



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Early Construction of the Masonic Memorial

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Image: Construction of the memorial in 1923. Photo, Library of Congress.

In 1910, Masonic leaders created the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association to build a memorial to Washington that would also house artifacts relating to his life and his connection with the Masons. Five years later, the association announced it had selected Shuter's Hill as the site for a grand memorial.

Groundbreaking occurred on June 5, 1922, with the association president and Charles H. Callahan, Past Master of Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22, turning the first dirt. The street in front of the memorial would later be named Callahan Drive in honor of his contribution.

Soon, steam shovels were digging the foundation, excavating earth which was hauled away by mule-drawn wagons. Mule power also helped create the impressive terracing, moving dirt by pulling large, lipped spades with wooden handles guided by workers.

So construction materials could be more easily transported to the site, a wide road to the top was built. Some construction materials, including the granite columns from New Hampshire, came by train into Union Station, which is one of the two long buildings visible in the left background of this photograph. The other long building is the Emerson Steam Pump Company, and to the right, an arch bridge along Duke Street crossing the railroad tracks is visible.

The memorial cornerstone was dedicated on November 1, 1923, when this photograph was taken, with President Calvin Coolidge and thousands of spectators looking on. A container holding copies of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, silver dimes, books and other items was placed under the cornerstone.





**Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

“Out of the Attic” is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as “Marking Time” and explored Alexandria’s history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into “Out of the Attic” and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.