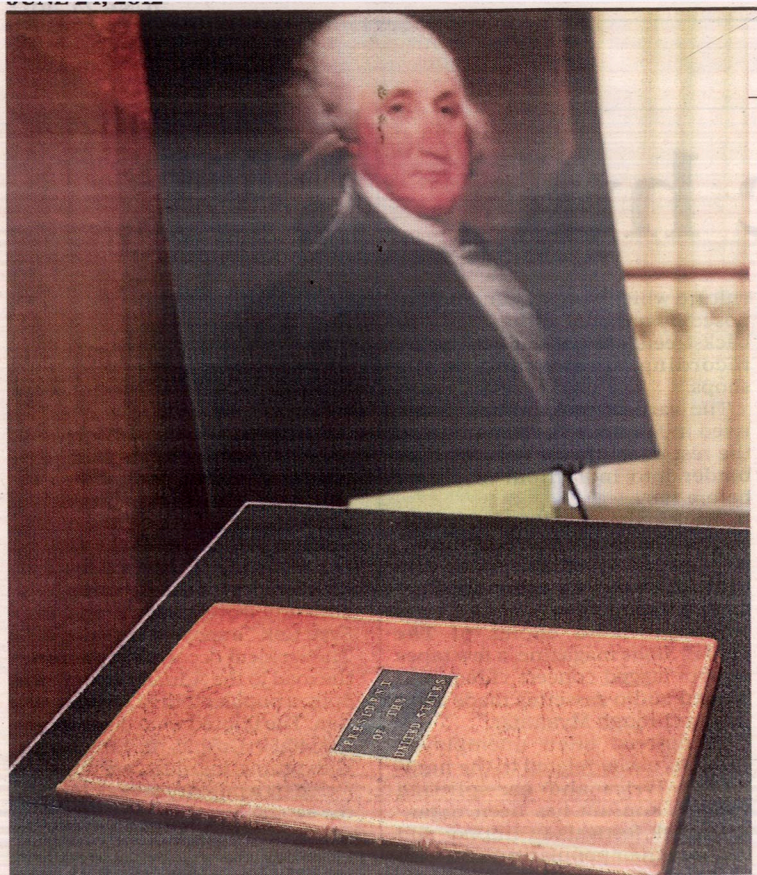


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George Washington's copy of the American Constitution and Bill of Rights set an auction record for an American book or historic document.
Reuters pic

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Old copy of US constitution fetches RM31m

NEW YORK: George Washington's personal copy of the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights sold for US\$9.8 million (RM31.3 million) at an auction on Friday, setting a record for an American book or historic document.

Bidders at Christie's New York salesroom and others on the telephone competed for the first US president's signed, gold-embossed volume dating to 1789, which had a pre-sale estimated of up to US\$3 million.

The Mount Vernon Ladies Association, which maintains the historic Mount Vernon estate in Virginia that was Washington's home and is now open to the public, was the successful bidder.

The bound volume was Washington's personal copy of the Acts of Congress.

They included the Constitution,

whose preamble promises to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity," and the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, which established such fundamental liberties as the right to free speech, press, assembly and religion.

Christie's described the book as being in near-pristine condition after 223 years. It was specially printed for Washington in 1789, his first year in office as president.

The margins included Washington's handwritten brackets and notations highlighting key passages concerning the president's responsibilities.

The Acts of Congress volume was sold from Washington's library at Mount Vernon in 1876 and eventually bought at an auction by Richard Dietrich in the 1960s. Reuters