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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**  
**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR**  
**and the New Deal**

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**File No. 1189**

**1938 December 15**

**Thomas Jefferson Memorial - Address**

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT, THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL,  
WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 15, 1938.

Nearly a hundred years ago, the Congress of the United States, in response to a general public demand, undertook to provide a memorial in the National Capital to the first President of the United States, George Washington. There followed many years of controversy both as to the type of memorial and as to its location. The Washington Monument emerged as the result of congressional action.

Half a century ago, again in response to public demand, the Congress began the consideration of a monument to the memory of Abraham Lincoln -- the preserver of the Union. Years went by and a distinguished committee, following the broad objectives of the original plan for the development of the National Capital, recommended the creation of two broad axes in the general form of a cross -- one axis from the Capitol through the Mall past the Washington Monument to the river bank; the other axis from the White House past the Washington Monument ground to another point near the river.

In line with this well considered plan, the Congress erected the Lincoln Memorial at the end of the longer axis and it was then the clear intention both of the Congress and of the many planning committees and commissions who studied the subject to complete the other axis by the erection of a public monument at the fourth corner of the cross.

For far more than fifty years, Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States, has been recognized by our citizens not only for the outstanding part which he took in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, itself, not only for his authorship of the Virginia statute for religious freedom, but also for the services he rendered in establishing the practical operation of the American Government as a democracy and not an autocracy.

For very many years, it has seemed appropriate that with Washington and Lincoln, his services should be held in memory by the erection of a monument of equal dignity. We are breaking ground, today, for such a memorial. The Congress of

the United States, through a distinguished Commission, has, after long consideration, chosen this site and made the first appropriations for the erection of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

In the days to come, the millions of American citizens who each year visit the National Capital will have a sense of gratitude that at last an adequate permanent National Memorial to Thomas Jefferson has been placed at this beautiful spot because as the joint resolution of the Congress says: "The American people feel a deep debt of gratitude to Thomas Jefferson" and "honor the services rendered by him."

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

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(Made from automobile - original  
reading copy)

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
At the Ceremony of Groundbreaking  
for the Thomas Jefferson Memorial  
Washington, D. C.  
December 15, 1938, 2.30 o'clock, P.M.

MR. GIBBONEY, MEMBERS OF THE THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL COMMISSION:

Nearly a hundred years ago, the Congress of the United States, in response to a general public demand, undertook to provide a memorial in the (National) Nation's Capital to the first President of the United States, George Washington. There followed many years of controversy both as to the type of memorial and as to its location. The Washington Monument emerged as the result of Congressional action.

Half a century ago, again in response to public demand, the Congress began the consideration of a monument to the memory of Abraham Lincoln -- the preserver of the Union. Years went by and a distinguished committee, following the broad objectives of the original plan for the development of the National Capital, recommended the creation of two broad axes in the general form of a cross -- one axis from the Capitol through the Mall past the Washington Monument to the river bank, and the other axis from the White House past the Washington Monument (ground) to another point near the river.

In line with this well considered plan, the Congress erected the Lincoln Memorial at the end of the longer axis and it was then the clear intention both of the Congress and of the many planning committees and commissions who studied the subject to complete the other axis from the White House to the river by the erection of a public monument at the fourth corner of the cross.

For far more than fifty years, Thomas Jefferson, the third

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

Henry's hundred years ago, the Congress of the United States, in response to a General Public Law, passed in 1802, which authorized the President of the United States, George Washington, to take any steps of controversy which he might see fit to see to the result of the investigation. The Washington Monument was the result of a presidential action.

It is a century ago, again in response to public opinion, the Congress passed the authorization of a monument to the memory of Abraham Lincoln -- the president of the United States -- and a distinguished committee, organized the group of designers of the design for the development of the Lincoln Capital, recommended the erection of two broad axes in the general form of a cross -- one axis from the Capital through the Mall past the Washington Monument to the river bank, and the other axis from the White House past the Washington Monument (ground) to another point near the river.

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For far more than fifty years, Thomas Jefferson, the third

President of the United States, has been recognized by our citizens not only for the outstanding part which he took in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence itself, not only for his authorship of the Virginia statute for religious freedom, but also for the services he rendered in establishing the practical operation of the American Government as a democracy and not as an autocracy.

For very many years, it has seemed appropriate that with Washington and Lincoln, his services should be held in memory by the erection of a monument of equal dignity. We are breaking ground, today, for such a memorial. The Congress of the United States, through a distinguished Commission, has, after long consideration, chosen this site and made the first appropriations for the erection of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

In the days to come, the millions of American citizens who each year visit the National Capital will have a sense of gratitude that at last, at long last, an adequate permanent National Memorial to Thomas Jefferson has been placed at this beautiful spot because as the Joint Resolution of the Congress says: "The American people feel a deep debt of gratitude to Thomas Jefferson" and "honor the services rendered by him."

And now I am about to present a spade to Mr. Gibbonsy and ask him, in my behalf, to turn the first piece of earth.

## STATEMENTS FILE

CONFIDENTIAL - BY REQUEST

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HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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December 19, 1958

CAUTION: These remarks of the President, to be broadcast at the ground-breaking for the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington on December 16, 1958, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE UNTIL RELEASED.

NOTE: Release in editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER than 2:30 o'clock, P. M., Eastern Standard Time, December 19, 1958.

STEPHEN SACKETT

Secretary to the President

Nearly a hundred years ago, the Congress of the United States, in response to a general public demand, undertook to provide a memorial in the Nation's Capital to the first President of the United States, George Washington. There followed many years of controversy both as to the type of memorial and as to its location. The Washington Monument emerged as the result of congressional action.

Half a century ago, again in response to public demand, the Congress began the consideration of a monument to the memory of Abraham Lincoln -- the preserver of the Union. Years went by and a distinguished committee, following the broad objectives of the original plan for the development of the National Capital, recommended the erection of two broad axes in the general form of a cross -- one axis from the Capitol through the Mall past the Washington Monument to the river bank; the other axis from the White House past the Washington Monument across to another point near the river.

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In the days to come, the millions of American citizens who each year visit the National Capital will have a sense of gratitude that at last an adequate permanent National Memorial to Thomas Jefferson has been placed at this beautiful spot because as the joint resolution of the Congress says: "The American people feel a deep debt of gratitude to Thomas Jefferson" and "honor the services rendered by him."

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STEPHEN EARLY  
Secretary to the President

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