



George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee (GWBCC)
Annual Report
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Mission

The Committee shall exist for the purpose of planning and carrying out of the City's annual George Washington Birthday celebration, as set forth in Title 2, Chapter 4, Article O of the Code of the City of Alexandria and shall operate in accordance with the Charter and Title 2, Chapter 4, Articles A and O of the Code of the City of Alexandria.

Leadership and Membership

Officers for the 2025-2026 year were Sue Johnson as Chair, Carol Myers as Vice Chair, and Peter Duggan as Secretary.

Michele Longo from the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) acted as the staff liaison to the George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee during the 2025-2026 year.

During the course of the 2025-2026 year, membership included the following individuals:

- Edgar Bates, George Washington Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), 11/1/2022-10/31/2026
- Colin Eilts, Citizen at Large, 11/1/2022-10/31/2026
- Sandra Welch, Kate Waller Barrett Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 12/1/2022-11/30/2026
- Jeanne Jacob, Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association, 10/1/2025-9/30/2027
- Lauren Augustine, Veteran Member, 6/1/2023-5/31/2027
- Peter Duggan, First Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line, 6/2/2023-5/31/2027
- Tyler Vanice, George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 6/1/2023-5/31/2027
- Susan E. Johnson, Citizen at Large, 10/12/2025-9/30/2027
- Kristen Eastlick, Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society, 3/1/2024-2/28/2026
- W. Patrick Wilson, Veteran Member, 7/1/2024-6/30/2026
- Stephen Konya, Citizen at Large, 10/1/2022-9/30/2026
- Carol Myers, American Legion Post 24, 10/1/2022-9/30/2026
- Casey Clark, Citizen, 5/1/2025-4/30/2027
- Jake Preston Sweely, Citizen, 7/1/2025-6/30/2027
- William Hannifan, Citizen, 1/1/2026-12/31/2027

- Sebastian Feitl, High School Student, 2/1/2026-12/31/2027
- Jacqueline Martin, Citizen at Large, 1/1/2024-12/31/2025

Attachments

1. 2026 Parade Route
2. GWBCC Press Release for 2026 Parade
3. 2026 Wreath-Laying Ceremony Program
4. March 2026 Newsletter of the George Washington Chapter, Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution

Legislative Accomplishments

The Alexandria City Council approved a Proclamation recognizing the month of February as George Washington Birthday Celebration Month on February 10, 2026.

Program Accomplishments

The 2026 George Washington Birthday Parade

A two-minute video collage and photos of the Parade can be viewed on the GWBCC home page at www.washingtonbirthday.com.

As in 2025, the February 14, 2026 parade was held on the Saturday before the traditional day of Monday, the City holiday, because of the escalated costs of security personnel working on a City holiday under the Alexandria Police Department's recent collective bargaining agreement.

Due to Market Square construction, the parade followed a new, shorter route to the west of Market Square, with a Start Point at St. Asaph and Wolfe Streets and an End Point at Duke and Pitt Streets (see Attachment). The route was four blocks shorter than in previous years.

A mandatory parade registration fee of \$75 was charged, with a \$125 fee for those units registering after January 14, 2026.

The 2026 Parade theme was *Virginia's Son ~ America's Founding Father*, in honor of George Washington's leading role in the founding of the country during its 250th Anniversary.

The Parade Grand Marshals were Ginnie Sebastian Storage, National President General of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and Michael J. Elston, National President General of the Sons of the American Revolution.

The weather on Parade Day was sunny with temperatures in the high 50s, creating a pleasant atmosphere for parade participants and spectators alike. Approximately 1,200 individuals marched in the parade, which included community groups, fraternal organizations, local merchants, youth groups, performance groups, the U.S. Army Old Guard Fifes and Drums, the Washington Commanders Marching Band, the Washington Nationals' Racing Presidents George and Tom, the Marquis de Lafayette, Abraham Lincoln, and, of course, George and Martha Washington.

A panel of judges representing segments of the Alexandria community presented awards in the categories of Semiquincentennial Chairman's Award (Grand Prize), Antique & Classic Vehicles, Bands & Corps, Community Spirit, Floats, Historical Units, Honor Guards & Color Guards, Spirit of George Washington, and Youth Groups. First place award winners were:

- **Semiquincentennial Chairman's Award (Grand Prize):** George Washington Chapter, Virginia SAR, Sons of the American Revolution
- **Antique & Classic Vehicles:** 1932 Light Eight Series 900 Packard Convertible, owned by Bob Montague
- **Band & Corps:** U.S. Army Old Guard Fifes & Drums, presented by George Washington Chapter, Virginia SAR, Sons of the American Revolution
- **Community Spirit:** Christ Church
- **Floats:** Rooftop Chimney Sweeps
- **Historical Units:** First Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line
- **Honor Guards & Color Guards:** Alexandria Combined Public Safety Honor Guard
- **Spirit of George Washington:** American Friends of Lafayette
- **Youth Groups:** American Heritage Girls Troop 0325

Sponsors of the parade included:

- **Gold Sponsors**—Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), George Washington Chapter; Fraternity Order of Eagles, Alva 871; Hotel AKA Alexandria; *The Zebra Press*
- **Washington Commanders Marching Band Sponsor**—The Maestro Dokken Fan Club
- **Silver Sponsors**—Wegmans
- **Cherry Challenge Sponsor**—George Washington's Mount Vernon
- **Bronze Sponsors**—American Legion Post 24; Friendship Fire Veterans Engine Association; Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society; George Washington Masonic National Memorial; Kate Waller Barrett Chapter, NSDAR; Kathleen Casey; Patrick Wilson; and the Old Dominion Boat Club Foundation
- **George Washington's Preferred Inn**—Duvall House
- **Supporting Sponsors**—Scot and Vickie Bryant; Exterior Medics; GEICO; King Street Souvenirs; Martha Washington Chapter No. 42, Order of The Eastern Star; and McLaughlin Ryder Investments, Inc.
- **Hunt for Washington Sponsor**—Lafayette College
- **Parade Donors**—Dr. Elisha Dick Chapter, NSDAR; Colin and Ashley Eilts; Janet Barnett; Jeanne and Gerry Frank, in honor of Sue Johnson; John Alexander Chapter, NSDAR; Leia Pankovich; Lynn Schrier-Behler; and The Virginia Daughters of the American Revolution.
- **In-Kind Donors**—Alexandria Radio Club; Jackson Group Media



Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution

On Parade Day, the George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee, with the support of the Kate Waller Barrett Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) and the George Washington Chapter, Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution, hosted a 30-minute wreath-laying ceremony in the historic burial ground of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House.

This year's ceremony was especially significant as it commemorated the nation's approaching 250th anniversary. We were honored to welcome two distinguished guest speakers: Michael Elston, President General of the Sons of the American Revolution, and Ginnie Storage, President General of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

The annual ceremony honors the memory of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution, who is buried at the Meeting House, as well as the many Revolutionary War veterans laid to rest in the historic cemetery. The event is free and open to the public, with no reservation required.

Approximately 100 members of the community and representatives of numerous lineage organizations attended the ceremony—the largest turnout in recent memory. Wreaths from 16 lineage organizations were placed in front of the Tomb. Before and after the program, volunteers from the Old Presbyterian Meeting House offered guided tours of the historic church.

The ceremony opened with the Color Guard of the Sons of the American Revolution, followed by welcoming remarks from the President of the George Washington Chapter, VSSAR, and the Regent of the Kate Waller Barrett Chapter, NSDAR.

Also participating were historical reenactors portraying General George Washington and Martha Washington. Following the ceremony, they joined attendees in a solemn procession to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution, where each participant placed a rose in tribute.

Adding to the ceremony's historical significance, the Historian of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House tolled the church bell, which was cast using metal from the original bell that rang in 1799 to announce the death of General George Washington.



Post-Parade Reception & Awards Ceremony at Hotel AKA of Alexandria

The Hotel AKA of Alexandria, a Parade Gold Sponsor, hosted a post-parade reception and awards ceremony for parade unit leaders, parade sponsors/donors, parade volunteers, and city/community officials at the conclusion of the parade. George and Martha Washington joined the festivities to thank all who made the 2026 George Washington Birthday Parade a success.



2026 George Washington Birthnight Ball

On the evening of Parade Day, over 60 guests gathered at Gadsby's Tavern Museum for the annual Birthnight Dinner in honor of George Washington's birthday. The evening included General Washington, portrayed by Brian Hilton. In honor of the 2026 Washington Birthday parade theme "Virginia's Son ~ America's Founding Father," Edward Lengel, Historian and George Washington Scholar, spoke about Washington's leadership at the "Ten Crucial Days," including the battles of Trenton and Princeton, 1776-1777. Lengel appeared on the Ken Burns documentary, "The American Revolution".

An Intimate Reception with General Washington

Approximately 30 George Washington Birthday Celebration supporters joined General Washington at the historic Duvall House on November 15, 2026, where he was celebrated by leading Alexandrians when he returned to Mount Vernon at the end of the Revolutionary War. The General shared his most

memorable experiences about the War and answered questions from the attendees. Proceeds from the event were used to support the Parade.



2026 Restaurant Cherry Challenge

Alexandria's "Cherry Challenge" culinary contest ran from January 27 through February 10, 2026, and included 20+ restaurants across the city competing to win by crafting their choice of a cherry-oriented appetizer, entrée, beverage, or dessert.

Diners (dine-in and take-out) received QR codes to vote electronically for their favorite cherry entries based on three criteria: taste, presentation, and creativity. Diners rated each item from one to three cherries for a maximum score of 9 on each ballot. Point totals for each dish are divided by the number of ballots to get the average score. The highest average in each category wins.

This year's #GWCherryChallenge participant list included a.Lounge+Bar at Hotel AKA Alexandria, Augie's Mussel House & Beer Garden, Bastille Brasserie & Bar, Buzz Bakeshop, Chadwicks, Cooper Mill, Dishes of India, Don Taco, Elaine's, Fish Market Restaurant, Frankie's Kitchen & Cocktail Bar, HomeGrown Kitchen, Julia's on the Potomac, Junction Bistro & Baker, Kiwi Kuisine LLC, Mason Social, , Murphy's Grand Irish Pub, Rocklands Barbeque and Grilling Company, Taqueria Poblano, The Haven, The Light Horse Restaurant, The People's Drug, Trademark, Union Sandwich Company, Urbano 116, Vaso's Mediterranean Bistro, Virtue Feed and Grain, and Whiskey & Oyster.

The winners of the 2026 #GWCherryChallenge were:



Hunt for Washington

The annual Hunt for Washington is a fun and educational game in which individuals and families download Clue Sheets with questions about locations associated with George Washington, and walk through Old Town Alexandria on the day/time of their choosing during the month of February to uncover the clues. Participants could submit their completed Clue Sheets to be placed in a Prize Drawing.



George Washington Masonic National Memorial Events

The Masonic fraternity continued its longstanding participation in Alexandria's celebration of George Washington's birthday during 2026. As George Washington was both a prominent Alexandria citizen and an active Freemason, the local Masonic community has maintained a close connection with the City's annual observances honoring his life and legacy.

Brethren from Alexandria-area Masonic lodges participated in the George Washington Birthday Parade on Saturday, February 14. The participation of local Freemasons continued a long tradition of the fraternity taking part in Alexandria's public celebration of Brother Washington.

The George Washington Masonic National Memorial also hosted several events during February in connection with Washington's birthday and the broader America250 commemoration.

On Thursday, February 5, national officers and leaders of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) visited the Memorial to lay a wreath at the statue of George Washington. The delegation included President General Ginnie Sebastian Storage, First Vice President General Kathryn Walker West, and Chaplain General Mernie Sams Crane, along with other national and regional DAR leaders. During their visit, the delegation toured the Memorial and viewed its exhibits. The visit provided another opportunity during the America250 commemorative year to honor Washington and highlight the Memorial's role as a national site of remembrance and education.

Later in the month, the Memorial hosted its annual Washington Birthday weekend. On February 21, the Memorial presented the George Washington Symposium, bringing together historians and members of the public for presentations examining Washington, Alexandria, and the Revolutionary era.

The program featured Eleanor Breen, City Archaeologist for the City of Alexandria, who presented "Beneath the Revolution: What Archaeology Reveals About Alexandria and the War for Independence." Shelby Chandler, Superintendent of the James Monroe Birthplace for the James Monroe Memorial Foundation, presented "The Relationship between George Washington and James Monroe." The

symposium concluded with a ceremony marking the grand reopening of the Memorial's Masonic Research Library.

That evening, the Memorial hosted its annual George Washington Gala Reception, Banquet, and Live Auction. The sold-out event welcomed Freemasons, supporters of the Memorial, and guests from across the country for an evening commemorating Washington's birthday and supporting the mission of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. The weekend's activities also included a reception on February 20 for members of the George Washington Memorial Society.



George Washington Chapter, Virginia SAR - Sons of the American Revolution

The George Washington Chapter, Virginia SAR was honored when the City of Alexandria's George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee named Michael J. Elston, President General of the national Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) organization (est. 1889) as a 2026 Parade Grand Marshal, alongside Ginnie Sebastian Storage, President General of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR).

The U.S. Army Old Guard Fife & Drum Corps led our parade unit with distinction. Our performance in the Parade was honored with an unexpected distinction: the parade judges awarded our chapter the Grand Prize: the inaugural "Semiquincentennial Chairman's Award" in honor of the nation's 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, to be presented annually to the best overall parade entry.

George Washington Chapter members along with compatriots from additional Virginia SAR chapters met Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) members at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House Churchyard Burial Ground in Old Town Alexandria on Parade Day to celebrate and pay their respects to the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution. National leadership from SAR and DAR were on hand as well as Virginia state leadership from both organizations along with leadership from the Virginia state Children of the American Revolution (C.A.R.).

