

Thomas Jefferson
MEMORIAL



*“I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal
hostility against every form of tyranny over
the mind of man”*

THESE WORDS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON now indelibly inscribed in this Memorial might be called the creed of his political and social philosophy. His opposition to tyranny in all its forms was repeatedly voiced. In the Declaration of Independence it appears in his famous phrase ". . . that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights . . ." It is seen in his Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom as "Well aware that Almighty God hath created the mind free; . . ." Elsewhere it is expressed in supporting his beliefs in a simple democratic form of government, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and education of the masses. These principles and his leadership of the common man won for him the high place of third President of the United States. In this capacity he strove to insure these liberties by expanding the Nation's frontiers and political system to include the great Louisiana Territory. As an early champion of the natural and civic rights of the individual, which have remained the principal doc-

trines of Americanism, Thomas Jefferson will forever be remembered as one of the great figures in American history. This Memorial, built in a style of his own liking, carrying inscriptions embodying his concepts of liberty and democracy, and housing a heroic statue by Rudolph Evans of New York City, a famous American sculptor, is an appropriate tribute to his contributions to the founding of the American Republic.

THE MEMORIAL SITE

ALTHOUGH the pleasant reflections of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial seen along the south banks of the Tidal Basin greatly enhance its beauty, the selection of this site was influenced by factors of far greater significance than the purely aesthetic. The importance of Jefferson as one of the great figures in the Nation's history demanded a memorial site of prominence in the central plan of the Capital City and in relation to the other great memorials already built. The location of the Capitol, the White House, and the Mall in ac-

cordance with the famous L'Enfant Plan, together with the erection of the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial on the west axis of the Capitol, long ago established the cardinal points of the city's plan. The lone remaining site in this cross-like scheme was the one selected for the Jefferson Memorial south of the Tidal Basin on a line with the south axis of the White House.

The American visiting the Nation's Capital will sense the meaning of this arrangement. Standing in the center of the group at the memorial to George Washington, he may look east along the wide vista of the Mall to the Capitol. To the north of him, and in clear view, is the White House. The Washington Monument, where he stands, the Lincoln Memorial to the west, and the Jefferson Memorial to the south are the great national memorials. These are his tribute to those figures in the Nation's history who he feels have contributed most to our independence, to the preservation of the Union, and to his concepts of liberty and democracy.

THE MEMORIAL BUILDING

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the architectural scheme of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial is apparent to even the casual student of Jefferson. One of the best-known characteristics of this great genius was his versatility and the remarkable practical application of his vast knowledge to many fields of endeavor. Outstanding among them was Jefferson's ability in architecture, as illustrated by the design of the Virginia State Capitol, which was essentially his. The admiration he held for the circular-domed Pantheon in Rome was also mentioned several times, and his designs of the rotunda at the University of Virginia and his famous home, Monticello, further indicate his preference for this type of building. In the preparation of the plan for the Memorial the architects, John Russell Pope and the survivors of his firm, Otto R. Eggers and Daniel P. Higgins, were clearly influenced by Jefferson's own taste as expressed in his writings and demonstrated by these works. Thus the circular colonnaded structure,

an adaptation of the classic style which Jefferson himself is credited with having introduced into this country, reflects even in its pattern a measure of the respect held by the Nation for this great American.

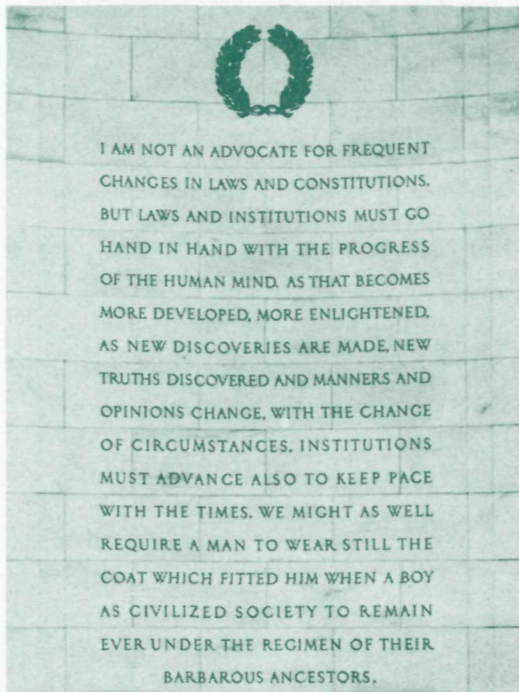
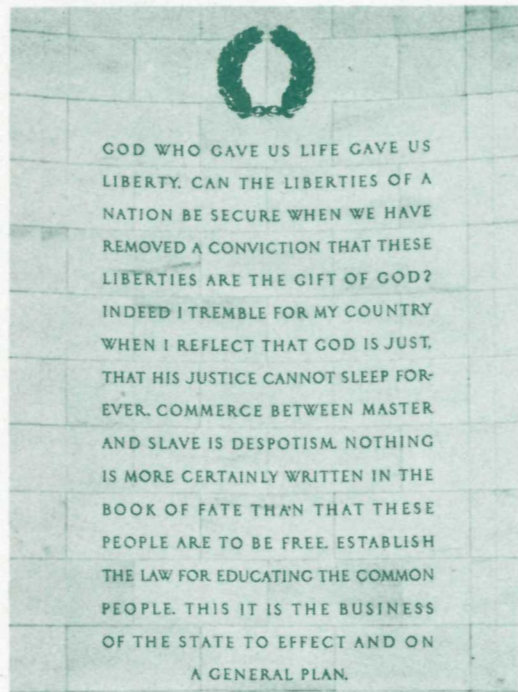
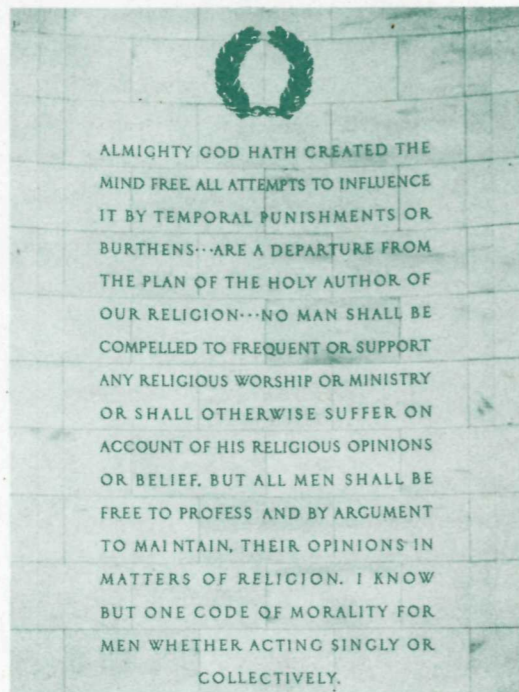
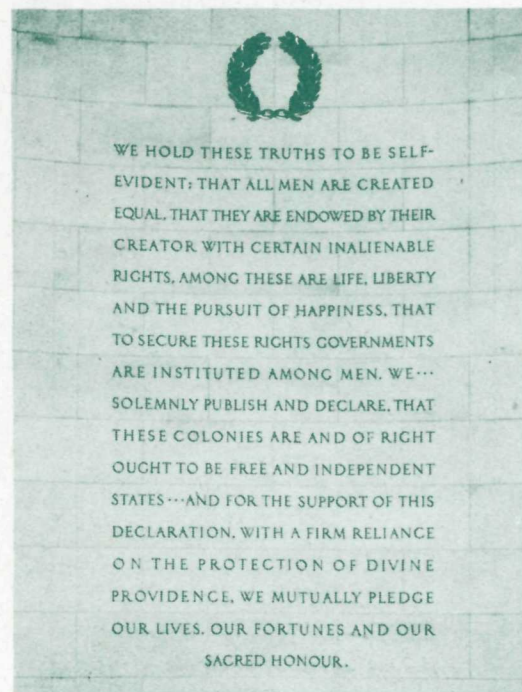
The entrance to the Memorial is located on the north, or Tidal Basin side. As the visitor passes from the plaza up the steps toward the Memorial Room he may view at close range the sculptural group in the pediment over the portico. It depicts Jefferson standing before the committee appointed by the Continental Congress to write the Declaration of Independence. The draft of this famous document, which Jefferson was selected to write, was adopted almost as written. To the left of Jefferson, as viewed from the steps, are Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, and seated on his right are Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston. The sculptor, Adolph A. Weinman of New York City, was selected by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission to do this work.

On the interior walls of the Memorial Room are four panels carrying inscriptions based upon the writings of Jefferson describing the principal tenets of his philosophy. In the southwest quadrant are famous and inspiring phrases from the Declaration of Independence. It is appropriate that these words should occupy the first panel in the sequence, for it was Jefferson's wish that he be remembered first as the author of this most famed of American documents. The words of the second panel embody his doctrine of freedom of the mind. It is nowhere better expressed than in his Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom upon which this panel is based. The third panel, seen in the northeast quadrant, is devoted to his concepts of freedom of the body and to his beliefs in the necessity of educating the masses of the people. Although his efforts to abolish slavery were unavailing, he was one of the first Americans to argue forcefully the inconsistency of slavery in a democratic state. Jefferson considered his

establishment of the University of Virginia as one of his outstanding accomplishments, and he maintained throughout his entire public career that the general education of the people was necessary to efficient self-government. Jefferson's vision in matters of government is demonstrated by the fourth panel. By this statement which appeared in a letter to a friend we know that he recognized the necessity for change in the laws and institutions of a democracy as opinions altered, new discoveries were made, and circumstances changed.

The domed interior of the Memorial is dominated by a heroic statue of Thomas Jefferson. The sculptor, Rudolph Evans, who executed this portraiture, was chosen from more than a hundred who were considered in a Nation-wide competition conducted by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission. The final selection of the standing figure presented by Evans was made with the advice and assistance of critics having national reputation in the fine arts. The height of the statue is 19 feet, and it stands in the center of the Memorial Room upon a pedestal of black Minnesota granite reaching 6 feet above the floor. The statue of Jefferson, together with the inscriptions executed in bronze, is in pleasant contrast with the white Georgia marble of the interior. The four colonnaded openings of the Memorial—two on the east-west axis, and two on the north-south—make it possible to view the figure from many angles and with varying lights and shadows. The domed ceiling of Indiana limestone reaches approximately 67 feet above the head of the statue.

From the portico and the walk along the exterior colonnade, which surround the building, the visitor may see some of the interesting structural detail of the Memorial. The exterior walls and dome of Danby Imperial Vermont marble reach approximately 96 feet above this level. The terraces and steps of the stylobate seen below are about 25 feet above the



The philosophy of Thomas Jefferson, based upon his own writings, inscribed on panels, on the walls of the Memorial Room



"... among these are
life, liberty, and the
pursuit of happiness"

Th Jefferson

ground. The diameter of the building from this position is approximately 152 feet. One may get a glimpse of the Capitol, White House, Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial from this walk. The Memorial is beautifully mirrored in the Tidal Basin which lies to the north and west of the building.

CONSTRUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION

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. 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. On April 13, 1943, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States, officially dedicated the Memorial. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission participated in the dedication ceremonies.

The twelve members of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission at the time of the dedication were: Stuart G. Gibboney of New York, Chairman; Senators Elbert D. Thomas, Charles L. McNary, and Charles O. Andrews; Representatives Howard W. Smith, Francis D. Culkin, and Fritz G. Lanham; Dr. George J. Ryan, Dr. Fiske Kimball, T. Jefferson Coolidge, Joseph P. Tumulty, and Gen. Jefferson Randolph Kean. John J. Boylan, Representative from New York and the first Chairman of the Commission, died in October 1938. Hollins N. Randolph, a Commissioner, also died in 1938; and Senator Augustine Lonergan was not reelected in 1938, and so ceased to be a member of the Commission. Representative Francis D. Culkin died in August 1943, and Senator Charles L. McNary in February 1944. The Chairman, Stuart G. Gibboney, died in April 1944, and Josephus Daniels was appointed to succeed him as a member of the Com-

mission. Senator Elbert D. Thomas has served as Chairman of the Commission since June 1944.

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial is open daily from 9 a. m. to 9 p. m. It is administered by the National Capital Parks of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. This agency has been associated with the Memorial since 1937 when the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission appointed its Director as executive agent during the period of construction. All inquiries should be directed to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, Washington 25, D. C.

Revised 1946.



The statue of Thomas Jefferson at night

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