

*Thomas Jefferson*

MEMORIAL



WASHINGTON, D.C.



# Thomas Jefferson

## MEMORIAL

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

**T**HESE 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 it appears in his famous phrase "... that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the 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 tried 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 doctrines 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, carries inscrip-

tions giving his views of liberty and democracy. It houses a heroic statue by Rudolph Evans of New York City, a famous American sculptor, and is an appropriate tribute to Jefferson's contributions to the founding of the American Republic.

### *The Memorial Site*

The pleasant reflections of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial seen along the south banks of Washington's Tidal Basin enhance its beauty. However, 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 Capitol, the White House, and the Mall were located in accordance with the famous L'Enfant Plan. These, 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 National Park System, of which this memorial is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.*

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 our Nation's history who he feels have contributed most to our independence, to the preservation of the Union, and to his ideas 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 many-sided ability and the remarkable practical

application of his vast knowledge to many fields of activity. 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. 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 were clearly influenced by Jefferson's own taste as expressed in his writings and demonstrated by these works. Thus, the circular colonnaded structure is an adaptation of the classic style which Jefferson himself is credited with having introduced into this country. It reflects even in its pattern a measure of the respect held by our Nation for this great American.

The entrance to the memorial is on the north, or Tidal Basin side. As you pass from the plaza up the steps toward the

memorial room you may view at close range the sculptural group above the entranceway. It depicts Jefferson standing before the committee appointed by the Continental Congress to write the Declaration of Independence. 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. Adolph A. Weinman, a sculptor of New York City, was selected by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission to do this work.

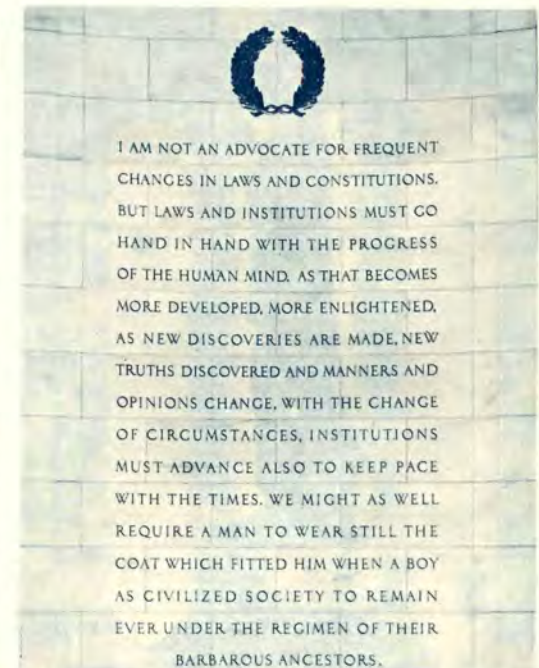
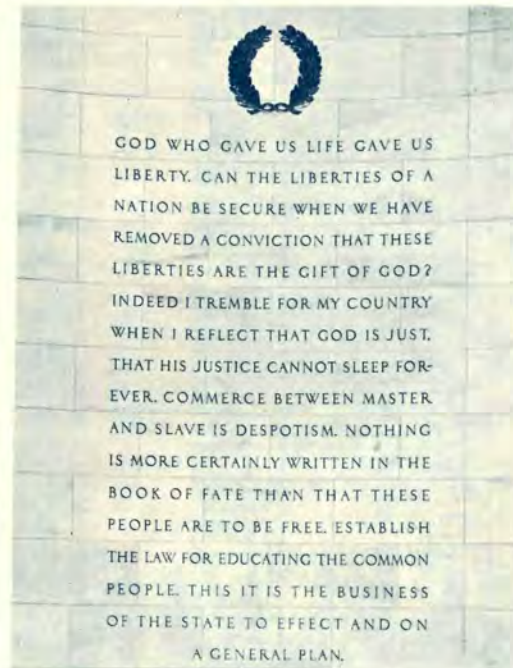
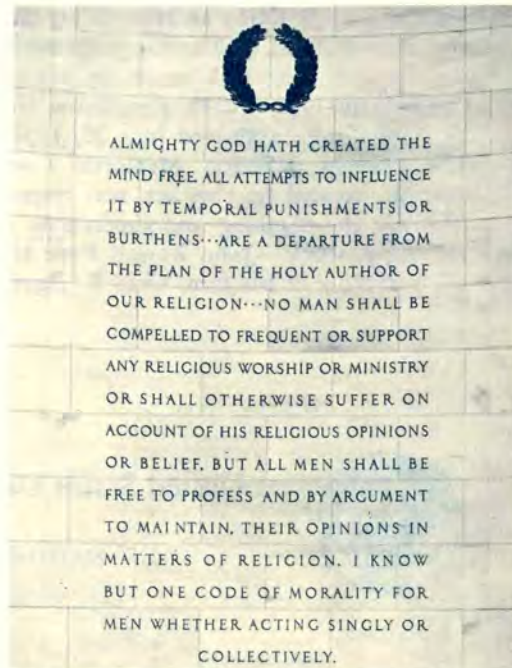
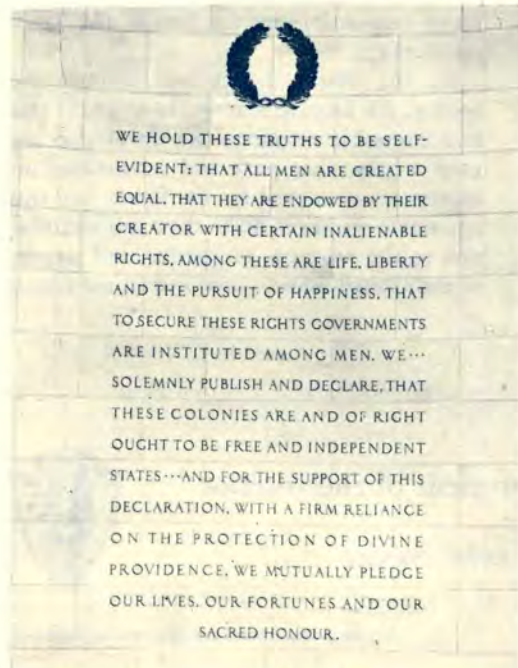
THE FOUR PANELS. On the interior walls of the memorial room are four panels carrying inscriptions based upon the writings of Jefferson describing the chief principles of his beliefs. On the southwest wall are famous and inspiring phrases from the Declaration of Independence. It is appropriate that these words should occupy the first panel in the sequence. 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 principle 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 on the northeast wall, is devoted to his ideas on 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 not successful, 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. Throughout his entire public career, he maintained 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

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



and institutions of a democracy. This was especially true, he believed, 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. Rudolph Evans, the sculptor, was chosen from more than a hundred who were considered in a nationwide 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 4 colonnaded openings of the memorial—2 on the east-west axis, and 2 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 entrance and the walk along the exterior colonnade, which surround the building, you 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 seen below are about 25 feet above the ground. The diameter of the building from this position is approximately 152 feet. From this walk, you may get a glimpse of the Capitol, the White House, the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial.



## *Oriental Flowering Cherry Trees*

In early spring, when the Oriental Flowering Cherry Trees are in bloom, Thomas Jefferson Memorial appears in its most beautiful setting. It is then that the memorial receives the greatest notice from the public. Although the blossoming of these famous trees, which encircle the Tidal Basin and number approximately 600, depends upon seasonal conditions, they ordinarily bloom about the first week in April and remain in blossom for 10 to 12 days. 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 12, 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. On April 13, 1943, the memorial was dedicated. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission participated in the dedication ceremonies.

## *About Your Visit*

You can visit the memorial daily from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Address all inquiries to: Regional Director, National Capital Region, National Park Service, Washington 25, D.C.

## *Administration*

THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.



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