

Alexandria's Washington Masonic Memorial named a national landmark

The George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Alexandria has been designated one of four new national historic landmarks, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis announced Tuesday (8/4/15).



The neoclassical tower, built on a hill overlooking Old Town Alexandria, is “among the most architecturally significant projects to honor George Washington and one of the boldest private efforts to memorialize him,” the Park Service said in an announcement.

The memorial, a well-known Alexandria landmark, was built to honor Washington, a charter member of the Alexandria Freemasons lodge. The structure was built between 1922 and 1970 on a site once nominated by Thomas Jefferson as a possible location for the nation’s capital, according to the memorial’s Web site. The exterior was completed in 1932, and the interior was finished in 1970.



Only about 2,500 sites are designated as national historic landmarks, said Park Service spokeswoman Victoria Stauffenberg. She said one of the reasons the masonic memorial was designated was “to connect people with the history in their own back yard.”

The designation comes on the 262nd anniversary of the day that Washington was made a master mason, said Shawn Eyer, a spokesman for the memorial.

The building was designed by Harvey Wiley Corbett, a champion of skyscrapers and modernism. “The architecture of the building makes such a powerful statement that people are very curious,” Eyer said. “The building itself was meant to be a statement — and the primary statement is to express our esteem for George Washington.”

Alexandria claims Washington as a hometown hero, citing the city’s proximity to his home at Mount Vernon and his ownership of a townhouse at 508 Cameron St.

Washington drilled troops for the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War at what is now Market Square in Alexandria, dined at Gadsby’s Tavern and worshiped at Christ Church.

Although being awarded a historic designation makes sites eligible for government preservation grants, Eyer said the privately owned memorial has no intention of applying for financial assistance.



The other national historic landmarks named on Tuesday are the First Peoples Buffalo Jump in Cascade County, Mont., the oldest, largest and best-preserved bison cliff jump in North America; Detroit's Lafayette Park, one of the earliest and most complete urban renewal projects of the 20th century; and Red Rocks Park and Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps Camp in Jefferson County, Colo.

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