New York became the eleventh U.S. state on July 26, 1788. Have you heard that New York City served as the first capital of the nation. George Washington became President there in 1789 soon after that, the U.S. capital move to Philadelphia, then to Washington, D.C. New York, however remained the “trade capital” of America for many years. That's why George Washington is said to have given New York the nickname Empire State.”