

George Rogers Clark

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

George Rogers Clark
National Historical Park



Clark Memorial Facts



An intense interest in commemorating the great accomplishments of George Rogers Clark had developed among the citizens of Vincennes and the state of Indiana during the early 1920s as the 150th anniversary of the American Revolution neared.

Building a Memorial

After various proposals had been considered, President Calvin Coolidge signed into law a resolution establishing the George Rogers Clark Sesquicentennial Commission on May 23, 1928. The 15-member commission was created for the purpose of "designing and constructing at or near the site of Fort Sackville a permanent memorial, commemorating the winning of the Old Northwest and the achievements of George Rogers Clark and his associates."

The Clark Memorial was designed by the

architectural firm of Hiron & Mellor of New York. The W. R. Heath Construction Company of Greencastle, Indiana, built the structure between September 1931 and May 1933. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt dedicated the memorial June 14, 1936. In 1940, the memorial became a unit of the Indiana Department of Conservation. In 1966, Congress made the building and grounds a part of the National Park Service. The measure was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson during a ceremony at the memorial on July 23, 1966.

Outside of the Memorial

The Clark Memorial is more than 80 feet high and is 180 feet across at the base. The walls are two feet thick. The exterior is composed of granite from Vermont, Minnesota, and Alabama.

Towering over the entrance is an eagle with outspread wings. Above the 16 Doric columns is an inscription, which reads: "The Conquest of the West - George Rogers Clark and The Frontiersmen of the American Revolution."

Inside the Memorial

Inside the rotunda are seven murals, each created on a single piece of Belgium linen 16 feet by 28 feet. They were painted by Ezra Winter during a period of approximately two and a half years. Hermon Atkins MacNeil, designer of the standing liberty quarter, sculptured the bronze statue of Clark. The pedestal beneath the statue is approximately four and a half feet, the base is half a foot, and the statue is seven and a half feet. Total height is twelve and a half feet. The statue and Italian marble pedestal together weigh 12 tons.

There are three flags on display: the yellow-and-white French fleur-de-lis (iris or lily) flag; the red- white-and-blue British flag; and the red-and- green flag made by Vincennes resident Madame Godare for use by the Americans during Clark's campaign.

The ceiling and the inside rotunda walls are constructed of Indiana limestone. The tan-

colored marble wainscoting and adjoining seat, which encircle the inside of the memorial, are from France. The blue marble step circling the floor is from Italy. The floor is of pink Tennessee marble. A dozen dragons spit fire from the metal heat registers under the rotunda seat.

Three of Clark's quotations are inscribed in the memorial: "Great things have been effected by a few men well conducted;" "Our cause is just . . . our country will be grateful;" and "if a country is not worth protecting it is not worth claiming."

The carving above the door represents Clark receiving from Virginia Governor Patrick Henry both his commission as lieutenant colonel along with Governor Henry's orders for the offensive campaign against the British posts in the Old Northwest Territory.

Dates remembered

There are Roman numerals at three locations. Left of the steps are the numerals, 1931, the year construction of the memorial began. Above the memorial's entrance door are the Roman numerals for the years, 1779 and 1933. In 1779, Clark captured Fort Sackville from the British and in 1933, the memorial was completed. Clark's birth and death years of 1752 and 1818 encircle the

statue's base.

It is highly fitting that the nation honors the great individuals and deeds of the past. Certain things do not change. The virtues that Clark and his men exhibited transcend an era. A memorial such as this serves as a reminder that courage, fortitude, and valor do not go out of style. The truly great heroes of history age well and provide guidance for the future.

