

WASHINGTON MONUMENT

Washington, D.C.





WASHINGTON MONUMENT

A memorial to the First President of the United States, peerless military leader of the American Revolution, and wise statesman of the new Republic

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT, built at intervals between 1848 and 1885 with funds from public subscriptions and Federal appropriations, memorializes George Washington's achievements and unselfish devotion to principle and to country. It shows the gratitude of the people of the United States to the father of their country and their like faith in the causes for which he stood.

Early History of the Washington Monument

A monument in honor of George Washington was first considered by the Continental Congress in 1783. At the time of his death, and during the next three decades, Congress neglected to take definite action on many additional proposals for the erection of a suitable memorial. In 1833, the Washington National Monument Society was organized by influential citizens of the National Capital who determined to make amends for the failure of Congress. The society undertook the building of a "great National Monument to the memory of Washington at the seat of the Federal Government."

Laying the Cornerstone

The progress of the society was slow at first. By 1847, however, \$70,000 had been collected by popular subscription. A design submitted by Robert Mills, well known as an architect, was selected but later greatly revised. Congressional authority for the erection of the monument was soon granted. On July 4, 1848, the cornerstone was laid with elaborate Masonic ceremonies. The trowel used by Washington at the laying of the cornerstone of the Capitol in 1793 was used on this occasion.

Work progressed favorably until 1854, when the building of the monument became involved in a political quarrel. Many citizens became dissatisfied with the work and the collection of funds lagged. This unfortunate affair and the growing disagreement between the North and South, which resulted in the Civil War, brought construction to a halt. For almost 25 years, the monument stood incomplete at the height of about 153 feet. Finally, on August 2, 1876, President Grant approved an act which provided that the Federal Government should complete the erection of the monument. The Engineer Corps of the War Department was placed in charge of the work.

Construction Resumed and Monument Completed

In 1880, work was resumed on the shaft. The new Maryland marble with which the remainder of the monument is faced was secured from the same vein as the original stone used for the lower part. However, it came from a different stratum and has weathered to a slightly different tone. This explains the "ring" noticeable on the shaft. The walls of the memorial reached the height of 500 feet on August 9, 1884. The capstone was set in place on December 6, 1884, marking the completion of the work. Dedicated on February 21, 1885, the monument was opened to the public on October 9, 1888.

The top may be reached by elevator or by an iron stairway. The first elevator was a steam hoist. This was used until 1901 when the first electric elevator was installed. The present elevator, installed in 1959, makes the ascent in 70 seconds. The iron stairway consists of 50 landings and 898 steps.

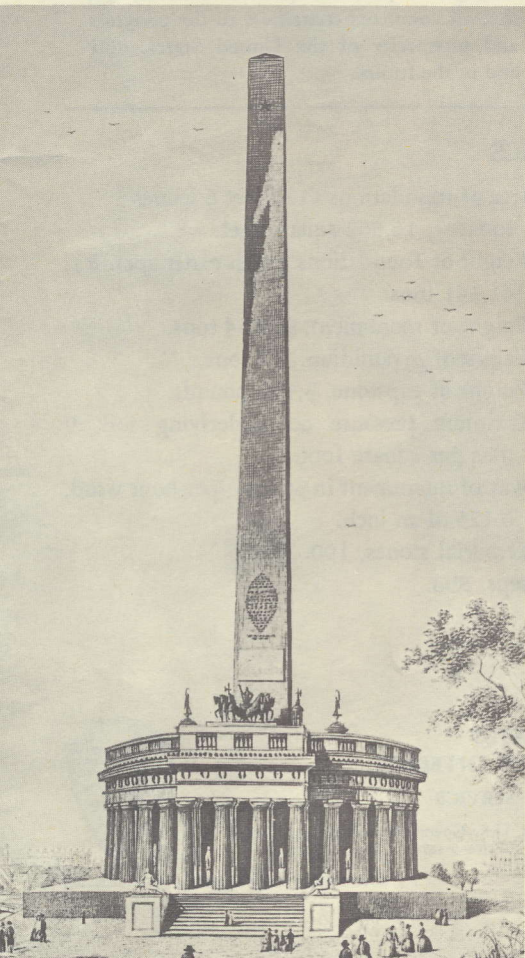
Inserted into the interior walls are 190 carved stones presented by individuals, societies, cities, States, and nations of the world. They include stones from the ruins of ancient Carthage, Brazil, Japan, Greece, and Turkey. Forty-nine were presented by States of the Union. Near the top are several given while present-day States were still Territories.

Mills' Original Design

The present monument, a hollow shaft without decoration or embellishment, has little in common with Mills' original elaborate plan. This provided for a decorated obelisk 600 feet high and 70 feet at the base. It was to rise from a circular colonnaded building 100 feet high and 250 feet in diameter, surrounded by 30 columns each 12 feet in diameter

Left: Mills' Original Design

Below: The Monument in 1879





and 45 feet high. This temple was to be an American pantheon, a repository for statues of Presidents and national heroes, containing a colossal statue of George Washington. The proportions of Mills' shaft, which were at variance with traditional dimensions of obelisks, were altered to conform to the classic conception. This produced an obelisk that for grace and delicacy of outline is unexcelled by any in Egypt.

Washington During the Revolutionary War

It was in July 1775, when Gen. George Washington took command of the newly-formed Continental Army that his rise to enduring fame really began. He was already an international figure because of the part he had played in the French and Indian War. However, the quarter of a century that loomed ahead of that July day was to place him high in the ranks of the world's great. The problems that confronted the new commander and his country were colossal. Thirteen small colonies, with potentially rich but yet undeveloped resources, had embarked on armed conflict with the richest and most powerful empire in the world. It was an empire whose fleets proudly boasted that they ruled the sea, and whose far-flung commerce supplied an abundance of the weapons of war.

As commander of the small Continental Army seeking to win national independence for the colonies, Washington was an inspiring leader. He showed a remarkable ability to secure the best results with the scanty material resources and untrained armed force at his command. His persistence secured essential reinforcements and supplies from reluctant governors and assemblies and enabled him to strengthen the army and feed and clothe his frequently cold and hungry troops. To an unusual degree he possessed the ability to win the support of capable men in both military and civil life. He made of this Continental Army an easily maneuverable force which survived the worst blows of its foe and even won significant victories in the first 3 years of the war. He thus assured the all-important alliance with France which was to guarantee the achievement of American independence.

By the close of the Revolution the outstanding position of Washington in the minds of the American people was generally recognized. More than any other American, he symbolized the Revolution and its triumphant conclusion. He had been its military leader for more than 8 years. No figure in American military or civil life commanded the same general respect and admiration as were given to the great Commander in Chief. At times, it was by his strength of character as much

as by his military ability that he had prevented the Revolution from collapsing. No other American military hero has possessed in equal measure so many outstanding qualities of leadership. It is not strange that he has come to be regarded as the father of this country and that he has remained the preeminent figure in American history.

Washington, the First President

The years that followed the Revolution further added to the fame of Washington. This was a critical period in the life of the young

The Monument from the Lincoln Memorial



republic. Its very existence was endangered by the weak central government established under the Articles of Confederation. The public debt remained unpaid, and public credit declined. The States levied their own customs duties and disputed among themselves over the regulation of interstate commerce and other vital matters. In this national crisis, Washington was again summoned to serve his country. He presided over the Convention of 1787 that drew up the Federal Constitution. In 1789 his outstanding ability was recognized by his unanimous election as first President of the United States.

In his new office, Washington showed the same high administrative qualities that had marked his work as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. His choice of executive officers again proved his capacity to select men of high competence and to place them in positions where their ability could be used to the best advantage. During his administration, the public credit was restored. Irritating disputes among the States over domestic commerce disappeared with the regulation of interstate commerce by the Federal Government. The adoption of these measures was accompanied by bitter charges directed partly against Washington himself. Nevertheless, the laws which successfully launched the new government on its course have won the general approval of all succeeding groups of our citizens.

Washington in Retirement

When, in March 1797, Washington set out to pass the remaining years of life at Mount Vernon, he left behind him a great work successfully completed. As the people had looked to him for leadership in war, so they looked to him for leadership in peace, and he did not disappoint them.

Steadily through the years that have passed since Washington's death in 1799, his fame has burned brightly. All sections of the country, North and South, East and West,

have recognized him as a truly great man whom all citizens can admire. Indeed, no other American has been accorded such general admiration. Abroad, the fame of Washington grew as the French Revolution gave emphasis to the republicanism and nationalism that he symbolized. The acceptance of democratic principles increasingly became the fashion in 19th-century Europe and South America, where liberals and nationalists spread his fame. Chateaubriand, the celebrated French commentator on America, said: "The name of Washington will spread with liberty from age to age."

Administration

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this monument is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great natural, historical, and recrea-

tional places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of all the people.

The monument is open daily from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., March 20 through Labor Day, and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Labor Day through March 19. The monument is closed on Christmas Day. The elevator charge of 10 cents is waived for children 15 years of age and under and for educational groups. Address all inquiries to the Superintendent, Central National Capital Parks, 900 Ohio Drive SW., Washington, D.C. 20242.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

STATISTICS

Cornerstone laid, July 4, 1848.
Capstone set, December 6, 1884.
Dedicated, February 21, 1885.
Opened to public, October 9, 1888.
Total cost, \$1,187,710.31.
Height of monument above floor, 555 feet 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches.
Side of base of shaft, 55 feet 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Side of top of shaft, 34 feet 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Thickness of walls at base of shaft, 15 feet.
Thickness of walls at top of shaft, 18 inches.
Material used on face of shaft, white marble.
Depth of foundation, 36 feet 10 inches.

Area of foundations (126 feet 6 inches square), 16,002 square feet.
Weight of foundations (with earth upon it), 41,341 tons.
Weight of monument, 90,854 tons.
Weight of pyramidion, 336 tons.
Weight of capstone, 3,300 pounds.
Maximum pressure on underlying soil, 9 tons per square foot.
Sway of monument in 30-mile-per-hour wind, 0.125 of an inch.
Memorial stones, 190.
Steps, 898.



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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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