



An American Tour: 30



Washington, D.C.'s Jefferson Memorial

“Thomas Jefferson - political philosopher, architect, musician, book collector, scientist, horticulturist, diplomat, inventor, and third President of the United States - looms large in any discussion of what Americans are as a people. Jefferson left to the future not only ideas but also a great body of practical achievements. President John F. Kennedy recognized Jefferson's accomplishments when he told a gathering of American Nobel Prize winners that they were the greatest assemblage of talent in the White House since Jefferson had dined there alone. With his strong beliefs in the rights of man and a government derived from the people, in freedom of religion and the separation of church and state, and in education available to all, Thomas Jefferson struck a chord for human liberty 200 years ago that resounds through the decades. But in the end, Jefferson's own appraisal of his life, and the one that he wrote for use on his own tombstone, suffices: ‘Author of the Declaration of Independence, Of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, And Father of the University of Virginia.’”

Jefferson's importance as one of the great figures in the Nation's history demanded a memorial site of prominence in the Capital City equal to that occupied by the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Placing the Jefferson Memorial on the Tidal Basin, directly south of the White House achieved this, for these monuments, the White House, and the Capitol completed the east-west axis and its complementary north-south alignment, creating a monumental heart for the city. In the preparation of the plans for the memorial, the architect, John Russell Pope, was clearly influenced by Jefferson's taste as expressed in his writings and demonstrated by his works. The circular colonnaded structure is an adaptation of the classical style that Jefferson introduced into this country. Rudolph Evans was sculptor of the statue of Jefferson in the center of the memorial. The memorial was dedicated in 1943 on the 200th anniversary of Jefferson's birth, four years after President Franklin Roosevelt laid the cornerstone. The memorial is at its most beautiful in early spring when the Japanese cherry trees are in bloom. The trees were a gift from Tokyo in 1912.” [http://

tourofdc.org/monuments/jefferson-memorial/]

