

or Knave?

and is probably the most widely distributed of the three distinct poses. Stuart himself, however, disliked it and said that he had destroyed it.

Most experts dispute this, believing that Stuart merely used this as a subterfuge to get Washington to pose again. The original is believed to be in the National Gallery in Washington, and many variations of the Vaughn type, painted by Stuart himself, are known to exist. Two should be familiar to every American. One is reproduced on the dollar bill and another on the two-cent stamp.

The second pose, or Lansdowne type (also named for the first owner), involves three originals simply because Stuart painted all three of them at once. He set up three easels and alternately worked on each, mass-production style.

The third pose, called the Athenaeum type, is probably Stuart's best picture of Washington, although it brought him into direct conflict with his subject. Washington himself ordered this portrait for his wife Martha. Stuart, however, liked it so well that he kept it. We have several versions of what happened. Stuart's daughter wrote the most charitable account.

She said that Washington called at the Stuart home to pick up the picture, but when Stuart explained that it was invaluable to him in making extra copies which he could sell, Washington conceded that Stuart could keep it "at your pleasure, if it be of any consequence to you, sir."

A MORE SALTY VERSION was offered by a visitor to Mount Vernon who heard the picture referred to rather angrily. It seems that both Washington and Mrs. Washington each had made several visits to Stuart's home, hoping to have the picture delivered. Each time Stuart put them off, claiming that it wasn't ready. On the final visit, the President became so ruffled he stormed out, rasping, "Very well, sir, deliver it when you will, for I will not call again."

Both versions have an element of truth. The fact is that Stuart was quite right when he said the painting was not finished—it still isn't! But it is unfinished because Stuart did not wish it to be. The portrait was a good one, so good that Stuart wanted it handy to make copies. So he left the foreground and background blank as an excuse, although Washington's visage was completed admirably. Before he was through with it, Stuart made more than 70 copies of this version. The original, which now hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, is still the best of the group.

Despite his mild—perhaps excusable—deceptions, Stuart's worth as an artist should not be minimized. As one observer commented, "Stuart's portraits of Washington are so implanted in our minds that if Washington were to return to earth today and stand beside one of them and not resemble it, he would be declared an impostor."



One of three Lansdowne portraits Washington actually posed for now hangs in Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

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