This restrained and excellent portrait of Washington was one of several done about this time by Savage. The president set to him several times, according to letters which survive, and although this was finished in London in 1795, we can assume that the likeness was already established before Savage went abroad. How much faith to put in the legend that the wooden panel on which it was painted was once a part of the stage coach of George III is open to question.

Our painting presents a three quarters length portrait of Washington, wearing a black velvet costume and seated in a damask covered chair. At the right is a pillar, partially covered by a draped figured damask curtain. On the table are a cocked hat and a map of the city of Washington.

The mezzotint which was made after this painting hangs at the left. Published in Boston in 1795, it is one of the finest prints of Washington now available.

Savage himself retained our portrait of Washington until his death in 1817 when it was passed on to members of his family. His grandson, Charles H. Savage of Chicago, owned it for a time and in 1921 it was bequeathed to the Art Institute by a descendant, Miss Catharine Colvin.
The Washington Family
Stipple Engraving by Edward Savage
Published in London in 1798

Washington, in uniform, and Mrs. Washington are shown seated at
a table on which is a map of the District of Columbia. With them are
their adopted grandchildren, George Washington Parke Custis, and Nelly
Custis, and Billy Lee, Washington's faithful colored servant.

George Washington
Messotint by Edward Savage
Published in Boston in 1795

Although a later state of this messotint bears the legend that
it was done from the original portrait painted at the request of the
corporation of the University of Cambridge in Massachusetts, it is
true only so far as the head is concerned. The pose and accessories
are much closer to our portrait of Washington, on exhibition here.
Edward Savage
American, 1761–1817

Edward Savage, famous as a painter and engraver of early American portraits, was born in Princeton, Massachusetts in 1761. Early in his life he practised the art of the goldsmith and by 1785 was an accomplished painter. In 1789 he completed his first portrait of Washington and presented it to Harvard University a year later. At this time he made a second Washington portrait, almost a replica, for John Adams. It must have been another replica of this same portrait which in 1791 he carried to London as the basis for his famous stipple engraving. While in England he is known to have studied under Benjamin West, the well-known American painter. The portrait on exhibition here had been begun in America from life in 1790. It was finished in London in 1795.

In 1794 on his return to Boston, Savage married Sarah Seaver. Later he settled in Philadelphia where he became well-known for his engravings. He exhibited the first panorama ever shown in Philadelphia, representing London and Westminster. In 1798 he published the print, "The Washington Family," shown here at the right. Two years later he went to New York and with David Bowen became interested in the New York Museum which by 1812 was called The Columbian Gallery, one of those strange storehouses of miscellaneous art objects and curios which were the forerunners of our modern museums.

A group of books dealing with Savage and portraits of Washington is on reserve in Hyerson Library.
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH

Drawing by Giulio Campagnolo,
February, 1940

EDWARD SAVAGE: PORTRAIT OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

Though Giulio has borrowed the elements of this composition from such different sources as Mantegna and Giorgione, by his method of expression his work ranks as one of his own. The scenes are his own.

REFERENCES

Books on display table in Reference Room - Ryerson Library

Baker, W. S., American engravers and their works, Philadelphia, Geibge and Barrie, 1875, p. 155

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