historic Park in Washington's Crossing, Pennsylvania at www.ushistory.org.

Visit the White House website, featuring biographies of all the American presidents AT www.whitehouse.gov.

