

# LIGHT

*of the George Washington  
Masonic National Memorial*



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## Celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Washington's Statue at a Special Ceremony, February 22, 2025

The Memorial's towering statue of George Washington in Memorial Hall at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial will be rededicated — 75 years to the day it was originally dedicated by President (and Most Worshipful Brother) Harry S. Truman.



*The statue of Washington was created by artist Bryant Baker, funded by the Order of DeMolay, and dedicated by President Harry S. Truman.*

To register, please visit  
<https://gwmemorial.org/statue>

The speaker for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary dedication will be President Truman's grandson, Ill. Brother Clifton Truman Daniel, 33°. The rededication will begin at 2 p.m. in the theater of the Memorial. Afterward, attendees will move to Memorial Hall for brief remarks.

The funding for the statue was provided by the Order of DeMolay (see the history of the statue on pages 7–10). As such, a multi-jurisdictional DeMolay initiation will be held at 10 a.m. the same day in the North Lodge Room at the Memorial. Following the initiation, lunch (by advance reservation only using the form on the Memorial's website) will be held at the Valley of Alexandria Scottish Rite building located within a couple of miles of the Memorial. For more information about the initiation, please contact Virginia Executive Officer Rick Young at [rmyoung2424@gmail.com](mailto:rmyoung2424@gmail.com). If planning to attend the initiation, please indicate when you register using our link below.

Dress for the day is coat and tie. Registration fees (\$20 per person) may be paid only by credit card. Registration must be submitted no later than January 25, 2025. No onsite registrations can be accepted.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

#### *Changing of the Guard*

by Kenneth G. Nagel



One of the great pleasures of leading an organization like the George Washington

Masonic National Memorial Association is seeing new life breathed into its work. With the appointment of Matthew T. Szramoski to the role of Executive Director, a new era at the Memorial has begun.

Matt comes to us from the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, where he was Director of Development. Since this summer, he has worked diligently to make improvements at the Memorial and prepare it for the future with new initiatives, new fundraising campaigns, and new ideas that will be of benefit to Freemasons and the general public.

One of those initiatives is the new Turn the Page campaign. This is designed to provide funds needed to restore the Memorial's sixth-floor Library, which has not been accessible in recent years. In preparation for this work, the Library has been thoroughly cleaned out and reorganized. Now, we are raising funds to fully restore the space in order to make it the pre-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

mier research library it was always intended to be, with a focus on Craft Freemasonry, the York Rite, and George Washington. See the story on page 3 for more details.

Also related to Turn the Page is the Memorial's plan to conserve and highlight one of the collection's greatest treasures: the George Washington Family Bible. Long on display in a case on the Memorial's fourth floor, this is a precious volume belonging to Brother Washington. As part of our new initiative, this Bible will be professionally conserved. The Memorial's staff are creating an impressive new exhibition that will allow this Bible to be more fully understood by visitors (see page 10 to learn more).

These projects are just the beginning of the new directions that the Memorial is taking. Becoming more active and more relevant, the Memorial intends to expand its positive influence and fulfill its important mission more strategically and effectively. We can only do that with your support. Your direct participation can come in many forms. By visiting the Memorial or engaging in its online content, you spread the Light we offer. Should you wish to provide financial support, your gift to the Memorial will be welcomed and put to the very best of uses.

Won't you join me at the Memorial in February 2025 for our annual Washington's Birthday Gala, and to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the George Washington Statue in Memorial Hall? When you do, I know that you will see for yourself the positive developments at the Memorial, and share my pride and appreciation for the new directions that are being taken.



*Guests enjoyed good fellowship and refreshments in Memorial Hall during the 2024 Washington's Birthday Gala.*

## Attend the 2025 Washington's Birthday Gala

On February 22, 2025, the Memorial will celebrate the 293<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Father of our Nation, Brother George Washington.

Our celebration will begin with a special reception for members of the George Washington Memorial Society on Friday evening, February 21<sup>st</sup>. This will be an opportunity for us to thank some of the Memorial's most committed supporters. (For information about how you can become a part of the GWMS, please see our story on page 13.)

The next day, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, we have some very special events for you to enjoy. The activity begins at 10 a.m. with DeMolay degree ceremonies in the North Lodge Room. These are certain to a memorable experience for all participants. At 11:30 a.m., this is followed by a special DeMolay Luncheon at the Alexandria Scottish Rite, offering a chance to connect over shared ideals and history. Reservations are required, via the link on page 1. While the DeMolay ceremonies and luncheon are open only to recognized Master Masons and members of the Order of DeMolay, at 2 p.m. the Rededication of the George Washington statue is open to the public. This ceremony, which will begin in the Memorial's Theatre, will feature Bro. Clifton Truman Daniel, 33<sup>o</sup>, grandson of M.W. Bro. Harry S. Truman, Past Grand Master of Missouri and the 33<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States (1945–1953).

Our Washington's Birthday Gala then begins at 5 p.m. with a formal reception in Memorial Hall. Guests will browse a silent auction to benefit the Memorial's initiatives. This will be followed by the Gala Banquet in Grand Masonic Hall, where fine food and drink will be served. Dress for the Gala is white tie formal. More information, including tickets and hotel arrangements, are available on our website.

For tickets and more information:  
<https://gwmemorial.org/gala>

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## Announcing *Turn the Page* — An Exciting New Campaign to Restore the Memorial’s Library to Full Functionality and Grandeur

Once upon a time, the Library at the Memorial was intended to become the foremost national Masonic research library. Our Library got off to a strong start in 1931, with an initial donation of 6,000 books from the estate of Rae John Lemert, Grand Historian of Montana. With funding provided by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, the Library was finally dedicated on February 22, 1952, and named for Louis A. Watres (Past Grand Master of Pennsylvania, 1916-1917 and GWMNMA President, 1918–1937). Occupying a beautiful Art Deco space on the sixth floor, the Library soon became a destination for researchers and a memorable experience for tourists.

In the years since, the Library’s collections have grown, and notably it contains nearly all of the published proceedings of the American Masonic bodies. Unfortunately, while the material in the Library expanded, the space itself fell into disuse. It was subtracted from the daily guided tours and eventually nearly forgotten by the researchers who might otherwise have relied upon it. Significant water damage is now observed on all of its walls, and the sixth floor is in need of major restoration.

“We’re at a pivotal moment where we can enhance the study of American Freemasonry by creating a specialized research library,” said Matthew Szramoski, the Memorial’s Executive Director. “Our goal is to establish a leading center for Masonic scholarship, focusing on Grand Lodges, American Masonic history, George Washington, and the York Rite.”

The project involves restoring the physical space: repairing damage, updating facilities, laying new carpet, adding more shelves, crafting new display cabinets, and creating a comfortable study area. It also means establishing a standard catalog for our library holdings and our archives.

Your support is crucial to make this vision a reality. Help us build a library where the legacy of Freemasonry can be explored and celebrated, ensuring it remains a place of Light and learning for all.



To support the Memorial’s Turn the Page campaign, please visit our website:  
<https://gwmemorial.org/turnthepage>

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### *Life is Like a Good Book*

by Matthew T. Szramoski



I have always been an avid reader and as a History major in college, I have always thought of time in chapters similar to how a story revolves in a good book. We are continuing the important story of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial and writing new chapters for its future.

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Matthew Szramoski (I go by Matt) and I was selected by the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Board of Directors to assume the role of Executive Director in July. Previous to coming to the Memorial I worked at the National Rifle Association where I managed national youth programs and raised funds to assist in our budgetary needs. I then began a career at the Supreme Council, 33° Southern Jurisdiction, USA, where I served as Director of Development overseeing a major capital campaign to restore the House of the Temple, expand scholarship programs, raise funds for RiteCare, and other philanthropic endeavors.

When I was approached by the Board about my interest in accepting this position, I requested an opportunity to meet with the staff before making a final decision. I spent about an hour with each staff member to discuss what their role was, why they enjoyed working at the Memorial and any concerns they had. These meetings were very informative and greatly helped me in making the decision to accept the position of Executive Director.

One thing I quickly learned from the meetings, and over the course of my first few weeks of working at the Memorial is like much of Freemasonry we were too focused on surviving and not on thriving. By that I mean, with rising expenses, declining membership in the Craft and other obstacles we were focused on trying to simply maintain what we have and how we can weather though the next storm. This is not a good plan for long term success or to thrive as a national Memorial that explains the story of both George Washington the Mason and the history of American Freemasonry in our 52 supporting Grand Lodges.

We are now wringing a new chapter, one that will focus on improving our endowment, completing several maintenance projects, enhancing and expanding our educational programs, improving and growing our exhibits and operating in a business-like, cost-effective manner.

I am pleased to announce one of the first steps in the process is out Turn the Page Campaign to restore the Memorial library. For

about fifteen years the library has been closed and sadly became essentially a storage room. What was once a beautiful research library had lost much if not all of its grandeur.

It is time for a new chapter to begin, for us to turn the page and create a thriving research library where Masonic scholars and public researchers can visit what we hope will become the premiere Masonic research library in the nation on American Freemasonry. Our focus will be on Grand Lodges, general American Masonic history, George Washington, the York Rite, and several smaller related Masonic bodies. We will fill a niche that is not covered by the House of the Temple Library or major Masonic Libraries such as in Iowa.

The restoration will include the full cataloging of the collection, updating missing annual proceedings and restarting our digitalization of them, repairing plaster damage, renovating the restrooms, constructing additional shelving, adding display cases, restoring research areas where visitors can work and making it a place of dignity again (see page 3 for more information).

In addition, we will be restoring the Washington Family Bible, which is a centerpiece of our collection and is on display in the George Washington Museum here at the Memorial. This Bible belonged to Washington himself, and he was one of the sponsors who helped bring it into existence. We're just beginning to learn its fascinating story (see the story on page 10).

We will need about \$200,000 to fully restore the library in our Turn the Page Campaign. I hope you will consider taking part in it and making a tax-deductible contribution.

This campaign is the first step in a large \$2,500,000 campaign we are trying to raise between January 2025 and December 2026, in time for our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. \$1,250,000 will go to needed renovations on the building and \$1,250,000 to our endowment to help ensure the financial stability of the Memorial.

The time has come for us, and all Freemasons, to begin working in the quarries so that we can thrive again. Preserving the memory and legacy of George Washington is more vital today than perhaps anytime in our nation's history. We need to ensure that future generations understand the lessons of Washington's life and how Freemasonry played a role in his character. Together, we can make the Memorial a beacon for the nation.

I'm ready to turn the page. Are you?

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# Naming Opportunities & Gift Ideas for the George Washington Masonic National Memorial

OPPORTUNITY	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	RECOGNITION
<i>The George Washington Memorial Society</i>	The George Washington Memorial Society comprises a select group of members who are dedicated to supporting the Memorial and its Mission. The purpose of the Society is to raise support for the George Washington Masonic National Memorial's operations and to increase awareness of the Memorial's mission among Freemasons and the wider community.	\$1,000 initial gift  \$250 per year in subsequent years	A unique hand-finished membership patent, a specially-produced medal, and a lapel pin. Invitation to the annual reception for members in February.
<i>Library Display Case</i>	Part of our larger Turn the Page Campaign to restore our library, this donation will cover the cost of a new display case in the library to exhibit Memorial artifacts. Only ten cases are available.	\$5,000	Name(s) on the display case of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation.
<i>State/Organization Collection Sponsorship</i>	Part of our larger Turn the Page Campaign to restore our library, this donation will cover the cost of restoring a collection of proceedings from a jurisdiction (state) or organization (i.e., Royal Arch). These funds will enable us to add to the collection any missing volumes, repair damaged ones, and maintain them for years to come.	\$10,000	Name(s) on a collection's plaque of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation. Plaque will be displayed in the library.
<i>Endowment Gift</i>	Part of our \$2.5 million by America's 250 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign (raise by December 2026), this will enable us to build our endowment to ensure the perpetual operation and maintenance of the GWMNM.	\$15,000 and up, no upper limit.	Name(s) on a plaque in the board room of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation. Recognition on our website.
<i>Observation Platform Drain Pipe Replacement</i>	Replacement of three drain pipes from the observation platform (top of Memorial) that run down the elevator shaft. One has been replaced. The remaining ones have exceeded their lifespan and are causing water issues.	\$30,000	Name(s) by the elevator door of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation.

OPPORTUNITY	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	RECOGNITION
<i>6 Passenger Golf Cart</i>	To enable staff to travel throughout the 36 acres of Memorial property for trash pick-up and maintenance work. Transport handicap individuals at special events such as the Easter Sunrise Service.	\$18,000	Name(s) on the golf cart of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation.
<i>Final Repointing of the Building Envelope</i>	This gift will enable us to complete the final repointing of the building protecting the stone masonry envelope for the next 50 years. This is a critical need.	\$98,000	Name(s) on a plaque of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation. Plaque will be placed in the board room.
<i>Repointing the main retaining wall surrounding the Memorial</i>	This gift will enable us to repoint the wall as well as repair damage from the earthquake that was experienced several years ago. The wall is badly in need of this repair work.	\$350,000	Name(s) on a plaque of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation. Plaque will be placed by the North entrance for maximum visibility.
<i>Main level roof replacement</i>	The roof over the main level, i.e., Memorial Hall, replica lodge room, etc., is failing and has numerous leaks that have been patched.	\$480,000	Name(s) on a plaque of the donor or someone who is honored/memorialized by the donation. Plaque will be placed by the North entrance for maximum visibility.
<i>The Society of Washington Lodges</i>	The Society is for regular Lodges who are committed to supporting the Memorial and its mission.	\$2,500	Member Lodges will receive a specially-commissioned Society of Washington Lodges jewel for the Master of the Lodge to wear and pass to his successor, and a unique hand-finished patent attesting their membership in the Society, suitable for display.



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Editor: Shawn E. Eyer

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*Elected February 17, 2024*

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*Term Expires February 22, 2026*

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*Term Expires February 22, 2027*

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The statue of Washington fits perfectly into the niche of Memorial Hall, where the dome is ornamented with gilt octagonal coffers and a beautiful sunburst symbolizing the meridian sun.

## Celebrating Seventy-Five Years of Bryant Baker's Masonic Masterpiece

by Shawn Eyer

Towering over the majestic space of Memorial Hall, Bryant Baker's statue of George Washington the Mason is one of the most memorable aspects of any visit to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia. Standing with his serene gaze set firmly to the East, this figure of Washington fittingly bedecked in Masonic regalia seems to look forever into the future of the great American experiment. Visitors to the museum are frequently struck by the impressive beauty of this work of art. But who made it, and how did it get here? It's a multifaceted and complex story.

### *About the Sculptor*

Percy Bryant Baker, better known as Bryant Baker, was a British-born American sculptor whose artistic legacy spans continents and centuries. Born on July 8, 1881, Baker's life and work exemplified the intersection of art, history, and fraternal organizations, particularly Freemasonry. Baker's artistic journey began in England, where he honed his skills and gained recognition for his sculptural work.

There, he also was made a Mason in Constitutional Lodge No 294, at Beverly in Yorkshire.

At the age of 34, Baker made a pivotal decision to move to America, seeking new opportunities and artistic challenges. His commitment to his adopted country was demonstrated when he became a U.S. citizen in 1923. This transition period coincided with a prolific phase in Baker's career, during which he created over one hundred statues and busts.

### *His Most Famous Work: The Pioneer Woman*

In 1927, Baker and his assistant Donald De Lue produced the winning entry for a contest to create a tribute to mothers who settled the western states of the U.S. 750,000 people viewed the entries and cast votes for their favorite one. Bryant Baker's design, depicting a confident woman striding forward with her young son, emerged as the overwhelming favorite. The 1930 unveiling of *Confident* at Ponca City, Oklahoma, was a momentous occasion. It quickly became a



Bryant Baker's *Confident* (known popularly as *Pioneer Woman*). Model 1927, casting 1968. Bronze, 32 × 15 × 16⅞ in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, 1968.126. Gift of the artist.

cherished public monument symbolizing the American spirit. Bryant created many copies of it for gallery display (see above left). This heroic bronze monument became his most renowned work.

### *The Statue of Washington*

After the Memorial's dedication in 1932, the most noticeably absent element in the building was the planned statue of Washington. A massive rotunda intended for it was starkly empty. Unfortunately, during the Great Depression, the funds to rectify this were difficult to come by. In 1934, the Memorial Association accepted the Order of DeMolay's offer to raise money for the creation of the missing statue of George Washington. This campaign was ultimately successful, and in 1947 Bro. Bryant Baker was secured for the commission.

Baker's concept was to create in three dimensions the famous Hattie Burdette painting of George Washington as Master of his lodge, which had been created for the 1932 Bicentennial Commission. Copies of this painting had already been sent to virtually every Masonic lodge in the nation, where for the most part they continue to be proudly displayed. Baker knew that this painting would provide the perfect template for a sculpture that would resonate with the Fraternity and



Sculptor Bryant Baker on a ladder next to the completed clay model for his statue of Washington. Autographed by the artist. Photo from the GWMNMA archives.

the general public. This stated intention was to execute the statue in marble. However, in 1949 it was decided to create a bronze statue in keeping with Baker's classics such as *Pioneer Woman*.

The model for the seventeen-foot statue was carved in clay before being cast in metal. One element that was eliminated at the last moment before casting was the encircled letter G on the apron flap (visible in the photo, above right). This detail was surely not found on the Watson-Cassoul apron that Washington wore, so it was wisely struck from the work of art. Interestingly, its faint impression remains visible on the finished piece when viewed from certain angles.

### *A President's Dedication*

The bronze statue — along with the matching bronze sculptures of a lodge chair and pedestal — was delivered to the Memorial, and lifted into the building using a wooden track and pulleys. It was unveiled in a special dedication ceremony on February 22, 1950. In the presence of hundreds of Freemasons and members of DeMolay, United States President Harry S. Truman, who was also a Past Grand Master of Mason in Missouri, assisted by other Masonic dignitaries, performed the solemn dedication rite.



President Truman also used the opportunity to deliver a major foreign policy address. It is powerful even in abridged form:

It is a great privilege to dedicate this inspiring statue of George Washington. This is the climax of many years of planning and effort. I congratulate particularly the Order of DeMolay, whose contributions have made this statue a reality. This heroic likeness of our first President makes even more impressive the entrance hall of this temple. It is altogether fitting that this work should stand in the community that Washington did so much to build, and so near his own home at Mount Vernon.

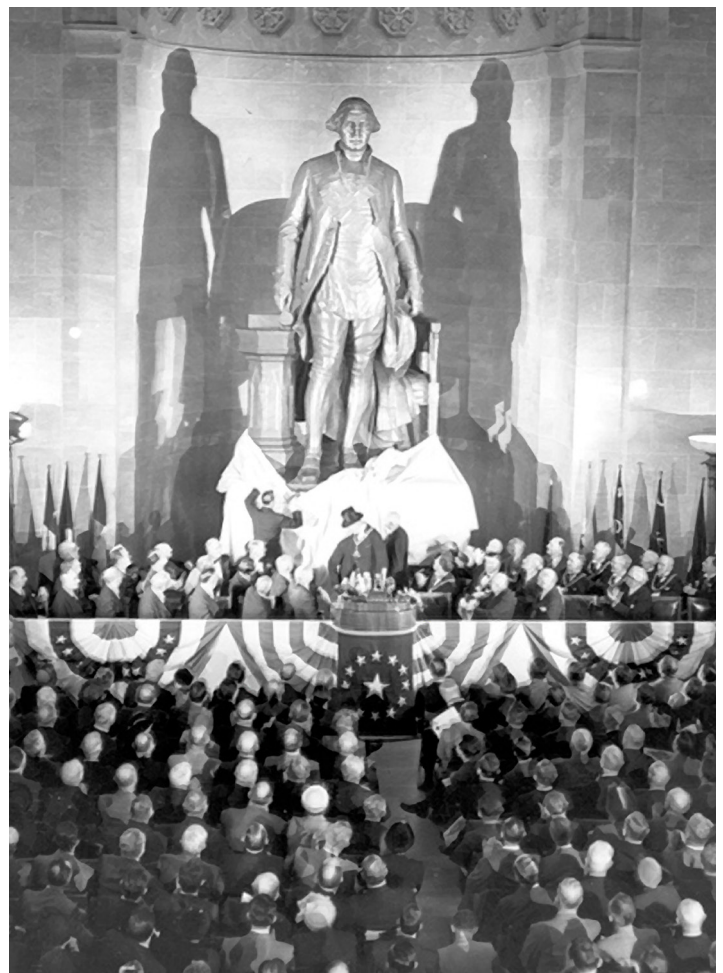
George Washington, like ourselves, lived in a period of great change — a period when new forces and new ideas were sweeping across the world. He was the leader of his people in a revolution against tyranny. He commanded an army in a long and bitter war. He was a major figure in the creation of a new kind of constitution. And, finally, as the first President of our Nation, he translated that Constitution into a living government.

Washington's efforts for freedom were twofold. He was concerned first with making the ideal of democratic government work. He was also concerned with the defense of that ideal against the forces that opposed it.

Washington was unwavering in his devotion to the democratic concept. He never yielded to those who urged him to assume extraordinary powers. Even in the darkest days of the Revolution, when his task as Commander in Chief of the American forces was rendered doubly difficult by the weakness of the Congress and the rivalries among the states, he always considered himself a servant of the people. In all that he did he strove to make democratic institutions more effective. He knew, too, that they had to be defended — that there were times when the use of force to defend democracy could not be avoided. He not only led the armies of the revolution, but as President he was always alert to the necessity of a vigorous national defense.

The task of Americans today is fundamentally the same as it was in Washington's time. We, too, must make democracy work and we must defend it against its enemies. But our task today is far greater in scope than it was in Washington's time. Not only are we concerned with increasing the freedom, welfare, and opportunity of our people. We are also concerned with the right of other peoples to choose their form of government, to improve their standards of living, and to decide what kind of life they want to live.

Since Washington's time the great principles for which the American Revolution was fought have become known throughout the world and have uplifted the hearts and hopes of generations of men. At the same time, through the progress of science, the nations of the world have been drawn together into a common destiny.



*President Harry S. Truman addresses the nation via radio from the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, February 22, 1950.*

This is a time of restlessness and change. In many parts of the world men are searching for a better social order. They demand a way of life that will provide greater freedom and more widespread opportunity. They yearn to own the land they live on, and to be secure against poverty, disease and hunger. Above all, they want to live their own lives as they see fit. This rising demand of men everywhere for independence and a better life puts the ideals of freedom and self-government to their greatest test. At the same time, these ideals are under deadly attack from those who would destroy them. The most aggressive of these enemies today is communism. Communism seeks to induce men to surrender their freedom by false promises of a better life. But the great danger of communism does not lie in its false promises. It lies in the fact that it is an instrument of an armed imperialism which seeks to extend its influence by force.

We shall continue to work with the other free nations associated with us in the common defense — for our defense is theirs, and their defense is ours. The united defense of these nations is a powerful deterrent to aggression, and it will become more powerful as time passes on. In creating a common defense, we

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do not seek to impose a way of life on any nation. Freedom is not expanded by conquest. Democracy is not created by dictation. Freedom and democracy grow only by persuasion and example and through the actual experience of what they mean. At the same time, freedom cannot grow and expand unless it is protected against the armed imperialism of those who would destroy it. The free nations, therefore, must maintain military force as a defensive measure.

The progress we have made in this country since the days of George Washington is proof of the vitality and truth of the ideals he fought for. We must be no less firm, no less resolute, no less steadfast than he was. We move upon a greater stage than he did, but our problems are fundamentally the same problems that faced the first President of this Nation — to make democracy work and to defend it from its enemies.

George Washington sought guidance from Almighty God as he faced these tasks in his time; let us be guided today by divine providence as we strive for lasting peace with freedom and justice for all mankind.

### *Later Masonic Works and Activities*

Bro. Baker continued to perform work for the Memorial. In the early 1950s, he was commissioned to produce busts of some of the Memorial's key supporters and leaders: Charles Hilliard Callahan (Grand Master of Virginia, 1924–25), Louis Arthur Watres (GWMNMA President, 1918–1937), and Elmer Raymond Arn (President, 1937–1951).

## George Washington Family Bible to Be Professionally Conserved

For six decades, visitors to the Memorial have been able to catch a glimpse of George Washington's own family Bible. This precious volume, of national importance, is now the subject of study by our professional staff, and will soon undergo much-needed conservation.

What makes this Bible so important? First, it was one of the first Bibles printed in America. It had been illegal for Americans to print King James Bibles before the Revolution. Instead, they had to be imported over the Atlantic Ocean. This restriction held until after the Revolutionary War, when the Bible could finally be printed here.

This is the first American edition of John Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible*. It is celebrated for its twenty engravings (including an iconic frontispiece). It was the first Bible printed in New York state. It was sold on a subscription basis in forty parts, completing in 1792. When complete, each owner would then have it bound themselves — so that every surviving copy is different. Washington is proudly listed at the top of the Bible's subscriber list, and his signature is on the title page.

George Washington's copy was provided to the Memorial directly by Anne and Patty Washington in 1964. A new exhibit is being designed to showcase this important American Bible and its artistry.

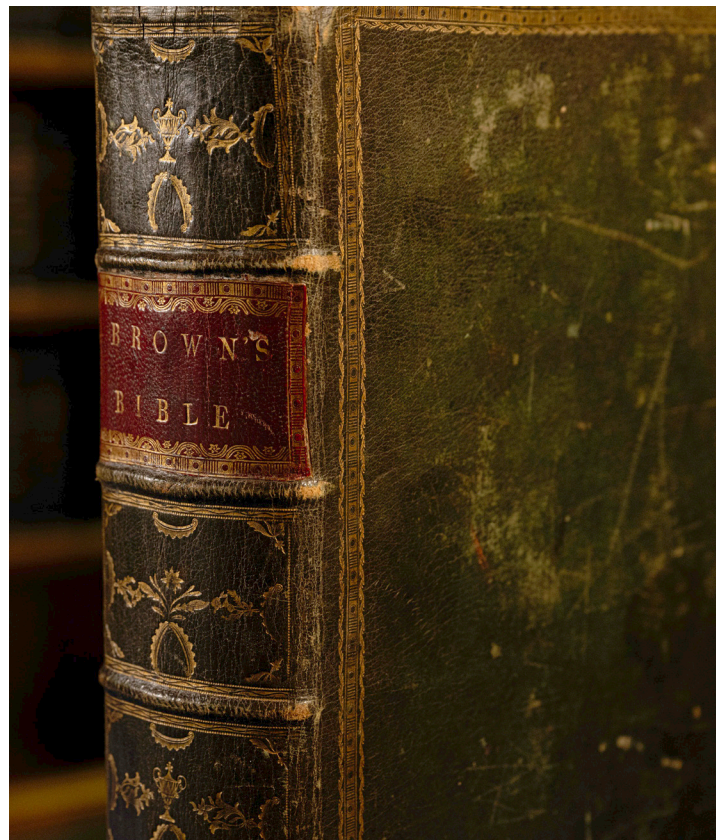
These outstanding works of art are on display today in the Memorial's Founders Hall. During his career, he also made sculptures of U.S. Presidents and Freemasons William Howard Taft and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Bro. Baker's fame was recognized by Liberty Lodge in Beverly, Massachusetts, whose brethren elected him to Honorary Membership on March 8, 1965. This lodge recently celebrated its bicentennial, with members of their sister lodge, Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22, in attendance.

Bryant Baker passed away in 1970, leaving behind an impressive legacy of fine art. His statue of Washington in Masonic regalia is not only a testament to his artistic skill but also serves as a powerful symbol of Washington's dedication to Freemasonry. The statue's prominent placement in the Memorial underscores the importance of Freemasonry in Washington's life and throughout the history of the United States. Truly, Bryant Baker's artistic statement lives on through his sculptures, which continue to inspire and educate viewers about American history, the pioneering spirit, and the principles of Freemasonry. On February 22, 2025, when Bro. Baker's statue of *Washington the Freemason* is rededicated, that legacy of inspiration, national pride, and education will be solemnly renewed. Please join us for that special event (see page 1 for more details).

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*Shawn Eyer is the Managing Director of Communications and Education at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial.*



## Museum Collections Update

First, let me introduce myself. I am Tyler E. Vanice, the new Director of Collections at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. My journey with the Memorial began in 2013 when I worked as an intern under Mark Tabbert. I returned in 2014 as Assistant Curator, where I gained invaluable experience managing the museum's collections. Over the years, I served in various capacities, including as the Director of Member Services.

With Mark Tabbert's retirement in 2023, a transition of roles and responsibilities occurred, and I am honored to now serve as the Director of Collections and Member Services. James Ferguson, our dedicated Collections Manager, has worked diligently under both Mark and myself, and I look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to care for and expand our collections.

One of my first priorities has been to evaluate the current state of the museum and library departments. The absence of a Director for some time, combined with staffing challenges, resulted in a backlog of work. James has been working tirelessly to update PastPerfect, our museum collections management software, to ensure we have a clear and comprehensive inventory of the objects entrusted to our care. A strong understanding of our holdings is essential to fulfilling our mission of preservation and education.



*Needlework tapestry with Masonic themes, c. 1875–1925. 21¼ × 17 inches. (2024.08.01). Gift of Dixie O. Rettig.*

With the arrival of our new Executive Director, the Louis A. Watres Library is now a primary focus for the Memorial. Once a popular research library open to the public, it has, unfortunately, fallen into neglect over the years, becoming more of a storage space than a resource for scholars. Through the Turn the Page Campaign, we are committed to restoring the library to its former prominence and to make sure it comes back even better than ever. Our goal is to complete the restoration by the end of 2025 and, if time and resources allow, reopen the library to the public. If not, the reopening will follow shortly thereafter. Once restored, the library will offer researchers and the general public access to its remarkable collection, fulfilling its potential as a center for learning and exploration.

To raise awareness of the museum and library, we have started sharing a weekly highlight from our collections, showcasing a book and object of interest each Tuesday and Thursday. These posts aim to inspire curiosity and to illustrate the educational value of our holding. We hope these glimpses into our collection will engage potential researchers and spark the interest of philosophers, historians, and enthusiasts alike, whether about Freemasonry, George Washington, or anything else that catches their attention.

One fascinating addition to our collection this year is a Masonic needlework tapestry (shown below left), which was generously donated by Dixie O. Rettig. This hand-stitched piece, likely created by the wife of a Freemason in the late 1800s or early 1900s, is a stunning example of craftsmanship and symbolism. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, needlepoint became a beloved pastime, particularly among women, who often created pieces to commemorate family



*Beadwork with Masonic Themes produced by Kelley Michael for Grand Master of Arizona Michael Manning. 14¾ × 13¼ inches. (2024.02.01). Gift of Maggie Manning.*

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events or reflect their cultural or social affiliations. In households where there was a member of the Craft, items like this were sometimes used to serve as a reminder of the moral lessons as well as show visiting guests one's affiliation in the fraternity. The tapestry beautifully captures the essence of Masonic values and symbolism across all three degrees, reflecting the enduring legacy of the Craft through art. The foreground features two bronze Doric columns wrapped in green foliage, with a level at the base of the left column and a square at the base of the right. The columns are topped with a globe and a celestial sphere, symbolizing universal knowledge and spiritual enlightenment. Between the columns lies a mosaic pavement adorned with working tools, a winding staircase ascending behind five columns representing the Five Orders of Architecture, and the phrases, "We meet upon the Level" and "We part upon the Square," accompanied by clasped hands. Above the scene, a Masonic altar supports an open Holy Bible, Square, and Compasses, flanked by three burning tapers. A ship's anchor rests on the altar, symbolizing hope, with an Ark in the background on the left and Jacob's Ladder ascending on the right. Scrolls bearing the Masonic virtues of "Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth" and "Faith, Hope, and Charity" frame the tapestry, while the Biblical Latin phrase, *et deus dixit sit lux et lux fuit* ("And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light") crowns the composition.

Another noteworthy acquisition this year is a stunning piece of handcrafted beadwork (shown on page 11) that resembles a Masonic apron. This intricate creation was a heartfelt gift from a daughter to her father, showcasing both artistry and devotion. The piece was meticulously crafted in 2014 by Kelley Michel for her father, Michael Manning, then serving as Grand Master of Arizona, during the 2014 Arizona Masonic Grand Lodge session. It remained proudly displayed at Michael Manning's home lodge from 2014 to 2023 before being

gifted to the Memorial by Maggie Manning, Michael's wife.

The apron is a testament to countless hours of dedicated work and is noted for its intricate detail. The flap features the iconic Arizona state flag's sunset design, with the Eye of Providence positioned within a five-pointed star. The body of the apron prominently displays the Masonic Square and Compasses at its center, encircled by a radiant sun and framed by laurels. Two Arizona Saguaro cacti stand on either side of the Square and Compasses, symbolizing the region's distinctive landscape.

The bottom edge of the apron is adorned with a black-and-white checkered floor, evoking the Masonic Mosaic Pavement, while the left and right borders are framed in deep purple. Two United States flags decorate the bottom corners, adding a patriotic touch to this remarkable piece.

This apron serves not only as a personal expression of familial love but also as a vivid celebration of Masonic values and Arizona's cultural identity. We are proud to have it here at the Memorial.

These Masonic decorative arts shown are but some of many fascinating objects that we are interested in collecting and preserving. We are always looking for more donations to the museum and library, especially if it's a recent publication or object that fits our mission. You can learn more about our donations by visiting <https://gwmemorial.org/pages/museum-donations>. If you have a book or object you would like to donate, please contact me at [tvanice@gwmemorial.org](mailto:tvanice@gwmemorial.org) and let me know what you have, any history (if known), before sending them. Please include photos if possible.

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*Tyler Vanice is the Director of Collections and Member Services at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial.*

## New: Symbols of Our Story & Bound for Preservation Weekly Features

Regular users of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial's social media channels on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and LinkedIn have noticed the creation of two new and highly interesting regular features: *Symbols of Our Story* and *Bound for Preservation*. Every Tuesday and Thursday, readers are able to discover new posts in these series, providing a new source for Masonic education and awareness.

*Symbols of Our Story* posts highlight items in or on loan to the Memorial's museum collections. Each installment gives the collections department staff an opportunity to retrieve objects from storage or from display cases where they have been lodged in some cases for decades, clean them, examine them, and prepare them for photography. The Memorial is making some interesting discoveries in this way. Once the photo is taken, a short write-up is prepared and posted for everyone to enjoy.

*Bound for Preservation* posts feature books from the Memorial's soon-to-be-restored sixth-floor research library. Over the centuries, tens of

thousands of books have been written about Freemasonry. These posts are an excellent opportunity to learn about useful writing about the Fraternity's history, development, ceremonies, symbolism, and philosophy. Almost as many volumes have been penned about George Washington himself, and many of those will be featured as well. Both types of posts include a link to make targeted donations in support.

In order to see these posts, simply follow the Memorial's official accounts on X (@gwmnm), Facebook (@gwmemorial), LinkedIn (@george-washington-masonic-national-memorial), or Instagram (@gwmemorial). By participating in our social media, you can help us achieve our educational mission. "A simple way to support the Memorial's work is to follow us on one or more of our social media channels, and interact with the posts," said Shawn Eyer, Managing Director of Communications and Education. "By liking, commenting upon, and sharing the Memorial's posts, you can significantly increase our visibility, reinforce our cultural influence, and expand our base of support."

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## Development Update

It's a great day to be a Mason! And it's a great day to be at the Memorial! It truly is an exciting time to be here. New leadership, new ideas and programs in the making, new energy and commitment. There is a very upbeat and motivating spirit about. In the coming months, we hope you'll feel that energy as we roll out those new programs and begin to build the Memorial's future.

Readers of this publication are great supporters of the Memorial. Each of you has shown your interest in this iconic building by sharing your personal treasure with us.

Those gifts have enabled us to accomplish what we have throughout the years. And, as you know, we will always need your support to continue to provide the programs which tell our visitors and online friends about General Washington and his singular dedication to creating a new, free nation.

You may not be aware that we created The George Washington Memorial Society (GWMS) in 2011 to establish a group of support-

ers with special interest in the Memorial. This group is dedicated to supporting the maintenance and operation of this Beacon of Light to enable us to celebrate Brother Washington's lasting impact.

Currently, nearly 170 brethren and ladies have made a commitment to that purpose. And, we want you to know that you, too, can join this cadre of our most ardent supporters. The initial fee is \$1,000 with an annual renewal of \$250. All members receive a unique hand-finished membership patent, a specially-produced medal (shown below), and a lapel pin.

### *New — A Convenient Monthly Payment Plan*

We have recently created a payment plan for the initial fee to make the Society more easily accessible for a broader range of interested persons. Now, you have two options for the initial fee: 1) a single payment of \$1,000; or 2) 10 payments of \$100 made within a twelve-month period.

Members of the Society receive a specially commissioned breast pocket jewel, lapel pin and hand-finished membership certificate. Annually, members are invited to our George Washington birthday Gala at the Memorial and to a members-only reception the night before the Gala. Additional members-only programs are being added in the coming year. And, of course, members are recognized in Memorial publications.

We invite you to consider membership in The George Washington Memorial Society as your way of supporting the Memorial and helping us assure Brother Washington's legacy will continue to be known to generations to come. Visit our website at this link, <https://gwmemorial.org/pages/gwms>, to access the Society application.

During this holiday season, we give thanks for each and every one of you and the support you provide the Memorial. From all of us here at the Memorial, may you and yours enjoy the special happiness and love this time of year brings. And may you have a happy, healthy and prosperous 2025!

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*Timothy Strawn is the Director of Development for The George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association.*



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The George Washington Memorial Society's mission is to raise support for and to increase awareness of the Memorial among Freemasons and the public. Member Lodges consist of those regular Lodges recognized by the Grand Lodges of the United States who are committed to supporting the Memorial and who make a donation of \$2,500.

The Lodge will receive a specially-commissioned Society of Washington Lodges jewel for the Master of the Lodge to wear and pass to his successor. Additional jewels may be purchased

for or by members of the Lodge. Member Lodges will also receive a unique hand-finished patent attesting their membership in the Society, suitable for display. The Member Lodges of the Society will be listed on the Memorial's website and acknowledged within the Memorial.

Freemasons everywhere feel a special connection to the Memorial. Now, it's easy for your Lodge to become part of the Society of Washington Lodges! Join the Society online by visiting our website at <http://gwmemorial.org/pages/swl>.

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