

Jefferson Memorial

Thomas Jefferson is one of the greatest figures in the history of the nation. The author of the Declaration of Independence and one of the founding fathers of the United States.

A firm believer in equal rights, democracy, education available to all, freedom of religion and separation between church and state, he gave form to the new nation still searching for its identity. Besides being a politician, Jefferson was also an architect, a writer, musician, scientist and inventor.

Below are listed the quotations shown on the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Panel One - "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men. We . . . solemnly publish and declare that these colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states. . . And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."



Panel 2 - "Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens . . . are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion . . . No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship or ministry or shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion. I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively."

Panel 3 - God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Establish a law for educating the common people. This it is the business of the state and on a general plan."

Panel 4 - "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."

A new Memorial

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt felt that a person of such magnitude deserved a memorial, similar to the Lincoln memorial and the Washington monument. A commission was installed in 1934 to choose a design and location for the memorial. It took until 1936 before a design by John Russel Pope was chosen. He had opted for a neo-classical dome with a portico based on the Pantheon in Rome. Since Jefferson was a supporter of classical architecture this seemed to be a fitting tribute.

Construction

Construction started in 1939 and it was dedicated four years later, in 1943. Since metal was being rationed during the Second World War, a plaster statue of Jefferson was created instead. After the war, the plaster statue was replaced by a 19ft / 6m tall statue in bronze, sculpted by Rudolph Evans. The interior walls are engraved with inscriptions taken from the Declaration of Independence and from other writings.

The Jefferson Memorial is located at the south side of the [Tidal Basin](#). The manmade lake is surrounded by cherry trees. The trees were a gift from the city of Tokyo to the city of Washington in 1912. It is one of the most photographed sights in Washington, especially during the two weeks when the trees bloom.

In 1941, Rudolph Evans was commissioned to sculpt the statue of Thomas Jefferson. The statue of Jefferson looks out from the interior of the Memorial toward the White House. It was intended to represent the Age of Enlightenment and Jefferson as a philosopher and statesman. The bronze statue is 19 feet tall and weighs five tons. Adolph A. Weinman's sculpture of the five members of the Declaration of Independence drafting committee submitting their report to Congress is featured on the triangular pediment. Also noteworthy, and adorning the interior of the Memorial, are quotations taken from Jefferson's writings that illustrate the principles to which he dedicated his life.