



The George Washington Memorial

Located on a hilltop in **Alexandria Virginia**, a short distance across the Potomac River from Washington DC, is the **George Washington National Masonic Memorial**.

While named in honour of the first President of the USA, this is far from just another memorial to Washington the man. It has multiple roles as a repository of some priceless masonic artefacts, including an extensive collection of Washington's possessions and other memorabilia, a museum, library, working masonic centre and community resource.

This multi storey edifice towering 333 feet (100 metres) above the surrounding area and located on Shooters Hill, site of Union fortifications during the American Civil War, provides commanding views from the top floor observation deck back across the river to the city that bears Washington's name and over the surrounding area.

The memorial concept was conceived in 1911 after an 1871 fire damaged some of the priceless artefacts from Washington's life held by Alexandria-Washington Lodge No 22. Construction commenced in 1922 and continued until consecration of the building on 12 May 1932. Building works continued throughout the Great Depression, only being undertaken when money was available as no loans were raised for construction of the memorial.

The memorial association is the only unified effort of all the Grand Lodges in the USA.

George Washington was initiated into Fredericksburg Lodge No 4 on 4 November 1752. He was made an honorary member of Alexandria Lodge No 39, which later became Alexandria-Washington Lodge No 22 when a new charter was issued by the Grand Lodge of Virginia. Records indicate that Washington was Worshipful Master of the Alexandria Lodge when sworn in as the first President

of the USA in 1789. He died in 1799.

Each of the other floors in the building hold displays about a particular masonic order provided by the members of the featured organisation. Each is different in style and content, informative and interesting.

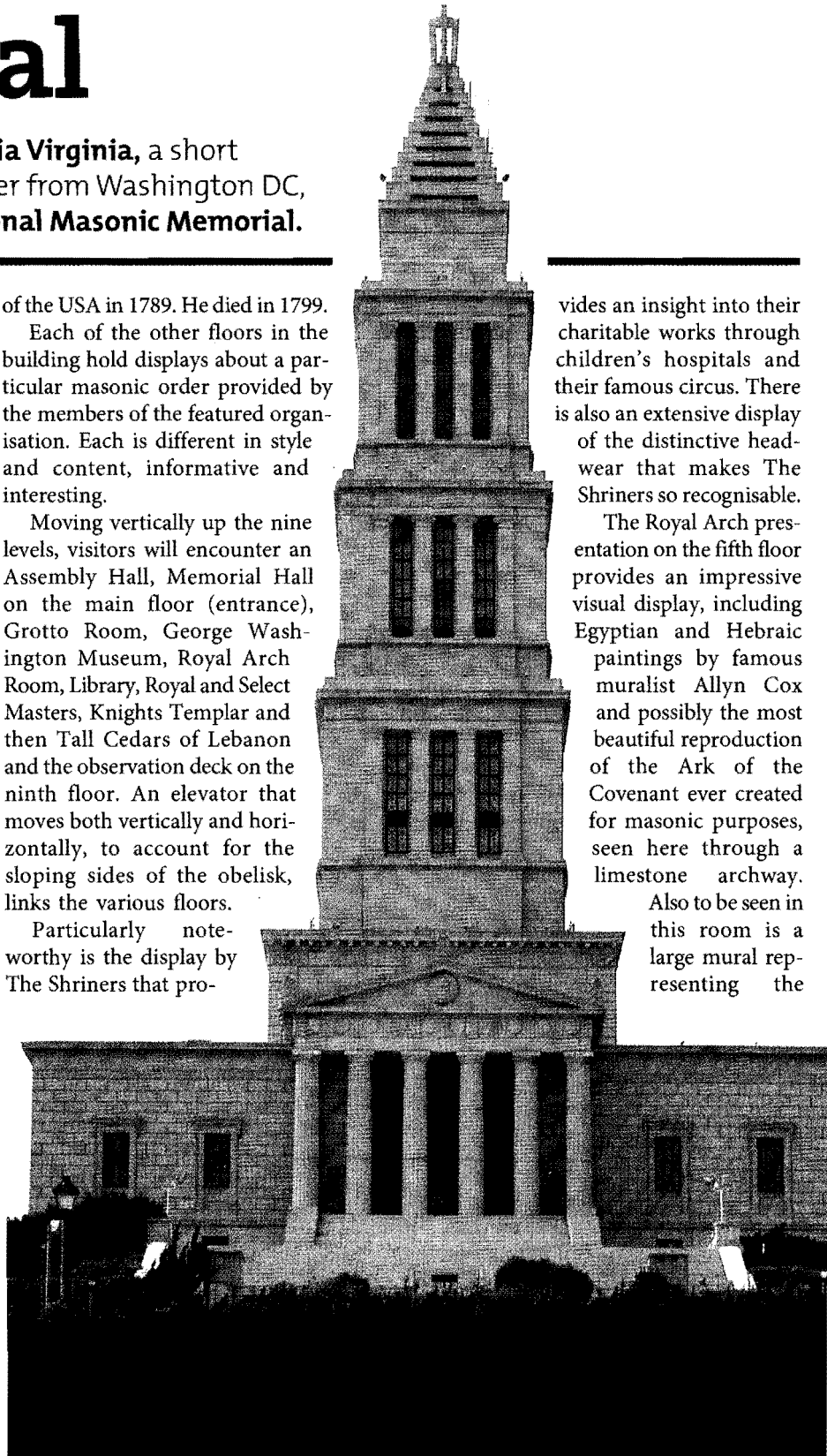
Moving vertically up the nine levels, visitors will encounter an Assembly Hall, Memorial Hall on the main floor (entrance), Grotto Room, George Washington Museum, Royal Arch Room, Library, Royal and Select Masters, Knights Templar and then Tall Cedars of Lebanon and the observation deck on the ninth floor. An elevator that moves both vertically and horizontally, to account for the sloping sides of the obelisk, links the various floors.

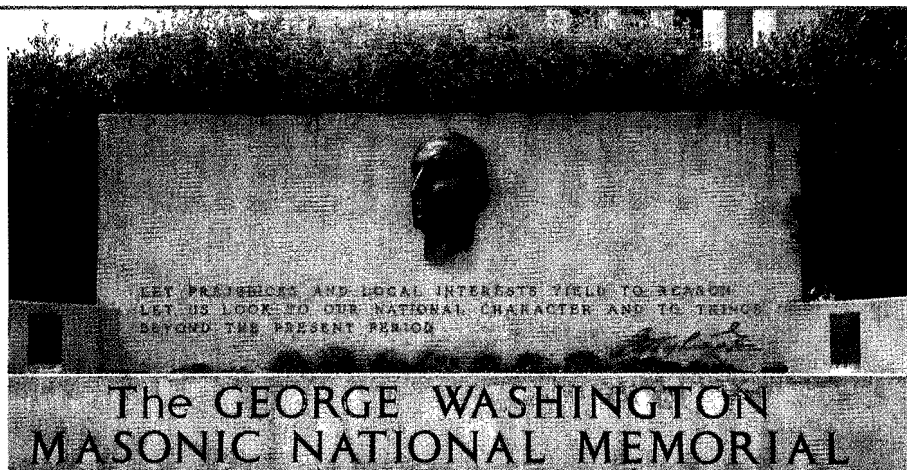
Particularly noteworthy is the display by The Shriners that pro-

vides an insight into their charitable works through children's hospitals and their famous circus. There is also an extensive display of the distinctive headwear that makes The Shriners so recognisable.

The Royal Arch presentation on the fifth floor provides an impressive visual display, including Egyptian and Hebraic paintings by famous muralist Allyn Cox and possibly the most beautiful reproduction of the Ark of the Covenant ever created for masonic purposes, seen here through a limestone archway.

Also to be seen in this room is a large mural representing the





artist's conception of the ruins of Kings Solomon's Temple.

Being a working masonic centre, the lodge room and other facilities are used regularly by a number of masonic organisations. Alexandria-Washington Lodge No 22 still meets here, as does Andrew Jackson Lodge No 120, a DeMolay Chapter, Jobs Daughters Bethel and OES Chapter.

The memorial also serves as a focus for other community cultural activities with recent uses including a youth Shakespeare camp and guitar festival. The memorial facilities are available for weddings, conferences and similar purposes.

Travelling to the memorial is convenient if travelling by train as it is located adjacent to the Alexandria Amtrak station. If coming from DC, simply board a Metro train and enjoy the journey across the Potomac, past the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, then disembark at Alexandria station for the short walk round the corner to the memorial.

Similarly, travelling by road should be no problem due to the prominence of the building on the skyline and the proximity of the station as a map reference. The

memorial is located at 101 Callahan Avenue, Alexandria. Ample parking is available at the rear of the building.

As access to the front entrance is by stairs leading up Shooters Hill, disabled access is also available through the carpark.

While climbing the stairs at the front of the building may be a little arduous for some, the effort is rewarded by the changing vista as you move toward the entrance and also the close proximity of the large Square and Compasses insignia located in the hillside gardens beside the stairs.

Approximately 50,000 visitors take advantage of the guided tours of the memorial held several times daily, apart from major public holidays. Admission is free.

The memorial will be of particular interest to those who have knowledge of, or interest in, all aspects of Freemasonry. However, others will not be disappointed as the artefacts held in the Memorial are unique while the various artworks and displays provide a glimpse into the life of George Washington and American history.

Research by Bro Brian Thompson, Phoenix Lodge No 85 at Petrie.

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