



★ 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.

*The National Park System, of which this area 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.*

## *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 portion. 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 1900 when the first electric elevator was installed. The present elevator, procured in 1926, makes the ascent in 70 seconds. The iron stairway consists of 50 landings and 898 steps.

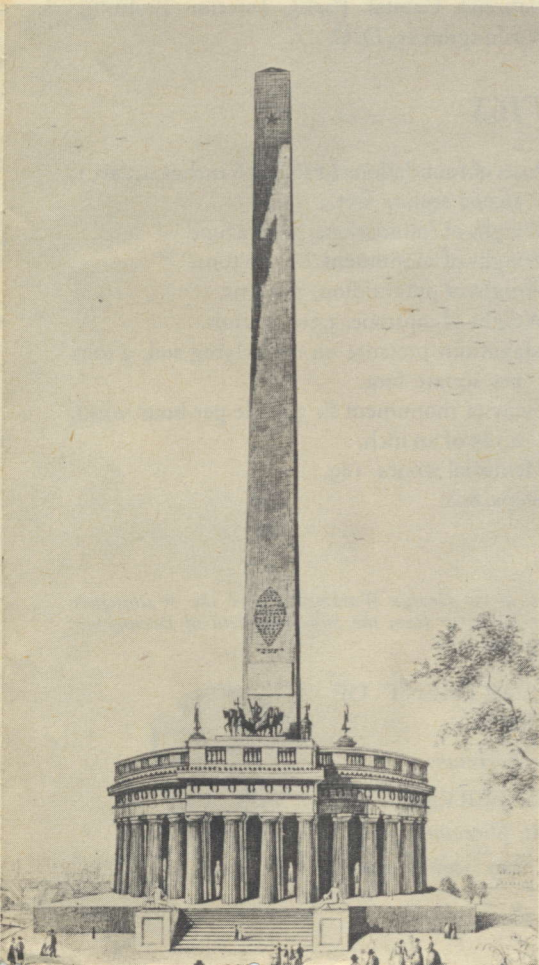
Inserted in the interior walls are 189 carved stones presented by individuals, societies, cities, States, and foreign nations. They include stones from the Parthenon at Athens, the ruins of ancient Carthage, and the tomb of Napoleon at St. Helena. Forty-eight were presented by States of the Union. Near 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

*Left: Mills' Original Design*

*Below: The Monument in 1879*





*Night View of Monument*

high and 250 feet in diameter, surrounded by 30 columns each 12 feet in diameter 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.

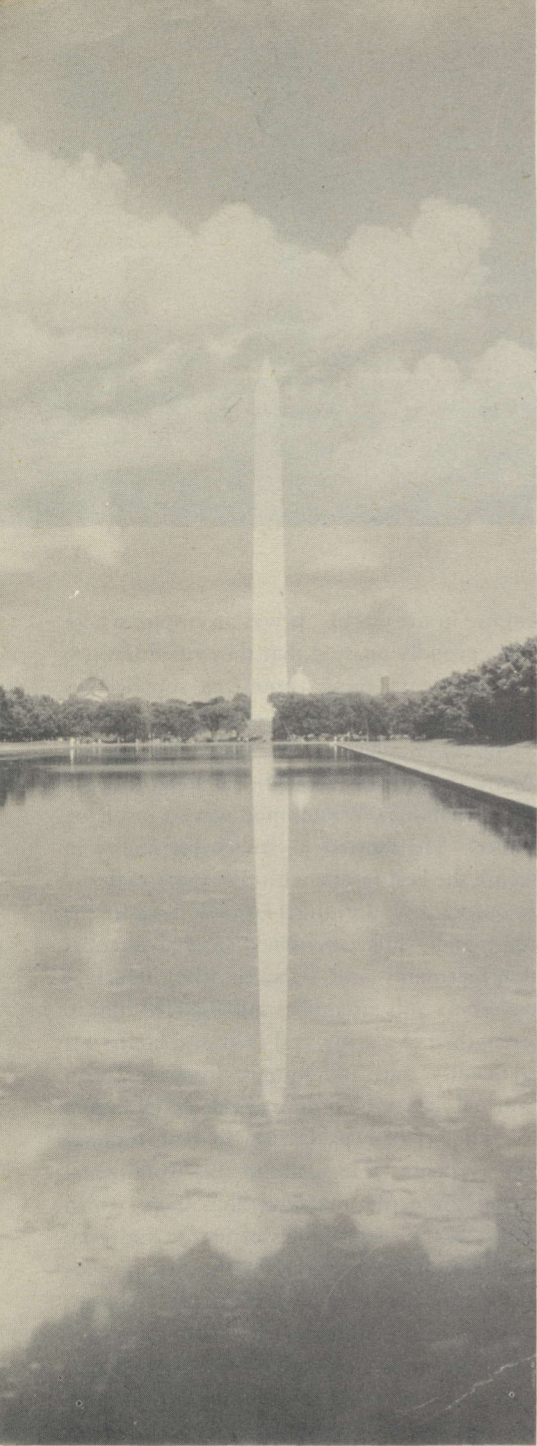
### *Washington During the Revolutionary War*

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



*The Monument from the Lincoln Memorial*

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 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, 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 and should admire. Indeed, no other American has been accorded such general ad-

miration. 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, celebrated French commentator on America, said: "The name of Washington will spread with liberty from age to age."

### *Administration*

The Washington Monument, open daily 9 a. m. to 5 p. m., is administered by National Capital Parks of the National Park Service. The elevator charge of 10 cents is waived for children and educational groups. Inquiries should be addressed to the Superintendent, National Capital Parks, Interior Building, Washington 25, D. C.

## 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  $1\frac{1}{8}$  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 foundations, 36 feet 10 inches.

Area of foundations (126 feet 6 inches square), 16,002 square feet.  
Weight of foundations, 36,912 tons.  
Weight of monument, 81,120 tons.  
Weight of pyramidion, 300 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, 189.  
Steps, 898.

*A 16-page illustrated booklet giving additional information about George Washington and the Washington Monument may be obtained at the Washington Monument Lodge or from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., at 10 cents a copy.*



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
THE INTERIOR

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