
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**

File No. 1253

1939 November 15

Cornerstone Ceremonies - Jefferson Memorial

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE
OF THE JEFFERSON MEMORIAL
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1939

In the earliest days of the Republic under the Constitution the representatives of the several states were in substantial agreement that a national capital should be founded in a federal district set apart from the jurisdiction of any individual state. This purpose was in a true sense a symbol of a realization of national unity; and the final location of the national capital proclaimed a proper compromise between the interests of the North, the South, the seaboard and the interior, as they existed at the time.

In all of the hundred and fifty years of our existence as a constitutional nation many memorials to its civil and military chiefs have been set up here.

But it has been reserved to two of these leaders to receive special tribute in the nation's capital by the erection of national shrines perpetuating their memories over and above the appreciation and regard tendered to other great citizens of the Republic.

Today we lay the cornerstone of a third great shrine -- adding the name of Thomas Jefferson to the names of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

I have spoken of the national character of the District of Columbia itself, a capital which represents today the vitality, not of thirteen Atlantic seaboard states, but of forty-eight states which encompass the width of our continent.

This vitality envisages many-sided interests; and it is therefore fitting that among hundreds of monuments to famous Americans the three great shrines are dedicated to men of many-sided qualities.

Washington represented abilities recognized in every part of the young nation and in every part of the civilized world; for he was not only a great military leader, not only a great moderator in bringing together discordant elements in the formation of a constitutional nation, not only a great executive of that nation in its troublous early years, but also a man of vision and accomplishment in civil fields -- talented engineer and surveyor, planner of highways and canals, patron of husbandry, friend of scientists and fellow of political thinkers.

Lincoln too was a many-sided man. Pioneer of the wilderness, counsel for the under-privileged, soldier in an Indian war, master of the English tongue, rallying point for a torn nation, emancipator, not of slaves alone, but of those of heavy heart everywhere, foe of malice, teacher of good-will.

To those we add today another American of many parts -- not Jefferson the founder of a party, but the Jefferson whose influence is felt today in many of the current activities of mankind.

When in the year 1939 America speaks of its Bill of Rights, we think of the author of the statute for religious liberty in Virginia.

When today Americans celebrate the Fourth of July 1776, our minds revert to Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence.

When each Spring we take part in the commencement exercises of schools and universities, we go back to the days of Jefferson, founder of the University of Virginia.

When we think of Benjamin Franklin as the experimenter in physics, we remember that Jefferson was an inventor of numerous small devices to make human life simpler and happier and that he, too, experimented in the biology of agriculture and live stock.

In the current era of the erection of noble buildings we recognize the enormous influence of Jefferson in the American application of classic art to homes and public buildings -- an influence which makes itself felt today in the selection of the design for this very shrine for which we lay the cornerstone.

But it was in the field of political philosophy that Jefferson's significance is transcendent.

He lived as we live in the midst of a struggle between rule by the self-chosen individual or the self-appointed few, and rule by the franchise and approval of the many. He believed as we do that the average ^{opinion} ~~opportunity~~ of mankind is in the long run superior to the dictates of the self-chosen.

During all the years that have followed Thomas Jefferson the United States has expanded his philosophy ^{into} ~~with~~ a greater achievement ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ security of the nation, security of the individual and national unity, than in any other part of the world.

It may be that the conflict between the two forms of philosophy will continue for centuries to come, but we in the United States are more than ever satisfied with the republican form of government based on regularly recurring opportunities to our citizens to choose their leaders for themselves.

Therefore, in memory of the many-sided Thomas
in honor of
Jefferson and ~~in~~ the ever present vitality of his type of Americanism, we lay the cornerstone of this shrine.

Franklin Roosevelt

Orig. reading copy

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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November 15, 1979

CAUTION: The following address of the President,
to be delivered on the occasion of the laying of the
cornerstone of the Jefferson Memorial, is for release
in editions of all newspapers appearing on the
streets NOT EARLIER than 2:30 P. M., E. S. T.,
November 15, 1979.

Care must be exercised to prevent premature
publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

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Copy of reading
copy

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Notes given to Bill Hassett
and this copy is his elaboration
of the President notes.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

These are the President's notes
dictated on November 14, 1939 at
5 P.M. for the Jefferson Memorial
radio address to be delivered on
November 15, 1939.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Final dictation by the
President on Thursday morning,
November 15, 1939 - (see
corrections in longhand from
which mimeographed copy was made.)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

The President's first draft
of the Jefferson Memorial Address.

Just Draft

PRESIDENT'S NOTES ON SPEECH AT JEFFERSON MEMORIAL

In our long history there have been probably only four Americans who could properly be called many-sided. The first was Franklin -- think of the different fields that he took part in -- the next was Jefferson, the third was The Earl of Orrery, otherwise known as Count Rumford, and the fourth was Theodore Roosevelt. Not one of them a complete outstanding specialist in any one field but all of them excellent as general practitioners in a vast number of fields.

Jefferson was not a great scientist and yet we all know that he was an inventor of a great many small, useful things. In other words, the practical application of mechanics. His clock, probably not the first clock in the world, which worked both outside his house and inside his house -- two dials going in opposite directions; his combination, made on his own place, of a revolving chair, a table with a revolving top and a bench under it on which he could stretch out his legs. As a farmer -- a constant experimenter in the improvement of seeds, the cultivation of land, fertilizer, the improvement of live stock.

As an architect -- a man who brought back to this country the classical architecture, almost introduced it, as applied not only to homes and country places but also

institutions of learning - group buildings such as those at the University of Virginia.

A man who in the field of government could be the author of the Declaration of Independence; fill diplomatic Ambassador posts with enormous credit; be Governor of the State of Virginia and President and then retire for two decades nearly and all through that period exercise tremendous influence on the thought of his day. A man who while not a member of any given church was a deeply religious Christian, simplifying the whole of the New Testament for his own benefit. A man who in the field of polity, rather than politics, became the founder of liberal political thought in this nation as opposed to conservative political thought, and who did it so well that he was able to ~~immediate~~ institute a two party system, thereby excluding the dangers of a multi-party system.

A student and patron of natural history of all kinds. An utterly generous person who gave away so much and entertained so many friends that he died practically broke.

When you sum up the different fields that he had a great influence in you put him down as one of the three or four obviously many-sided Americans. Not just President Jefferson is this memorial dedicated to but to the many-sided American who also has aroused the interest of succeeding generations because of his many-sided personality.

Remarks of the President at the laying of the cornerstone
of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, Washington, to be delivered over a
nationwide hookup in connection with a program beginning at 2:30 P.M.,
E.S.T., November 15, 1939.

CHAIRMAN GIBBONET, MEMBERS OF THE THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL COMMISSION,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

We as a nation are entitled to take pardonable pride in the number and the range of the men of genius we have produced: statesmen, scholars, scientists, artists in all lines of creative endeavor, men of affairs. There is hardly a field of human activity in which we may not point to a man, yes and to a woman, too, of outstanding achievements.

But as we gather here today to do honor to Thomas Jefferson the names of four Americans come to my mind who could properly be called many-sided — versatile — men of talent in many and diverse fields of human activity — in distinction to the specialist who excels in one line of endeavor. My list of four outstanding many-sided Americans leads off with Benjamin Franklin — think of the many different fields in which he excelled; next comes Thomas Jefferson. The third is the versatile Count Rumford, who started life in an obscure Massachusetts town as Benjamin Thompson, and the fourth, vividly remembered by many before me, is Theodore Roosevelt.

All four were men of boundless energy, insatiable curiosity and amazing achievement, each in several fields. Perhaps not one of them was an outstanding specialist in any one field but all of them were excellent as general practitioners in a vast number of fields.

It is fair to say of Jefferson that he was not a great scientist yet we all know that he was an inventor of a great many small, useful things. He became a pioneer in the practical application of mechanics to everyday life. The clock which he invented which worked both outside and inside his house with two dials going in opposite directions probably was not the first clock of that character. But it did show the originality

of a wonderfully fertile mind. We marvel, too, at another combination, made on his own place, and for his own convenience, which included a revolving chair, a table with a revolving top and a bench under it on which he could stretch out his legs. The visitor to Monticello will marvel at the range and the originality of his inventions. As a farmer, too, he was a constant experimenter in the improvement of seeds, the effect of fertiliser, the cultivation of land, the improvement of livestock.

As an architect he led a renaissance in classical architecture as applied not only to homes and country places but also to institutions of learning and public buildings, as witness the University of Virginia and the State Capitol at Richmond.

This same man, in the field of government, was the author of the Declaration of Independence. He filled diplomatic posts with enormous credit. After serving as Governor of the State of Virginia he was twice President of the United States and then in retirement through nearly two decades by correspondence and by counsel and conversation exercised a profound influence on the thought of his day. Though not a member of any church he was a deeply religious Christian and devised an original and remarkable arrangement of the Books of the New Testament. In the field of polity rather than politics Thomas Jefferson became the founder of liberal political thought in this nation as opposed to conservative political thought and he did it so well that he was able to bring about a two-party system of government, thereby excluding the dangers of a multi-party system. No field of human thought was closed to his mind. He was a student and patron of natural history. An utterly generous person, he gave away so much and entertained so many friends that he died practically broke.

When you come to sum up the different fields in which his influence was preeminent you put him down as one of the three or four obviously many-sided Americans. So it is not just to President Jefferson

that we are rearing this Memorial but to the many-sided American who also has aroused the interest of succeeding generations because of his versatile personality. Indeed, Jefferson's epitaph, written by himself, bears witness to his many-sided genius. In that epitaph, you will remember, he chose to ignore altogether the fact that he was President of the United States and chose rather to be remembered as "Author of the Declaration of Independence; of the Statute for Religious Liberty in Virginia, and Founder of the University of Virginia."

Second draft

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE
OF THE JEFFERSON MEMORIAL,
Wednesday, November 16th.

In the earliest days ~~of the founding~~ of the Republic under the Constitution the representatives of the several states were in substantial agreement that a national capital should be founded in a federal district ^{not} apart from the jurisdiction of any individual state. This ~~objective~~ ^{purpose} was in a true sense a symbol of a realization of national unity, and the final location of the national capital proclaimed a proper compromise between the ~~sectional claims~~ ^{interests} of the North, the South, the seaboard and the interior, as they existed at the time.

In all of the hundred and fifty years of our existence as a constitutional nation many ^{memorials} ~~tributes~~ have been paid by ~~the nation~~ ^{to its civil and military chiefs.} But it has been reserved to two of these leaders to receive special tribute in the nation's capital by the erection of national shrines perpetuating their memories over and above the appreciation and regard tendered to other great citizens of the Republic.

Today we lay the cornerstone of a third great shrine --
adding the name of Thomas Jefferson to the names of Abraham
Lincoln and George Washington.

I have spoken of the national character of the District
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This vitality ~~and this interest~~ envisages many-sided ~~interests~~
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Lincoln too was a many-sided man. Pioneer of the wilderness, counsel for the under-privileged, soldier in an Indian war, master of the English tongue, rallying point for a torn nation, emancipator, not of slaves alone but of those of ~~under-mingled~~ heavy heart everywhere, foe of malice, ~~—~~ teacher of good-will.

To those we add today another American of many parts -- not Jefferson the founder of a party, but the Jefferson whose influence is felt today in many of the current activities of mankind.

When in the year 1939 America speaks of its Bill of Rights, we think of the author of the statute for religious liberty in Virginia.

Celebration
When today Americans ~~celebrate~~ the Fourth of July 1776, our minds revert to Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence.

When each spring we take part in the commencement exercises of schools and universities, we go back to the days of Jefferson, founder of the University of Virginia.

STATEMENTS FILE
Short Hand by Kannanee

Address of the President
At the cornerstone laying of the Jefferson
Memorial

HOLD FOR RELEASE HOLD FOR RELEASE HOLD FOR RELEASE

Washington D.C., November 15, 1939

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STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

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In all of the hundred and fifty years of our existence as a constitutional nation many memorials to its civil and military chiefs have been set up (here). But it has been reserved to two of these leaders to receive special tribute in the nation's capital by the erection of national shrines perpetuating their memories over and above the appreciation and regard tendered to other great citizens of the Republic.

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I have spoken of the national character of the District of Columbia itself, a capital which represents today the vitality, not of thirteen Atlantic seaboard states, but of forty-eight states which encompass the width of (our) continent.

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But it was in the field of political philosophy that Jefferson's significance is transcendent.

He lived as we live in the midst of a struggle between rule by the self-chosen individual or the self-appointed few, and rule by the franchise and approval of the many. He believed as we do that the average opinion of mankind is in the long run superior to the dictates of the self-chosen.

During all the years that have followed Thomas Jefferson the United States has expanded his philosophy into a greater achievement of security of the nation, security of the individual and national unity, than in any other part of the world.

It may be that the conflict between (the) two forms of philosophy will continue for centuries to come, but we in the United States are more than ever satisfied with the republican form of government based on regularly recurring opportunities to our citizens to choose their leaders for themselves.

Therefore, in memory of the many-sided Thomas Jefferson and in honor of the ever present vitality of his type of Americanism, we lay the cornerstone of this shrine.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
At the Cornerstone Laying of the Jefferson Memorial
Washington, D. C., November 15, 1939

(The President was introduced by Honorable Stuart G. Gibbons, Chairman, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission)

MR. GIBBONNEY, GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMISSION:

This is the second occasion on which I have had the privilege of coming in an official capacity to this site and I hope that by January in 1941, I shall be able to come to the final dedication of the Memorial itself.

In the earliest days of (the) this Republic of ours, the Republic under the Constitution the representatives of the several states of the Union were in substantial agreement that a national capital should be founded in a federal district set apart from the jurisdiction of any individual state. (This) That purpose was in a true sense a symbol of a realization of national unity; and the final location of the national capital in this place proclaimed a proper compromise between the interest of the North, the South, the seaboard and the interior, as they existed at (the) that time.

In all of the hundred and fifty years of our existence life as a constitutional nation many memorials to its civil and military chiefs have been set up (here) in the National Capital. But it has been reserved to two of (these) those leaders to receive special tribute in the

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 omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

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Washington represented abilities recognized in every part of the young nation and, indeed, in every part of the civilized world of his day; for he was not only a great military leader, not only a great moderator in bringing together discordant elements in the formation of a constitutional nation, not only a great executive of that nation in its (troublous) troublesome early years, but also a man of vision and accomplishments in private civil fields -- talented engineer and surveyor, planner of highways and canals, patron of husbandry, friend of scientists and

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When today Americans celebrate the anniversary of the Fourth of July 1776, our minds revert to Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence.

And when each Spring we take part in (the) commencement exercises of schools and universities, then we go back to the days of Jefferson, founder of the University of Virginia.

When we think of his older contemporary, Benjamin Franklin as the experimenter in physics and of science, we remember that Jefferson was an inventor of numerous small devices to make human life simpler and happier and that he, too, experimented in the biology of live stock and of agriculture. (and live stock.)

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