

For Immediate Release

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AN AMERICAN TREASURE CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF THE NATION TO BE AUCTIONED AT CHRISTIE'S

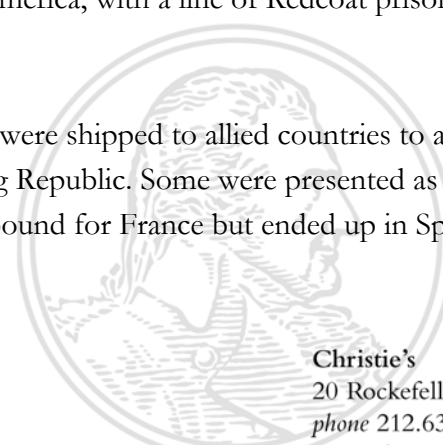
**The Collection of Mrs. J. Insley Blair
January 21, 2006**

New York – An American painting of momentous national, cultural and historic importance is to be auctioned at Christie's New York on January 21, 2006. A full-length painting of *George Washington* by Charles Willson Peale is estimated at \$10,000,000-15,000,000, and will lead *The Collection of Mrs. J. Insley Blair*, which also includes a fine selection of American furniture and decorative arts.

One of eight known full-length Washington portraits painted by Peale during the Revolutionary War over a three year period between 1779 and 1781, this particular example is signed and dated 1779. Depicting George Washington as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, the work is an early example from this iconic and patriotic series, a series that established Peale as the premier portrait painter of colonial America.

With Princeton's Nassau Hall in the background and the Hessian flags draped in the foreground, the picture alludes to the notable American victories over the British at Trenton in December 1776 and Princeton in January 1777 – the two most significant battle successes to date. The picture emphasizes the victorious air of Revolutionary America, with a line of Redcoat prisoners marching behind Washington.

As these impressive portraits were finished, they were shipped to allied countries to aid the war's diplomatic efforts and gain favor for the fledgling Republic. Some were presented as gifts to foreign dignitaries - this particular example was initially bound for France but ended up in Spain.



During its voyage across the Atlantic, the ship carrying the painting ran into the British and was forced to dock on the Iberian Peninsula. The painting was in the care of William Carmichael, the American Charges d’Affaires in Spain. A friend of Peale’s, he managed to sell the portrait in 1782. Soon after the work came into the possession of the Duke of Pastrena, who bequeathed it to a Spanish monastery before it found its way to the New York dealers P.W. French & Co in the early 1900s. Mrs. Blair purchased the painting in 1919 and it was on display in the Blair Tuxedo Park family home - and it has been on view at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts for the last 22 years.

Representing the pinnacle of Peale’s portraiture, six of the eight portraits are in United States institutions including the Senate, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Colonial Williamsburg, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Princeton University Art Museum.

Auction: The Collection of Mrs. J. Insley Blair
January 21, 2006

Viewing: Christie’s Rockefeller, New York
November 26 – 30 (during the Important American Paintings view)
January 14 – 19

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Image available on request
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