

# Even George Washington was a target of misinformation | Poynter

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While it's easy to consider President George Washington as a Founding Father from long ago, his political milieu of the 1700s had at least one thing in common with today: People used misinformation to try to gain political advantage.

And, yes, even George Washington was a target.

Forged letters from before his presidency claimed to show that Washington privately sympathized with the British monarchy and thought the American cause was doomed. The very idea that the first president didn't ardently support the new nation was scandalous.

The letters were clever forgeries, but they dogged Washington. They circulated in pamphlets, during both the American Revolution and Washington's presidency.

Eventually, Washington grew tired of hearing about the letters and issued an adamant fact-check of his own.

Whoever forged the letters worked to make them believable, including details about Washington's life as a Virginia farmer. When the letters first appeared in London in 1777, they were published with a preface claiming they had been found when Washington's enslaved servant, William "Billy" Lee, was captured. Lee worked as personal assistant to Washington, even accompanying him on horseback when Washington was out in the field with his troops. The forgers claimed that Lee had letters in a briefcase when the British captured him.

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