

The Washington Monument's Stone from Rome & Masonic Consecration

Compiled by

Mary's Little Remnant

302 East Joffre St.

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico 87901-2878, USA

Website: www.JohnTheBaptist.us

(Send for a free catalog)

HISTORY
OF THE
WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT
AND OF THE
WASHINGTON NATIONAL
MONUMENT SOCIETY.



BY FREDERICK L. HARVEY, Secretary,
WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT SOCIETY.

PRESS OF
NORMAN T. ELLIOTT PRINTING CO.,
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1902.

On the 4th of July, 1848, under a bright sky, in the presence of the President and Vice-President of the United States, Senators and Representatives in Congress, Heads of Executive Departments, and other officers of the Government, the Judiciary, Representatives of Foreign Governments, the corporate authorities of Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria, military commands, associations of many descriptions, delegations from States and

Territories and from several Indian tribes, and a great multitude of citizens, the corner-stone was laid.

The Rev. Mr. McJilton offered the consecration prayer, and the oration, lofty and eloquent, was delivered by the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop.

Mr. Benj. B. French, Grand Master of the Masonic Fraternity of the ~~United States~~, then delivered a beautiful and appropriate address, after which he descended to the corner-stone and performed the Masonic ceremonies of laying it.

The gavel used was that employed by George Washington, as Master Mason, in the Masonic ceremonies in the laying of the corner-stone of the National Capitol. A patriotic song, written by Robert Treat Paine, was sung, after which the benediction was pronounced.

The corner-stone was laid at the northeast angle of the foundation. Among the distinguished guests on the stand at the laying of the corner-stone were Mrs. Alexander Hamilton (then ninety-one years old), Mrs. Dolly Paine Madison, George Washington Parke Custis, and others of eminence.

STONE FROM ROME.

In this year an act occurred at the Monument which created much indignation and excitement in the District, and was the subject of much public discussion throughout the country.

The facts furnished to the press by the Society, after an investigation by it, were reported thus in the "Daily National Intelligencer" on March 8, 1854:

"A deed of barbarism was enacted on Monday morning last, between one and two o'clock, by several persons (number not known, but supposed to be from four to ten), which will be considered as belonging rather to some of the centuries considerably in our rear than to the better half of the boasted Nineteenth Century. We refer to the forcible seizure from its place of deposit, in a shed at the Washington Monument, of a block of marble sent hither from Rome, a tribute to the memory of Washington by the Pontiff, and intended to become a part of the edifice now erecting to signalize his name and glory. It originally stood in the Temple of Concord at Rome, was of beautiful texture, and had for its dimensions a length of three feet, height of eighteen inches, and thickness of ten inches. The account we hear of the matter is this: That at about the time above mentioned several men suddenly surrounded the watch box of the night watchman, and passed a cord, such as is used for clothes lines, around the box, and piled stones against the door, calling to the man within that if he kept quiet he would not be injured, at the same

time they pasted pieces of newspapers on the two or three window openings that commanded the particular shed containing the fated block, so as to prevent the watchman from seeing their operations. They then removed one of the strips in front of the place where the block stood, and passing in and out by the opening carried it off by placing it on a hand cart used about the premises. There is no doubt they took the block to the river side, not less than a quarter of a mile off, and pitched it over the steep bank upon the river beach, where they enjoyed a favorable opportunity of breaking it up undiscovered or boating it off into the river, which they probably did after defacing it. All this went on, it seems, without effective remonstrance from the watchman, although he had with him a double-barrel shot gun loaded with buck shot, and the operations at the shed were within easy shot. As for the pasting on the windows, there was nothing in that, for they slid up and down like the sashes of an omnibus. These proceedings, the watchman says, took place about half-past one; but he gave no notice of it to the family residing at the Monument until four. For these and other similar reasons he has been suspended."

A meeting of the Society was held on the 7th of March in reference to this vandalism, and it was resolved to offer a reward to discover the perpetrators. Accordingly, the following advertisement appeared in the "Daily National Intelligencer" on March 8th :

"\$100 REWARD. The Board of Managers of the Washington National Monument Society will pay the above reward of \$100 for the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who, on the night of the 5th instant, stole and destroyed a block of marble contributed to said Monument."

This advertisement availed nothing as to the discovery of the guilty persons. It was understood to have been the work of persons belonging to the party styled "Know-Nothings;" one of their professions being opposition to the Roman Catholic Church and any political preference of its members. It was not thought the persons were generally depraved characters, but, on the contrary, were supposed to be identified with the respectable part of the community. From the time of the reception of this stone from Rome by the Society until its destruction, there had been frequent expressions in a portion of the daily press in opposition to its being placed in the Monument, and the Society had received many protesting letters and, in some instances, long petitions from various parts of the country, numerous signed, urging that the stone be not used by the Society, as it was representative of the Roman Church, &c.

Many petitions from New Jersey recited :

"We, the undersigned, citizens of ———, in the State of New Jersey, believing the proffer of a block of marble recently made by the Pope of Rome to this country for the Washington Monument to be totally inconsistent with the known principles of that despotic system of government of which he is the head ; that the inscription, ' Rome to America,' engraved upon it, bears a significance beyond

its natural meaning; that the construction is an artful stratagem, calculated to divert the attention of the American people for the present from his animosity to republican institutions by an outward profession of regard; that the gift of a despot, if placed within those walls, can never be looked upon by true Americans but with feelings of mortification and disgust; and believing that the original design of the structure was to perpetuate the memory of Washington as the champion of American liberty, its national character should be preserved, do therefore most earnestly protest against the placing of said stone within the Monument, or any other stone from any other than a republican government."

But the Society was not organized on sectarian or political lines, and to the opposition and protests no heed was given. The Society was composed of men of different political beliefs and church affiliations.

The immediate effect of the destruction of the "Pope's stone" was to anger a large body of the citizens of the country, members of the Catholic Church, and then, and for a long time afterward, to estrange any interest they had had in the building of the Monument, and to this extent to impair the field for the collection of funds for the Monument.

It has never been certainly known what the precise fate of the stone was, though occasional uncorroborated statements of individuals, alleging knowledge of or participation in its destruction, have been made as to it. But their variance has rendered them of no value.

ORATION

615
H12

PRONOUNCED BY THE

HONORABLE ROBERT C. WINTHROP,

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES,

ON THE

Fourth of July, 1848,

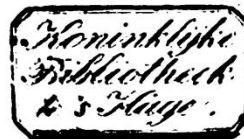
ON THE OCCASION OF LAYING THE CORNER-STONE OF THE

NATIONAL MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY OF WASHINGTON.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND AN APPENDIX.

Published by order of the National Monument Society.



WASHINGTON:

J. & G. S. GIDEON, PRINTERS.

1848.

ADDRESS

OF

BENJAMIN B. FRENCH, Esq.,

(FURNISHED FOR PUBLICATION AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.)

My respected Brethren of the Masonic Fraternity, and Fellow-Citizens:

WHY have we assembled here to-day? What means this immense crowd around us? For what, beneath a July sun, on this anniversary of the birth-day of a nation, has this vast multitude come up, as came Israel of old to the dedication of the Temple of the Lord?

We are here to perform a duty, which, were it possible, twenty millions of people would, without a whisper of dissent, assemble here to-day to witness, for it would be but the homage due to the memory of one, whose name shall live in every American bosom as long as our great and glorious Union shall exist.

We are about to lay the foundation stone of a National Monument, here, in the city that bears his name, at this seat of the General Government, which his exertions established, to be consecrated to the memory of GEORGE WASHINGTON.

"The world—the whole civilized world," says a most worthy and eloquent writer,* in an address on the Masonic character of Washington, "bows with admiration to that name as the exponent of all that is great in patriotism and lovely in public example. The furthest nations of the earth take up praise when that name is syllabled in their ear, as if his virtue were their inheritance. The broadest empires of Europe, while they shut out the light of republican truths, acknowledge the lustre which our country's father has thrown around the name of MAN; and the little republic of San Marino, situated above the clouds that play about the mid-height of Mount Urbino—a republic too poor to have jewels—too small to boast of a treasury—she cherishes, among the

* Joseph R. Chandler, Esq.

valuables of her public possessions, the name and simple portrait of Washington."

It is peculiarly appropriate that the solemn and interesting ceremony, of laying this corner-stone, should be performed by us, my Masonic brethren, for he, whose name is to make it a great national landmark for all future time, was a Freemason. The soldier, the statesman, the great and good man, upon all proper occasions, clothed himself in the regalia of our order, took his place among the craft, and avowed to the world his affection and regard for our ancient institution.

We have all about us, my brethren, the evidences that Washington was a Mason, and of his devotion to the craft. The Lodge from Fredericksburg, Virginia, is present, and its members bear with them the ancient, and interesting records of their proceedings, wherein is recorded the entering, passing, and raising of "Mr. George Washington," and upon which may be seen the handwriting of the Father of his Country. This apron and this sash, which I now have the honor to wear, were Washington's, and were worn by him while President of the United States, at the laying of the corner-stone of the Capitol, at which ceremony he used this gavel, which I shall use in the ceremony of laying this corner-stone. The chair upon the stand opposite, which has been occupied by the gifted orator who has just addressed you in words of eloquence, which shall be as immortal as the fame of him whom he has so nobly eulogized, is the property of Alexandria Washington Lodge, No. 22; it was purchased for that Lodge by Washington, and occupied by him during the time in which he presided over its deliberations. These sacred and invaluable relics are owned, the gavel by Potomac Lodge, in Georgetown, the other articles by Alexandria Washington Lodge.

We come here, then, to-day, on this Sabbath of our national existence, not only in the presence of this immense concourse of human beings, but in the presence of the Almighty, whose blessing we have invoked, to commence, in behalf of a great nation, the performance of a duty which that nation owes to the memory of Washington.

The superstructure which is to rise above this corner-stone, will bear such emblems as shall be calculated to remind the millions who may look upon it hereafter, not only of the Father of his Country, but of the country of which he was the father.

A circular colonnade is to form the main feature of the structure, from which, pointing to heaven, will spring a plain obelisk, five hundred feet in height. Near the apex of that obelisk is to be placed, in alto relievo, a single star. Like that star of old, which gathered the

•

wise men at Bethlehem, in Judea, may this be the guiding point to gather together the wise men of this land, should danger ever threaten the existence of our beloved and cherished Union!

I feel, my fellow-citizens, while standing here on this consecrated spot, set apart, as it has been, by the Congress of the United States for a sacred purpose, as if I were almost inspired by the spirit of prophecy when I say, that this Union shall be perpetual; for here, in this vast crowd, among all these banners that are floating and waving about me, nothing is seen but the emblems of union. The glittering arms, that flash back the sunlight, are for protection and defence. Men of all parties, and all Christian creeds, here stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder, a single brotherhood, ready to defend this Union in one united mass, should ever that defence be necessary. Who, then, can doubt its perpetual integrity? Who shall dare to predict that our constitution, fraught with so many blessings to mankind, will ever be broken in fragments, and scattered abroad? If there be a single speck upon our political horizon—if the faintest shadow of portending danger is to be seen, there are in the North, in the South, in the East, and in the West, patriots, statesmen, great, and gifted, and good men, the descendants of the fathers of this Republic, who will stand by, and defend, and preserve, this citadel of liberty whole, entire, perfect, as it now is, to be the glory of after ages, as it is of this.

First, in the name of the Most High, and next, in that great human name, to manifest respect to which we have met here to-day—in the name of George Washington—let us, all here assembled, as the voice of one man, pledge ourselves anew to maintain the constitution, which Washington so powerfully aided in establishing; and let us also implore upon our common country, perpetuity, happiness, and peace.

It is very common, upon the erection of monuments to the dead, to say that they are erected to commemorate the persons whose name they bear; and, in most instances, this is said with truth. But the erection of a marble monument, for no other purpose than to perpetuate the memory of Washington, would be a vain and useless task. He has a monument that can never die, where his name shall never be forgotten; it *was* indelibly engraved upon the hearts of five millions of people; now it is upon the hearts of twenty millions; hereafter it shall be upon the hearts of hundreds of millions.

We shall all be gathered to *our* fathers, as the generations which have preceded us have been gathered to theirs. They taught us to pronounce, and venerate the name of the Father of his Country. It was a holy lesson—and I say it with the utmost reverence, and with

a profound conviction of the immensity which should ever separate the name of Him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, from the purest and best of mortals—but still I say, it was a holy lesson, and second only to that one, so much more holy, which teaches us to say, “Our Father who art in heaven.” We will teach it to our children, and they shall teach it to theirs; and upon that glorious Monument of human hearts, it shall be borne onward until Time shall be no more. We erect not, then, this Monument of marble to enable us, or those who may succeed us, to remember Washington, but we erect it as a mark of our affection, our veneration for the memory of the great and good man whose name it bears; and it shall hereafter be viewed, by an admiring world, as the evidence to all future time that this republic is not ungrateful. We commence here, a great, a patriotic, a glorious work; and when it shall have been completed, who that shall visit this city, but will come to this spot, and while contemplating the Monument of a nation’s affection, but will feel his bosom warm, and his heart expand with the holy fire of patriotism? His thoughts will not recur to him alone whose name it shall bear, but also to that galaxy of great names, who not only pledged everything, but risked everything, that we might stand here, this day, in the proud position which we occupy before the world.

Is there, then, a single individual among the millions who hail this as their common country, who, possessing the ability, will refuse the proffered honor of being permitted to contribute his mite to so noble, so patriotic an enterprise? I trust not one!

The fraternity of Freemasons can recur, with proud satisfaction, to our revolutionary struggle, when they remember that every general officer of the American armies, save one, was a Freemason—at least the pen of history has so made up the record, and he, whose eyes never beheld

“That hieroglyphic bright
Which none but craftsmen ever saw,”

died a traitor to his country !*

* This portion of the address was extemporaneous, and the language used was such as the speaker’s mind suggested at the instant. He ought, perhaps, to have said, *traditionary rumor*, instead of “the pen of history.” Since the address was delivered, he has seen a newspaper statement that Gen. Arnold was a Freemason. He is sure that he has often seen the contrary stated. One rumor may offset the other, until proof is adduced, when no one will more cheerfully bow to the evidence than himself.—B. B. F.

This grand and imposing assemblage is, at this moment, graced and honored with the presence of the Royal Arch apron, owned, and worn by General Joseph Warren, who fell at the battle of Bunker Hill, the first heroic martyr of high rank, who poured out his blood in the cause of American liberty. *

General Warren was Grand Master of Freemasons in America. The apron, to which I have alluded, is now in the possession of a worthy brother of the craft,* who has journeyed from Boston to this city to join in these ceremonies, and has brought with him that sacred relic of the past, that the name of Warren, immortalized by his patriotism, his valor, and his early but glorious death, might be associated here, in the never-to-be-forgotten ceremonies of this day, with the name of Washington! Wreath them together in your memories, my brethren, in an unfading chaplet, and wear them in your hearts!

Our most worthy brother, from whose eloquent address on the Masonic character of Washington, I have before quoted, after alluding to his retirement and death, pours out, as it were, from his soul, the following tribute to his memory, which will not be out of place here:

"He has gone indeed, but the brilliant track of his pathway shall know no darkness. The zodiac through which he took his course shall be bright in the lustre of his greatness; and star after star may go out in every constellation of the political heavens, but where he went the brightness shall be eternal; and the upturned faces of admiring mortals shall catch a reflection of that lustre from the very power of appreciating its purity.

No more Washingtons shall come in our time. Mount Vernon shall not give back its sacred deposit to bless a nation, and that human form has not yet been shaped to receive the ethereal fire to make it another Washington. But his virtues are stamped on the heart of mankind. He who is great in the battle field looks upward to the generalship of Washington. He who grows wise in counsel feels that he is imitating a Washington. He who can resign power against the wishes of a people, has in his eye the bright example of Washington. The husbandman, toiling in his field, is proud in the thought that Washington too was a farmer. The mason, in the midst of his labors, remembers with pride that Washington was a mason; and the man, struck down by misfortune, solitary and unaided, who has no special claim of association with that great one, warms his heart, and strengthens his resolution in the recollection that Washington, too, was a man."

True virtue and true valor never go unrewarded by a virtuous and patriotic people.

* Capt. Josiah Sturgiss, U. S. Revenue Marine.

This republic is proud of her jewels. She forgets not her statesmen and her heroes, but delights to honor them while living, and to commemorate them when dead.

Were the scroll, which contains the record of all the great and good men of the Republic, now to be unrolled before us, at its head, surrounded by a halo of undying glory, would stand, in living light, pre-eminent above all, the name of GEORGE WASHINGTON.

“He burst the fetters of the land,
He taught us to be free,
He raised the dignity of man,
And bade a Nation be.”

MASONIC CEREMONIES IN LAYING THE CORNER-STONE.

The Grand Master, having concluded his address, descended to the corner-stone, and, having applied the square, level, and plumb to the northeast corner thereof, pronounced it well squared, level, and plumb; well laid, true, and trusty. Then, having deposited in the cavity the several articles furnished, he said :

I shall now proceed to place upon this stone the ancient masonic elements of consecration, the corn, wine, and oil.

This may appear to many an unmeaning ceremony ; if such be the case, I can only say to those, who thus view it, that to them hundreds of other ceremonies and emblems must appear equally so. The water which is sprinkled upon the face of the infant; the solemn rite by which age comes visibly before the world and announces its faith in the redeeming power of a Saviour; the flag which floats at the head of the military column; the plume that dances amid the charge of warring hosts; the christening of the ship as she glides for the first time into her destined element, without which no sailor could be found to trust himself upon her deck—these are all *ceremonies and emblems*, but they are such as are solemnly recognized by the world. “The tabernacle in the wilderness and all its holy vessels were, by God’s express command, anointed with oil; Aaron and his two sons were set apart

for the priesthood with the same ceremony, and the prophets and kings of Israel were consecrated to their offices by the same rite."

To the reflecting mind all these ceremonies have a deep and abiding meaning.

In placing upon this stone this **CORN**, I invoke the blessing of plenty to the nation whose monument this is to be. May bread, that great staff of our physical existence, never be wanting to feed the hungry !

In pouring upon it the **WINE**, permit me to express a hope that the wine of joy may ever be found in our broad land, and that happiness may be a dweller in every hamlet, from the Rio Bravo to the Bay of Fundy, from the Pacific to the Atlantic oceans.

In pouring upon it the **OIL**, I invoke for all who may be in affliction the healing oil of consolation.

This corner-stone is now ready to receive the superstructure which is to rise above it. May no accident attend its erection, and may the cap-stone, that announces its completion, be laid under circumstances as happy and as favorable as this foundation stone has now been placed !

The Grand Master then presented to the architect, **ROBERT MILLS**, (who is a freemason,) the working tools of his profession, remarking, as he did it :

I now present to you, my brother, the *square*, *level*, and *plumb*, which are the working tools you are to use in the erection of this monument. You, as a freemason, know to what they morally allude : the plumb admonishes us to walk uprightly in our several stations before God and man, squaring our actions by the *square* of virtue, and remembering that we are travelling upon the *level* of time to that "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns." Never forgetting this sublime moral lesson, you are here to use them practically in your profession. Look well to the erection of this national monument ; see that every stone is well *squared*, and that it is placed in its position both *level* and *plumb*, that the noble offering of a nation, to commemorate greatness, patriotism, and virtue, may stand until the end of time.

The masonic grand honors were then given, and the benediction was pronounced.