Oriental Flowering Cherry Trees

Thomas Jefferson Memorial appears in its most beautiful setting in early spring, when the Oriental Flowering Cherry Trees are in bloom. It is then that the memorial receives the greatest notice from the public. Although the blooming of these famous trees, 650 of which encircle the Tidal Basin, depends upon seasonal conditions, they ordinarily bloom for 10 to 12 days starting about the first week in April. During this period, the annual Cherry Blossom Festival is staged near the Tidal Basin.

The cherry trees were the gift of the city of Tokyo to the city of Washington. The ceremony of official planting took place on the north side of the Basin on March 27, 1912, when Mrs. William Howard Taft, wife of the President of the United States, planted the first tree, and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese Ambassador to the United States, planted the second tree.

Construction of the Memorial

Provision for building an appropriate permanent memorial to Thomas Jefferson in the Capital City was made by act of Congress in 1934 (Public Resolution No. 49, 73rd Cong., approved June 26, 1934). The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, created by this act, was responsible for the planning and supervision of this great work. John Russell Pope and the survivors of his firm, Otto R. Eggers and Daniel P. Higgins, designed the structure. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held on December 15, 1938, and the cornerstone was officially laid on November 15, 1939. On both of these occasions the President of the United States and the members of the Commission took active part. The memorial was dedicated on April 13, 1943.


The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great natural, historical, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of all the people.

The Department of the Interior: As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.
These words of Thomas Jefferson now indelibly inscribed in this memorial to him might be called the heart of his political and social thinking. His opposition to tyranny in all its forms was repeatedly voiced. In the Declaration of Inde­pendence and, appearing in his face on all physical occasions, he is created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness; to secure these rights governments are instituted among men. He was, as he himself put it, "the most contented and of right ought to be free and independent states. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance upon Providence, we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or religious sanctions will suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion. I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively.

God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice will not overrule his wisdom and will despise us. Nothing is more certain written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Established by the thoughts of Thomas Jefferson’s vision in matters of government is demonstrated in the Declaration of Independence. The right to hold opinions, to be free, is a condition of liberty. Men are entitled to these liberties when they have re­flected and are prepared to maintain them. He who would not sacrifice a life for the protection of his property, and to effect and on a general plan.

I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and constitutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths explained, and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We must all, therefore, continually remind ourselves of our fundamental obligations under the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and constitutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths explained, and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We must all, therefore, continually remind ourselves of our fundamental obligations under the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men. He was, as he himself put it, "the most contented and of right ought to be free and independent states. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance upon Providence, we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

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