

**“THE SECRET AFRICAN CITY”: ANCIENT EGYPTIAN’S INFLUENCES  
ON  
WASHINGTON, D.C.’S PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup>  
AND 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

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Master of Professional Studies in Africana Studies

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

“The Secret African City” is a project that fulfills both my academic and personal interests. Throughout American history, ancient Egyptian’s art and architectural concepts have served as a blueprint for the development of state capitols, one in particular being Washington, D.C. where monumental constructions have occupied its city streets devoid of any direct recognition of their African origins. Traditionally, people of African descent among other Americans were not aware of African and more specifically Egyptian contributions to Western Civilization in general; hence, many have not made the correlation between D.C.’s architecture and artifacts such as the Washington Monument, the U.S. capitol, and/or the House of the Temple on one hand, and African influences or origins on the other. One of the most significant reasons for such absences and omissions is based on the long practice of portraying Egypt as separate from the African continent. Although architecture is the focus of this thesis, the pattern of silence/omission is consistent with the contributions of people of African descent in the United States in relationship to the development of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

By researching the works of scholars such as David Ovason, James Steven Curl, Ivan Van Sertima, Anthony Browder, and Martin Bernal among others an examination has been done to decode as well as unveil the significance of the ancient Egyptian inspired structural designs within Washington, D.C. As a result, the misconceptions that the edifices of the District of Columbia were initiated on behalf of the nation’s “forefathers” appear to have different origins and roots. Also, the honorary legacy of President George Washington is investigated to demonstrate the ways in which his position of power as the U.S. president and also, his association

with Freemasonry as a Master Mason influenced the evolution and construction of the U.S. Capitol and the planning of the city of Washington, D.C.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Tenisha Senora Howard was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey. Faith Howard, her mother, gave birth to her on September 9 in the year 1981. From a very young age the reverence of God and value of spirituality were instilled in Tenisha. Tenisha's fervent desire and love for both can be seen by her membership and continual participation with St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. At the age of 8, she became involved in an assortment of activities, such as the Youth Choir, Junior Usher Board, Young People's Division and her church's liturgical dance group.

Not only did Tenisha's mother encourage her to value and love both God and spirituality, she also implanted her with the highest regard and utmost respect for education and community service as can be seen by the several educational opportunities afforded to her and her involvement in the community.

In addition to being a student in the Essex County Public School System in New Jersey, Tenisha was enrolled in the following enrichment programs: Stevens Institute of Technology Upward Bound Program, New Jersey Institute of Technology's PACE Program, and the Lawyer Explorer's Group. These opportunities prepared her to handle the upcoming challenges in her pursuit of a quality education. In her senior year at University High School, Tenisha received 12 institutional acceptances; in the end she chose to go with her first choice Rutgers University-Douglass College in New Brunswick, New Jersey. While attending Rutgers Tenisha was involved in a number of programs such as Douglass College's Equal Opportunity Funding (EOF) Program, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, a Residence Counselor for the Upward Bound and EOF Program, a Residence Assistant for Residence Life, Team Leader of the Referendum for the

Targum Newspaper, Head Clerk for the Douglass Alumnae Annual Fund, an Extern for the Externship Program, and a Campus Representative for the NAACP.

Tenisha successfully completed her undergraduate studies at Rutgers University, Douglass College with the graduating class of 2005. Graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in both Africana Studies and Women and Gender Studies, Tenisha's educational career and also tenacity granted her even more rewards. Tenisha's name can be found on the Dean's List several times and she was the recipient of many awards and scholarships such as the Mildred R. Groder Scholarship, Douglass Residence Life Certificate of Appreciation, and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program Certificate of Completion. Her dedication and love for education inspired her to graduate with high honors in Africana Studies and honors in Women and Gender Studies.

Tenisha's favorite hobbies are singing and writing poetry. She has shared some of her work with several communities through submissions to poetry slams. In the near future, she plans to publish her poetry; thereby, sharing her gift of the written and spoken word with the world. Lastly, she has a "passion for fashion." Tenisha absolutely loves fashion and interior decorating because it allows her to freely express herself. She loves creating new styles and designing the homes of her family members and friends. In addition, to pursuing her doctorate she aspires to eventually open up her own boutique with a special collection of vintage and couture clothing and also, antique furnishings.

In conclusion, it is with the guidance, love, faith and support of her mother and Gammie that she was raised to achieve all that her heart desires; her strength, pride, and motivation stems from them. It is due to these Howard women that she too stands

tall and self-assured, knowing that “whatever is meant for her, will be for her.”<sup>1</sup> Recently, Tenisha completed her 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of doctoral work at Michigan State University however; she is also looking forward to pursuing a degree in Fashion Design and Interior Decorating. I hope that this autobiographical sketch paints a colorful picture of who Tenisha Senora Howard was, is, and will become because she firmly believes that “NOW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen” (Hebrew 11:1).

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<sup>1</sup> Her mother, Faith Howard always says this to her when she doubts herself. She reminds her that “self-doubt is your own worse enemy because; you defeat yourself before even trying.”

This work is dedicated to

The “Love of My Life,” my Gammie Ms. Cynthia Howard

My strong-willed mother, “My Buddy” Ms. Faith Howard

“The Gift,” my baby sister Ms. Justine “Tae” Howard-Stevenson

My mentors Dr. Muriel Grimmatt-Ray, Dr. Michelle Shostack, and Mr. Don Viapree

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The Department of Africana Studies at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

Specially, Dr. Gayle Tate, Dr. Regina Jennings and Dr. John Mtembezi Inniss

*“The race is not given  
to the swift nor to the strong  
but to the one that endures until the end.”*

~ Lyrics from Rev. Milton Brunson’s “For the Good of Them.”



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## INTRODUCTION

It must be remembered that the notion that all magic, all knowledge, all skills, and all basic architectural wisdom came from Egypt was powerful, and much intellectual effort was expended on trying to reveal the mysteries of Egypt by deciphering hieroglyphs. Egyptian religion, architecture, and sculpture took on a new significance as products of a great culture from which all skills had come: the craft had come from Egypt, Hermes had invented principles of geometry essential to architecture, and stone buildings of Egypt became symbols of excellence and causes for wonder in European minds.<sup>2</sup>

--James Stevens Curl

The purpose of this introduction is to provide a summary of the primary focus and also the theme of this thesis. The thesis itself is a critical examination of the architectural history of the District of Columbia as it pertains to ancient Egyptian influences. It also provides the major theoretical concerns of the study and the methodological approach pertaining to the researching and the writing of this thesis. Lastly, it entails a summary of all the chapters within this research project. The research for this thesis which includes scanty published works on the history and evolution of Washington, D.C., clearly attests to those ancient Egyptian influences on the architectural monuments of Washington, D.C. as well as on the planning and the building of the United States capital, which is the seat of the U.S. federal government. It will be shown that these influences derived from ancient Egypt via European art, architecture, and/or through Masonic ideas which have exerted a great impact on American ruling elites of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in particular, the Freemasons. Therefore, this proposed thesis is an exploration into the architectural history, mapping, and planning of Washington D.C. as they pertain to the above-mentioned influences. This project is also a means to highlight the historical impact of the great

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<sup>2</sup> James Steven Curl. *The Egyptian Revival* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 90-91.

works of ancient Egypt and how its legacy became the blueprint of America's national capital, Washington, D.C.

Throughout American history, monumental constructions influenced by ideas borrowed from ancient Egypt have adorned major cities without any recognition as to their origins or influences; thus, this legacy has rarely been acknowledged and has remained hidden from public knowledge or understanding. It is the task of this thesis to show how the ancient Egyptian concepts and ideas have contributed to D.C.'s stately mansions and monuments as a means to reinforce positions of power and authority such as the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument. In doing this, an analysis of the architectural history pertaining to Masonic ideas among others is also explored to investigate the linkage between Washington D.C.'s city planning and architecture on the one hand to those of ancient Egypt on the other. It will also show how those influences have traveled through time.

Considering the strong influence of Masonic ideas on the American ruling elites cited above, this thesis also explores a sacred building represented of the Freemasons (the House of the Temple) and its relationship to ancient Egyptian cosmology and belief systems. In this regard, the following issues are also raised and discussed: How and why did the appropriation of ancient Egyptian ideas and architectural concepts prove to be useful? How did such a history of conspicuous influences remain hidden in plain view and for what purpose? How do such Egyptian-influenced stately and sacred buildings validate power and reinforce authority for the federal government? Ultimately, this research leads to the revealing of a hidden and often neglected layer of the District of Columbia's history. This revelation, in turn, makes pellucid why the city of Washington, D.C. is referred to in the title of this thesis as 'The Secret African City'.

## ***Methodology***

As stated earlier, a variety of primary and secondary texts were consulted to provide a general summary of both the development of Washington, D.C. and the significance of the art and architecture of its stately mansions and monuments, all of which include representations of ancient Egyptian influences. To understand how these replicated designs of ancient Egyptian art and architecture enforce power and agency within the District of Columbia, I conducted visual analyses to illustrate these comparisons. On October 16, 2006, I attended Anthony Browder's "Egypt on the Potomac Field Trip" in Washington, D.C. at which time I was introduced to the ancient Egyptian and Masonic influences of D.C.'s art and architecture.<sup>3</sup> During the field trip, Browder did an analysis of the sacred architecture and symbolisms within the District of Columbia: He highlighted the significance of the Washington Monument, explained the spiritual and astronomical significance of 16th Street (where the House of the Temple is located), gave a symbolic interpretation of numbers (as they related to D.C.'s city streets of architectural designs), and lastly, reflected upon the Masonic influences of Washington, D.C.'s city planning and architectural designs. Not only did he provide a visual interpretation, but he also reflected upon his research pertaining to the relationship of the art and architectural concepts of ancient Egypt and the U.S. capital which are referenced in his books: *Egypt on the Potomac*, *The Browder Files*, and the *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*.

Upon my next visit to the federal city, I had the opportunity to examine two of the three buildings in my case study (see Chapter 3): the House of the Temple and the Washington Monument. At the House of the Temple, I was taken on a full-length tour

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<sup>3</sup> "Tony Browder is one of the latest of a number of messengers attempting to tell the story of the Nile Valley contribution to civilization. [...]. He is both a teacher and a learner." See Anthony Browder. *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization* (Washington, D.C.: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 11.

(approximately an hour and a half) of the interior layout of the Masonic Temple. This tour assisted me in making the comparisons between the Masonic and ancient Egyptian art and architectural ideas. (These details will be discussed further in Chapter 3). The following day, I rode the elevator to the top of the Washington Monument (while, attempting to take quick snap-shots of the Masonry stones embedded in the walls of the Monument). *The Washington Monument: It Stands for All* by Thomas B. Allen provided an historical overview of the Washington Monument and its significance to George Washington's legacy as a U.S. president and his association with Freemasonry.

After visiting the Washington, D.C. area, I became so engrossed in the art and architectural features within the federal city that I began to search for other relationships to those of ancient Egyptian structures. These findings allowed me to examine specific details of the federal city's buildings, especially those I was unable to visit due to time constraints such as the U.S. Capitol building. As a result, I began a content analysis of pictures (which I found on various websites and within preliminary sources) of the stately mansions and monumental edifices of the District of Columbia which led to the unveiling of the ancient Egyptian influenced art and architectural concepts.

### ***Literature Review***

Throughout history questions have been raised in relation to the evolution of the Egyptian civilization, but rarely has anyone inquired about the value of these queries. In Ivan Van Sertima's *Egypt of Africa*, he questions the usefulness of the inquiry, "Were the Ancient Egyptians Black or White?" Van Sertima claims this question is inappropriately asked in that it draws attention to race rather than to the relevant historical facts of ancient Egypt's evolution. Therefore, he poses the question in two significant parts. The first asks who populated ancient Egypt before the

invasion of the Persians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs? Was Egypt in fact predominantly inhabited by the Africans (or *Africoïds*)? Secondly, he asks if any aspects of ancient Egyptian civilization (i.e. their language, their concept of divine kingship, their writing system, their architectural structures, and their symbols) existed in Europe and/or Asia before they emerged in Egypt? He also claims the reasoning behind asking the initial question is an attempt to separate the African linkage to Egypt. It is with this historical observation that Van Sertima inquires whether or not the achievements of Europe and/or Asia would be considered as if it were discovered that many of these achievements were based, at least in part, on earlier discoveries by ancient Egyptians, an indigenous people of Africa.

Ivan Van Sertima's line of inquiry was helpful because it not only asks precise questions but also then re-examines the posed questions through a wider lens. As a result, Van Sertima's research assisted me in analyzing my thesis topic and helped me to develop stronger arguments when addressing the historically debated question: Were the creators of the ancient Egyptian civilization European (Greeks and/or Romans) or of African descent?

Similarly, George G. M. James' *Stolen Legacy* examines the misrepresentation of the African Continent and its people thereby, disproving "the Western perspective that the African continent has made no contribution because her people [were] backward and low in intelligence and culture."<sup>4</sup> James demonstrates how European scholars such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle adopted the ancient Egyptian philosophies into their own culture to create a Europeanized empire by falsely portraying themselves as the "forefathers" all the while denying that that the progenitors of many of the ideas and concepts in Greco-Roman philosophy were

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<sup>4</sup> George G.M. James, *Stolen Legacy* (London: African American Images, 2001), 154.

ancient Egyptians of African descent. This book thus brings forth a clear understanding of the tactics used to undermine and ultimately distort the African image of ancient Egypt through the imperialistic acts imposed by the ancient Greeks (and the Romans). This historical evidence thus proves that the ancient Egyptians were not only the original Founding Fathers of philosophies but that they were of African descent as well.

Another book that examines the ancient Egyptians interaction with and influences on the Greeks and Romans is Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*. Bernal observes the Greeks and Romans initial recognition of the ancient Egyptians as their antecedents. It is this very identification that materializes their interest of all things Egyptian especially the ancient Egyptian belief systems. He also addresses the rise of colonization as being the primal force which causes the shifting of the two paradigms. To illustrate this modification Bernal does a comparative analysis of these paradigms which he labels as the 'Ancient' and the 'Aryan' models. Within in the Ancient Model, the Greeks and Romans openly acknowledged and also admired the contributions of the ancient Egyptians in areas such as art, architecture, chemistry and geometry. However, the shifting in paradigms is the result of scientific racism. This ideological strategy is formulated and repeatedly exercised as a means to establish and maintain separatist-imperialistic gains for Europeans; thus permitting the Greeks and the Romans an opportunity to reposition themselves from students to imperials of the ancient Egyptians and their land.

Bernal's research gives an historic outline of the antiquity of Egypt and other ancient kingdoms; this result in a detailed image of the possibilities that took place during the earliest periods of time. He accomplishes this by examining an array of cultures. His research also contributes suggestive responses to questions such as: What



led to the disruption of ancient Egypt's civilization, who and what caused these damages, and finally, what happened to all that they had created?

In response to the various inquiries, James Stevens Curl's *The Egyptian Revival* is helpful in reflecting upon the 19<sup>th</sup> century's rise of Egyptology and how it was specifically used to underestimate the contributions of ancient Egyptians and their civilization. His work details the "important aspects of Egyptian religion [and how it was...] absorbed into Greco-Roman culture and later into European civilization as a whole," thereby, proving similar to George G.W. James' perspective that the Greeks and Romans adopted the Egyptians way of life to produce their own philosophies."<sup>5</sup> As a result, Curl brilliantly shows how the Western perspective continues to undermine Africans by sustaining the notion that their descents are incapable of developing and maintaining such a rich legacy; thereby refuting that Africans had any involvement with the birthing of societies; especially, the Greeks and Romans. Lastly, Curl disproves this notion by examining and illustrating the resemblances of the ancient Egyptian and Greco-Roman culture to prove that the structures of art and architectural concepts of the West actually derived from ancient Egypt and not Europe.

To address the denial of the African origins of Egyptian civilization and its original inhabitants as producers of some of the world's most exquisite monumental designs. Anthony Browder's *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization* elaborates upon this factor by illustrating the profoundness of the *Ipet-Isut* (the Temple of Karnak) and the *Shemayit-Ipet* (the Temple of Luxor). In his essay titled, "The Great Temples of Waset," he captures the significant purpose of Egyptian art and architecture. He illustrates the correlation between the spiritual and material worlds and also, the

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<sup>5</sup> Curl, xxvi.

purpose of the temples serving as learning institutions and sacred dwellings for spiritual worship. With a sketch, Browder examines the architectural layout of the Luxor Temple and compares it to the anatomical structure of the human body. He states, “The open courtyard represents the legs; the hypostyle hall represents the thighs; the peristyle court represents the abdomen and the inner temple represents the head.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, this shows how the temple and the human body are joined as one which demonstrates the significance of the Egyptian temples.

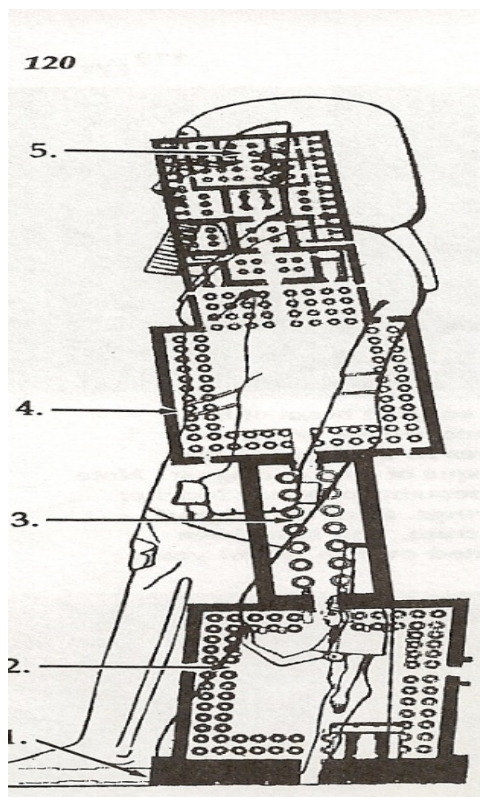


Figure 1: In the temple, one undergoes levels of transformation to become a god-like figure in the mortal world.

Browder’s essay takes an interesting approach by uniting spirituality and physicality. He demonstrates how the edifices were produced by skilled Masons to function as spiritual pathways for the afterlife. By incorporating Browder’s research

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<sup>6</sup> Browder, *Nile Valley*; 120.

within my thesis, I was able to show the relationship between the ancient Egyptian temples and the Masonic lodge (the House of the Temple) of the District of Columbia. By exploring and illustrating the adoption of ancient Egyptian belief systems by the Freemasons, the necessity of these doctrines which they refer to as rites and rituals are understood to have been purposely used to be incorporated into the landscaping and structural designs of the District of Columbia. This evidence thus proves that the stately mansions and monumental constructions of the federal city were influenced by ancient Egyptian concepts.

The research found within Helen Nicolay's *Our Capitol on the Potomac* traces the history of Washington, D.C.'s development while detailing the on-going debates of the federal city's location. Among the issues raised were whether or not the US capital should reside in an established state or relocate to a virgin land space such as the Potomac area. In addition, she reflects upon the drawing competitions as a means to find a superior architectural construction for the U.S. Capitol and its winning architect, Dr. William Thornton. Lastly, she demonstrates the ceremonial bricklaying of the cornerstone and the inclusion of the processions carried out by the Freemasons which are symbolically embedded in D.C.'s architecture.

As earlier noted, the blueprints of D.C.'s buildings have derived from the art and architectural influences of ancient Egyptian temples and monuments. David Ovason's *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation's Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.* details how ancient Egyptian temples served a dual function through physical and spiritual connections and how these elements of the ancient Egyptian belief systems fascinated the Europeans and eventually led to their interest in adopting the doctrines that later birthed Greek and Roman history and the organization of Freemasonry. By including this information, connections of George Washington's affiliation with Freemasonry are introduced; thus, detailing the how and

why “Egypt [is] on the Potomac.” Ovason provides historical and visual analyses of the cosmological symbolisms within the art and architecture in the District of Columbia and its ancient Egyptian roots.

Finally, in *The Washington Monument: It Stands for All* Thomas B. Allen illustrates the historical events which led up to the Washington Monument’s construction while detailing its purpose and the “stop and go planning” of its development. This book outlines President George Washington’s legacy as a U.S. General, President of the United States, and Master Mason; thereby, revealing the significance of an Egyptian obelisk being the “chosen” artifact to memorialize and celebrate his accomplishment as the “Founding Father.” Also, Allen captures the specific interior and exterior layout of the monument, detailing its different stones; especially, the donated one’s from national and international Masonic lodges which will be demonstrated within the illustration section of this research project.

### ***Outline of Chapters***

The initial chapter of this thesis introduces Martin Bernal’s ‘Ancient’ and ‘Aryan’ models and how the two distinctively have shaped the debate on the origin of art and architectural conceptions throughout the modern worlds of European and American societies by way of Greco-Roman revivals and appropriations. The second chapter details the historical planning and mapping of Washington, D.C.’s landscape while demonstrating President George Washington’s affiliation as a Freemason; thus, illustrating the relationship between the power of the state and its architectural structures. The third chapter looks at the use of cosmology and the belief systems of ancient Egypt and how it relates to the monumental constructions in the District of Columbia. Lastly, the concluding chapter encompasses all of the previously stated materials and then presents the importance of this research.

Chapter One, *The West and the Allure of Egypt: Appropriation or Fascination* delves into the discovery of ancient Egyptian civilization, the invasions of Egypt, *Egyptomania* and the Masonry ideas of Europe; thereby, explaining the rationale of Washington, D.C.'s planning and architectural conceptions in two ways. First, through the Masonry ideas of D.C.'s city planners and architects; all of which share membership as Freemasons (specifically, President George Washington) and secondly, through the incorporation of Europe via Greco-Roman revival of architecture and monuments. Chapter Two, *The Blueprint of the City of Secrets: Washington, D.C.'s History of Planning and Conceptions* gives an historical overview of the city planning of D.C. while observing the works of its contributor's namely President George Washington, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Andrew Ellicott, and Benjamin Banneker. It is through their association as Freemasons that Washington, D.C. is proven to have been mapped parallel to the constellations of the stars---a strategy adopted from ancient Egyptian influences. It is within these abovementioned elements that the stately mansions and monuments of D.C. are produced. As a result, these edifices can be viewed as emulated structures of antiquity as a means to present a newly developed capital (Washington, D.C.) superior to the previous and proceeding nation states.

The third chapter, *Egyptian Ideas, Power, Space and Stately Mansions; Three Case Studies* specifically focuses on three buildings the U.S. Capitol, the Washington Monument, and the House of the Temple. This section illustrates the correlation between the architectural influences of ancient Egypt in relation to the stately mansions and Masonic temple in Washington, D.C. The works of architect and Freemason, Robert Mills is displayed as a means to illustrate the Washington Monument resemblance to ancient Egyptian obelisks and its significance in relation to President Washington's positions as a Freemason and governmental official. It is

through the illustration of cosmological and Masonic resources that an understanding of the similarities of ancient Egyptian temples and Freemasonry lodges can be seen.

**CHAPTER 1:**  
**THE WEST AND THE ALLURE OF EGYPT: APPROPRIATION OR**  
**INSPIRATION?**

It is clear that Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign, and the exact archaeological surveys of buildings carried out as part of that Campaign, began the serious, scholarly side of the Revival, as well as focusing attention on Egypt in a scientific rather than a speculative, manner. With the later unraveling of hieroglyphs began more than a Revival: Egyptomania had arrived.<sup>7</sup>

--- James Steven Curl

[The Greeks] drew upon the Land of the Blacks for architectural designs, city planning, sculpture, science and even religion. These they reshaped and made Greek. [...]. [The Greeks had] the readiness to borrow from other peoples [...], to [... reshape or make] over to suit's one own ideals and needs.<sup>8</sup>

---Chancellor Williams

Appropriation claims and redefines a built environment, ultimately instilling in it a new sense of place and memory, defying its former past by adopting new culture and social aspects.<sup>9</sup>

--- Bradford Grant

Although Europe continues to be recognized as the dominant influence on the United States' art and architecture, historical evidence shows that many ideas or sources from Asia and Africa may also be credited in such areas. In particular, this thesis examines the contributions of ancient Egypt. It is through the scholarly works of researchers, such as Martin Bernal, Cheikh Anta Diop, James Curl, George James

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<sup>7</sup> James Stevens Curl, *The Egyptian Revival* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 205.

<sup>8</sup> Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilization* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1987), 296.

<sup>9</sup> Bradford Grant, *Sites of Memory: Perspective on Architecture and Race*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Craig Barton (New York, NY Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 109.

and John West, that Egypt has been unmistakably proven to have exerted great influences that have shaped the evolution and developments of European societies since the rise of the nation states of Greece and Rome. As a result, this chapter investigates and discusses the ways in which ancient Egyptian ideas and accomplishments in all fields of art, architecture, and belief systems were adopted through appropriations and revivals starting with the ancient Greeks and Romans.

The evolution of the ancient Egyptian civilization is first discussed in order to illustrate that their existence predates the rise of the Greek and Roman empires. Through subsequent contact with European empires, Egyptian art and architecture became diffused and influential to European cultures thus, Egypt had a long history of impact on Greek and Roman civilizations, which began in the ancient era and continued through the Greek and Roman revivals in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Crucial here is how European art, architecture, and Masonic ideas have filtered into the United States by various means, in particular, through the Masonic relationships of President George Washington and his affiliates Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Andrew Ellicott, and Benjamin Banneker (as expressed in chapter 2). Therefore, we can say that Egyptian influences have traveled through Europe via Greco-Roman revival of architecture and monuments and have been adopted and appropriated by Americans. This path announces that the derivatives of the colossal architectural structures that adorn the city streets of the United States capital (in particular, the House of the Temple and its twin-like sphinxes, the Capitol and also, the Washington Monument all, (Chapter 3) are in fact of Egyptian influence.

### ***Debates: Revisiting Egyptian and European Civilization***

To understand the history of the relationship between Egypt and Europe, it is best to refer to Martin Bernal's 'Ancient' and 'Aryan' models. First, Bernal coined the term, 'Ancient Model' to illustrate how Classical Greece initially referenced Egypt as



most influential in shaping its civilization. Basil Davidson acknowledges the Greeks' initial recognition of the Egyptians as most influential in ancient times, stating:

[Europe] gave full credit to the moral and intellectual achievements of Classical Greece, but it still saw these as being initially derived from Egypt. [...]. It taught that the founding beliefs of Classical Greece, like the mathematics and astronomy of Classical Greece, had for the most part come from Egypt.<sup>10</sup>

However, with the rise of a new imperialism in the 19th century, conflicting beliefs eliminated this perspective and a new one emerged which is the 'Aryan Model.'

With the rise of colonialism, the 'Ancient Model' was abandoned by those who opposed it, thus, creating what Bernal refers to as the 'Aryan Model,' which credits Greeks as the forefathers of Western civilization, Davidson states:

That Classical Greece had been the pure and original source and creator of all that was civilized in Europe: of all the arts of government and the values of freedom, of all the gods that man should worship and the teachings they should follow. These nineteenth-century proponents of racism...lose it there. [Thus,] the more the nineteenth century admired the Greeks, the less it respected their writing of their own history.<sup>11</sup>

This excerpt explains the sole purpose for creating a new model illustrating Europe's need to rewrite history as a means to position itself as the dominant culture. To recognize Egypt in such a manner would have meant to challenge Europe's seat of power. Therefore, to maintain this image of superiority, "Europeans began to [use] racism [as] the major ideological force by which the Aryan model achieved and maintained its dominance from 1850 to 1950."<sup>12</sup> Africans thus, as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, were defined throughout history books and other forms of literature as

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<sup>10</sup> Basil Davidson. "The ancient world and Africa: whose roots?" in *Egypt Revised*, (ed.) Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Davidson, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Bernal. "Race, Class and Gender in the Formation of the Aryan Model of Greek Origins" in *Unpacking Europe*, (eds.) Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, (Museum Boijmans Beuningen Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001), 31.

uncivilized and servile people who lacked a historical identity. Activist and scholar, Dr. Molefi Asante further explores these stereotypical depictions, stating:

When [westerners] spoke of Africans, they largely defined a narrow idea of a “true Negro” that usually referred to Africans from the rainforest region of the continent that had come to mean for Whites, primitive, dangerous, mysterious, and the extreme of themselves physically. To satisfy their stereotypes they took physical characteristics such as the shape of lips, the width of nose, and size of genitalia to be definitive statements about the difference between themselves and Africans. Surely the ancient Egyptians could not be Africans.<sup>13</sup>

This quote conveys strategies implemented by Europeans in order to gloss over the ‘Ancient Model’. As a result, not only were ancient Egypt’s contributions to civilization denied but also, “Egypt was neither truly African nor truly civilized. [Thus, Egypt was placed under] a categorical barrier between true Africans and true civilization.”<sup>14</sup> In countering these claims, it is necessary to trace the origin and evolution of the humanity of the ancient Egyptians. However, it is this attempt which led to the rise of the Aryan model which in turn displaced the Ancient model, eventually leading to the denial of the remarkable influences Egyptian civilization had exerted on Europe.

### ***Tracing Egyptian Humanity***

Although the origins and development of the Egyptian civilization is often debated among many researchers, historical documentation confirms that the Egyptian civilization appeared long before its European counterparts had evolved. In his publication *The Dawn of Civilization*, Sir Gaston Maspero claims that “...the Egyptians made their first appearance on the stage of history about 8,000 to 10,000

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<sup>13</sup> Molefi Asante. “Locating the Eurocentric Assumptions About History.” *Egypt Vs. Greece and the American Academy* (Chicago: African American Images, 2002), 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Unpacking Europe*, Bernal, 34.

B.C.”<sup>15</sup> However, other researchers assert that the Egyptians surfaced much later.

Another author, John Ruffles, makes the following claims in his book, *The Egyptians*:

The earliest traces of human occupation in Egypt are the palaeolithic and Mesolithic settlements [5,000 BC] on the extreme borders of the Nile Valley; they are followed by the Neolithic settlers, whose villages are known from sites in the western Delta, the Fayyum [4,500 BC] and later within the Nile Valley itself.<sup>16</sup>

Examining in greater length, Ruffle details the introduction of Egyptian script:

The individual settlements in Egypt gradually coalesced into [...] two divisions of Upper and Lower Egypt. These regions were apparently united by the military conquest of the Nile Delta by Upper Egypt c. 3000 BC. This more or less coincided with the introduction of a system of writing: thus simultaneously with the first historical documents, the period of dynastic Egypt began.<sup>17</sup>

Even though there is much confusion when determining the actual date of the rise of Egyptian dynasties, many efforts have been made to lessen this controversy. Historian and priest, Manetho<sup>18</sup> from Sebennytos created an outline of Egyptian history as a point of reference. Initially, composed of thirty dynasties, the *Aegyptica* (History of Egypt) was later divided into three major periods: the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms. However, in light of the above-mentioned information, scholarly debates

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization* (Washington, D.C.: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 62.

<sup>16</sup> John Ruffle. *The Egyptians: An Introduction to Egyptian Archaeology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ruffle, 15.

<sup>18</sup> According to Rosalie David in her book *The Ancient Egyptians*, “[Manetho] lived during the reigns of Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II. He knew both Egyptian hieroglyphs and Greek and had personal knowledge of Egyptian religious beliefs and customs. He is credited with the authorship of eight works which dealt with a range of subjects, including religious doctrines, rituals and festivals” (71). Also, author Gary Greenberg articulates “Manetho’s chronology from the First Dynasty to the last encompassed just under 5,500 years, dating the onset to sometime prior to 5,000 BCE. The presently accepted view of Egyptologists is that the First Dynasty began no earlier than about 3100 BCE, give or take 150 years, approximately two millennia shorter than that established by the Manetho sources.” See also; Gary Greenberg. *Manetho: A Study in Egyptian Chronology* (Warren Center, Pennsylvania: Shangri-La Publications, 2003-2004), 18-19.

continue, therefore, questioning whether or not the chronological orders of the dynasties are in need of modification. Nevertheless, the Manethonian<sup>19</sup> model still serves as the primary source when outlining the political divisions within Egyptian history. Regardless of the varied speculations, ancient Egypt's evolution and prosperity exceeds that of the Greeks and Romans, thus, explaining their continuous incursions onto Egyptian soil.

### ***The Results of Greek and Roman Invasions***

Although debates continue, historical research has proven that the Egyptian ideas and belief systems were adopted by European philosophers, and that Greek and Roman priests learned from their Egyptian counterparts. For example, Greeks and Romans eagerly traveled to Egypt, especially to learn Egyptian sciences and esoteric philosophies.<sup>20</sup> Browder acknowledges how the Greeks went about attaining the knowledge from Africa: "The Greeks came to Africa as students to sit at the feet of the masters, and to discover what Africans already knew."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, in *The Egyptian Revival* James Steven Curl states:

The Greeks were aware of the antiquity of the Egyptian civilization, and were impressed by its religion, buildings, and customs: even more important, however, was the awe with which Egypt was regarded, for it was seen as the repository of all ancient wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

In understanding that Egypt housed this knowledge, the Greeks befriended the Egyptians as a means to gain entry.

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<sup>19</sup> "The present practice of dividing Egyptian dynastic history *In Manetho: A Study in Egyptian Chronology* into a period of 30 or 31 dynasties, from the start of the first dynasty down to Alexander's conquest of Egypt, is known as the Manetho or Manethonian model." Greenberg, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Yosef A.A. ben-Jochannan refers to the Egyptian Mystery Systems as a study of esoteric philosophy.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Browder, *From the Browder File* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Karmic, 2000), 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, 12.

Ultimately, the Greeks and Romans subdued Egypt through military means, thus, obtaining control over the land and its people. Author of *Stolen Legacy*, George James details the Greeks' invasion tactics:

Egypt was supreme in the leadership of seeking admission into her mysteries or wisdom system. The immigration of Greeks to Egypt for the purpose of their education, began as a result of the Persian invasion (525 B.C.), and continued until the Greeks gained possession of the land and access to the Royal Library, through the conquest of Alexander the Great. Alexandria was converted into a Greek city, a centre of research and the capital of the newly created Greek empire, under the rule of Ptolemies.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. ben-Jochannan confirms this and other methods used by Greek invaders, in this following passage:

Aristotle, for example, not only received his education in Egypt, he confiscated (stole) entire libraries of the works belonging to the Africans' of Egypt Mysteries System when he entered Egypt with Alexander "the Great" as conquerors in 332 B.C.E. Aristotle even went to the extent of placing his name on the works he confiscated, most of which he claimed authorship, especially those which he kept for his private collection.<sup>24</sup>

These previously stated quotes, paint a clear picture as to how Egypt was subdued by European empires with the use of military forces. As a result, Greeks and Romans rose to the seat of power which therefore, explains their need to claim ownership of all things Egyptian.

Scholar, Cheikh Anta Diop illustrates in *Civilization or Barbarism* how the Greeks attained the ancient wisdoms of Egypt:

The Egyptian priests themselves had the habit of reminding the Greek scholars that it was in Egypt that they had learned the sciences that made them famous in their own country. It is all these facts that Western ideologists either innocently or cynically falsify today, when they dogmatically decree that

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<sup>23</sup> George James, *Stolen Legacy* (United States of America: African American Images, 2000), 42.

<sup>24</sup> ben-Jochannan, 379.

Pharaonic science was merely empirical and that it was Greece that introduced theory.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, it is evident that the “Greek philosophers” learned concepts from the ancient Egyptians to launch their own doctrines. Also, Labib Habachi notes in *The Obelisks of Egypt*, how Greeks learned from Egyptian priests, announcing:

Herodotus drew much of his information from its priests. [...] the scientist Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.) had visited Heliopolis and profited from the wisdom of that city. [...] in] the Greek impression of Egypt reported by Plato (429-347 B.C.), [he states,] “We Greeks are in reality children compared with these people with traditions ten times older.”<sup>26</sup>

Based on the information provided, it is clear that the Europeans recognized their infancy as students. Examining their prior knowledge, Diop articulates, “Also, before the translation into Greek of Egyptian scientific works, the Greeks knew almost nothing about astronomy and theoretical and applied sciences in general, not even the exact duration of year.”<sup>27</sup> In this regard, the longevity of Egypt’s antiquity alone outlasts Europe’s from any perspective. However, the Greek and Roman invasions in Egypt were promoted in attempts to suppress these historical facts, especially, with the heightened interest due to the new discoveries. From 332 BC, following the overthrow of the Persian monarchy by Alexander III, ‘the Great’ (356-323 BC), Macedonian Greeks known as the Ptolemies ruled Egypt, and Alexandria became the most important centre of Greek culture.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cheikh Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism* (New York, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 347.

<sup>26</sup> Labib Habachi. *The Obelisks of Egypt: Skyscrapers of the Past*, (ed.) Charles Van Siclen III. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1997) 39.

<sup>27</sup> Diop, 346.

<sup>28</sup> Curl, 4. “Alexander (356-323 BCE), of Macedon, called the Great, was the son of Phillip II of Macedon. Alexander came to the throne in 336 BCE and carried against the Persian Empire [...]. [...] In Egypt, [...] he was careful to observe the local rituals with public sacrifices to the Egyptian gods. He also made administrative arrangements that aimed at securing his control of the land while solidifying the support of the Egyptian people.” Description taken from: Donald B. Redford, (ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 53. Also, “The Ptolemies ruled Egypt

### ***Later European Invasions***

Following the invasions of the Persians and Alexander the Great, French imperialist, Napoleon Bonaparte pursued Egypt for its wealth and repository of wisdom and knowledge. As a man who possessed many titles and victories, Napoleon set out to invade Egypt by utilizing his illustrious military tactics. Convinced that Egypt possessed the hidden elements of masonry (pertaining specifically to geometry); Napoleon was persistent in his pursuit to rule Egypt. His campaign to conquer Egypt was part of his imperial military plan but it was coupled with an intense desire to unlock the secrets of Egypt which Napoleon believed to be the source of Masonic lore” (which will be explored in later chapters of this study).<sup>29</sup> Writer and independent Egyptologist, John Anthony West asserts that Napoleon was in fact a Mason, when he states that “Napoleon, like so many other men of his era, was a Freemason.” Cathie Bryan in her article, “Egypt in Paris: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Monuments and Motifs” asserts that the cooptation of Egyptian ideas became possible only after Napoleon’s failed military intervention:

As a military man, Bonaparte’s main objective in invading Egypt was conquest and colonization. At that time, the intellectual aspect was secondary. After the military failure, the spirit of the age allowed the objectives to be reversed. The commissioning of the public monuments that highlighted Egypt promoted the success of the intellectual achievements of the Egyptian Campaign, and thus introduced a ‘spin’ which down-played the military loss.<sup>30</sup>

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from the accession of Ptolemy I to the death of Cleopatra VII and the fall of the country to Rome in 30 BC.” See also; Rosalie and Anthony E David, *A Biographical Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, (Seaby London: 1992), 113.

<sup>29</sup> West, 34.

<sup>30</sup> Cathie Bryan. “Egypt in Paris: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Monuments and Motifs.” (eds.) Jean-Marcel Humbert and Clifford Price, in *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing architecture* (Great Britain: UCL Press, 2003), 202.

Although, Napoleon was unsuccessful in his aim to rule Egypt (thus, ending his three-year crusade) Europe became even more attracted to Egypt. Habachi further articulates this attraction, “It was only after Napoleon Bonaparte came to Egypt on his abortive military campaign (1798-1801), accompanied by group of scholars that Europe began to take an interest in Egypt, its past and present.”<sup>31</sup> In addition, Curl quotes Richard G. Carrott’s illustration of how Egypt influenced Europe, stating that:

Napoleonic discoveries brought accurate pictures of Ancient Egyptian art and architecture made its appearance in halls, showrooms, exhibition buildings, factories, cemetery lodges, and mausolea<sup>32</sup> and as a result of these new discoveries, “Egyptology, the serious study of Egypt, [...] began [...].<sup>33</sup>

As Curl further explains, “the enthusiasm for things Egyptian in France gained further momentum when the Napoleonic dream of erecting an Ancient Egyptian obelisk in Paris was realized: one of the obelisks from Luxor was carefully dismantled and shipped to France.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Habachi writes about the removal of Egyptian artifacts:

[The heightened] interest in Egypt and its glorious past was engendered throughout Europe, and as a result the major states began to acquire Egyptian artifacts for their own collections. Foreigners, especially those occupying diplomatic posts in Egypt, were soon engaged at most of the important sites, picking up objects of value even as they destroyed Egypt’s monuments to obtain them. The local authorities raised no objection to this wholesale plunder.<sup>35</sup>

Here Habachi articulates Europe’s admiration for Egyptian artifacts which, consequently, led to the disfiguring and occasional destruction of monuments simply due to pure greed and envy. Curl affirms Europe’s purpose in possessing things

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<sup>31</sup> Habachi, 152.

<sup>32</sup> Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, xxix.

<sup>33</sup> West, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Curl, 276.

<sup>35</sup> Habachi, 152.



Egyptian. He states, “Many Ancient Egyptian objects, such as obelisks, were [...] brought to Europe partly because they demonstrated that Egypt had been subdued by Rome, and partly because they were admired for their aesthetics, monumental, mysterious, and exotic qualities.”<sup>36</sup> It was this fascination with ancient Egypt that led to the rise of what scholars refer to as “Egyptomania.”

### *The Rise of Egyptomania*

The late 18<sup>th</sup> and the mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the rise of colonialism and the imperialist scramble for Africa, which coincided with the rise of scientific racism as an ideological justification for the subjugation of Africans. This was ultimately expressed in the so-called ‘civilizing mission’ as an essential cornerstone of the imperialist project in Africa and a means to solidify European superiority. Therefore, “[o]nly in counterpoint to the constructions of ancient Greece and ancient Rome did ancient Egypt become not positively politicized but, eroticized, not molded but scorned, not worshiped but feared.”<sup>37</sup> “Black Athena: The African and Levantine Roots of Greece,” Martin Bernal clarifies how the ancient Greeks discredited Egypt by illustrating it and its people as atypical. He states:

The Ancients’ view of Greece as civilized by Africans and Near Easterners had to be removed, because it went counter to “racial science.” It was this “scientific” spirit that the medical term “Egyptomania” was coined. This was seen as a delusion that affected otherwise rational Greeks with the belief that Egypt was central to their culture.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the concept ‘Egyptomania’ was used to shift the view of Egypt from being perceived positively to being negatively viewed as a means for Europeans to claim

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<sup>36</sup> Curl, xxii.

<sup>37</sup> Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 147.

<sup>38</sup> Ivan Van Sertima, *African Presence in Early Europe*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 200), 71.

themselves responsible for civilizing Western societies. In other words, all things Egyptian became eroticized by Europeans with the intention to diminish the significance of Egyptian art and architectural conceptions and, most importantly, to strip the Egyptian land of its power. Price and Humbert define the significance of “the term ‘Egyptomania’ [as referring] to anything ancient Egyptian, and [the terms] ‘Egyptian Revival’ and ‘Egyptianizing’ for the use of styles originally from Ancient Egypt.”<sup>39</sup> Europe was thus borrowing Egyptian ideas which they later appropriated as their own through the Egyptian Revival. In “Egypt in London --- Public and Private Displays,” Alex Werner speaks of London’s fascination with ancient Egypt’s “architecture, iconography and decorative patterns.”<sup>40</sup> Curl speaks of the emergence of the Egyptian Revival, “When the lands of the eastern Mediterranean became politically integrated with the Empire [...] Roman artists began to manufacture objects in the manner of Egyptian artifacts, and a Classical Egyptian Revival began.”<sup>41</sup> Because of this fixation and wonder of ancient Egyptian influences, exhibitions of Egyptian antiquities flourished in Europe as a means to satisfy the country’s probing appetite for Egyptian culture.

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<sup>39</sup> Humbert and Price, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Alex Werner, “Egypt in London – Public and Private Displays” in *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing architecture*. (eds.) Jean-Marcel Humbert and Clifford Price. (Great Britain: UCL Press, 2003), 76.

<sup>41</sup> Curl, 10.



Figure 2: Exterior of William Bullock's Egyptian Hall for storing his personal collection of Egyptian artifacts

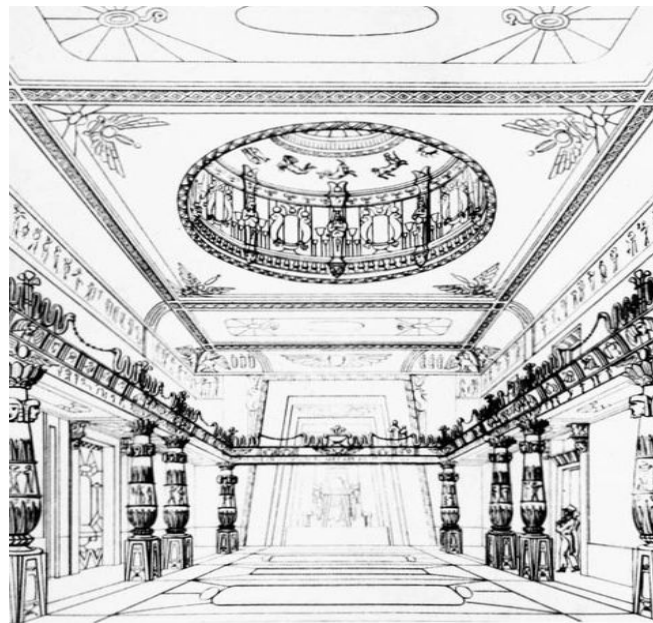


Figure 3: Interior view of William Bullock's hall

In London, well known collector William Bullock first pioneered a field study of Egyptian art and architecture. He shared these “historical curiosities” as a means to popularize the ‘Egyptianized’ style that started to flourish at that time. Egyptian art and culture were thus, introduced through forms of public display. Werner speaks of the importance of these exhibitions. He states:

The arrival of a major collection of Egyptian antiquities in London in 1802 was an important development in London’s perception of Egypt’s art and culture. For the first time, many Londoners came face to face with important and unusual artefacts from Egypt.<sup>42</sup>

One structure in particular was fashioned resembling an Egyptian temple, he displays:

The Egyptian Hall was the first London building in the Egyptian style [...]. The building housed the collection of William Bullock, the celebrated showman, entrepreneur and collector. [...]. The façade of the building was loosely based on the late Ptolemaic temple of Hathor at Dendera. [...]. Above the entrance stood two imposing sculptures of Isis and Osiris. Other decorative details included sphinxes, lotus-flowers and hieroglyphs.<sup>43</sup>

This quote is a clear example of how Egyptian concepts and ideas were adopted and embraced by Europeans, thus, trickling down to the Western world.

Curl expresses how Western society emerged from the Greco-Roman culture, which benefited from the takeover of Egyptian land and influences of its cultures and civilization. He states:

The civilization of the West [...] developed from the Greco-Roman world, [also,] its close connections with secular power and the legitimizing of that power, and from the vast cultural stew of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea, drew heavily on the religion of Ancient Egypt.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Werner, 77.

<sup>43</sup> Werner, 82-83.

<sup>44</sup> Curl, 2.

To appropriate Greek and Roman architecture, “environmental appropriation[s] [were] used as a form of resistance [in] reclaiming or redesigning [the] existing building of landscape to present a new identity through culture expression.”<sup>45</sup> As a result, “from about 1800 a fresh influx of Greek architectural examples, seen through the medium of etchings and engravings, gave a new impetus to neoclassicism that was called the Greek Revival.”<sup>46</sup> Curl continues to explore stating that “the aesthetic ideals of Neo-Classicism tended to strive for greater simplicity, grandeur, and massiveness, first by returning to the architecture of Ancient Greece [...] and then going back even further to the buildings of Ancient Egypt.”<sup>47</sup> The Egyptian revival consisted of “[t]he rediscovery of Egyptian architecture [in] the eighteenth centuries and (especially) nineteenth centuries. [...] It] was an international movement, and was part of the final phase of Romantic Neo-Classicism.”<sup>48</sup> However, it is important to note that there were other influences: in particular, Europe’s affiliation with Freemasonry. Charles Vail articulates the influences of the esoteric systems of Freemasonry. He says, “Some contend that until the revival, in 1717, the mysteries of the craft were merely the particular methods or rules employed in their special art. This may be partly true of the body as a whole, but that an inner occult teaching.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Grant, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Art Reproductions. 17 July 2007. Art Reproductions Gallery. <<http://www.topofart.com/movements/Neoclassicism/>>.

<sup>47</sup> Curl, xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>48</sup> Curl, xxvii-xxviii. “Neo-classicism’ is defined as “being of, relating to, or constituting a revival or adaptation of the classical especially in literature, music, art, or architecture.” See also; Merriam Webster. 17 July 2007. Merriam Webster Online 17 July 2007 <<http://www.m-w.com/>>.

<sup>49</sup> Vail, 145.

### *The Rise of Masonry in Europe*

Europe's fascination by with all things Egyptian led to their interest in the ancient Egyptian belief systems. Quoting Terner, Curl announces Egypt's influence on Masonry by asserting, "The iconography of European Freemasonry, that potent force in the Enlightenment, was steeped in Egyptianizing design, for Ancient Egypt provided a main source of Freemasonic legend and wisdom."<sup>50</sup> One of the primary contributions to not only Masonry, but to architecture as a whole, was geometry. Masonic historian, Albert Mackey asserts, "[...] Geometry [was] among the mathematical sciences that one [would have] the most especial reference to architecture, we can therefore, under the name of Geometry understand the whole art of Freemasonry."<sup>51</sup> Curl confirms:

Freemasonic lore stresses the antiquity of geometry, [...] in connection with land-measurement and surveying, and hence the setting-out of monumental architecture. Thus the beginnings of architecture, and therefore of Freemasonry, are traced to Egypt, the mysterious land from which all wisdom sprang.<sup>52</sup>

Lastly, Curl quotes Erik Iversen, articulating the origins of geometry:

It must be remembered that the notion that all magic, all knowledge, all skills, and all basic architectural wisdom came from Egypt was powerful, and much intellectual effort was expended on trying to reveal the mysteries of Egypt by deciphering hieroglyphs. Egyptian religion, architecture, and sculpture took on new significance as products of a great culture from which all skills had come: the craft had come from Egypt, Hermes had invented principles of geometry essential to architecture, and stone buildings of Egypt became symbols of excellence and causes for wonder in European minds.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Curl, xxix.

<sup>51</sup> Mackey, *History of Freemasonry*, 41.

<sup>52</sup> Curl, 132.

<sup>53</sup> Steven Curl, (1958): 'Hieroglyphic Studies of the Renaissance', in *Burlington Magazine*, c/658 (January), 15-21 .p. (90- 91).

Here it is understood that Egypt and geometry are one: mathematics and science being the essential elements incorporated into the functions of Egyptian daily lives.

Historically, Freemasons are known to have emerged as an extension of a group of “stonemasons, builders of Europe’s greatest cathedrals”<sup>54</sup>. In the early 17th century, there was a shift from the “operative” to the “speculative” forms of Masonry. Tabbert emphasizes the distinction of the two. He states:

Operative masons were organized in lodges or guilds and were taught ways to use tools to improve stone construction. Speculative Masons call their organizations “symbolic” lodges and apply the symbolic meanings of the stonemason’s tools to discern ways -obvious upon further reflection but often overlooked — to improve themselves and become useful and productive members of their communities.<sup>55</sup>

This quote displays the symbolic similarities and differences of the two, the operative and speculative and how Freemasonry as we know it today, adopted the tools used by stonemasons’ to create their organization.<sup>56</sup> Mackey announces that “[t] his transitions from the operative to the speculative form of Masonry was completed by the year 1717, when the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons was established in London.”<sup>57</sup> Daniel Beresniak further explains the emergence of Freemasonry, which is the speculative form. He states:

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Freemasons took their inspiration from the rites and customs of the Guild of Masons in order to give their work structure, organization and symbols necessary to fulfill a specific purpose. This was to gather people of different origins and different opinions and enable them to work on a common project: the creation of a temple for all humanity.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Jeremy Harwood, *The Freemasons* (London: Hermes House, 2006), 120.

<sup>55</sup> Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>56</sup> Harwood announces the popularly known tools of Freemasonry, “The Square stands for morality, honesty and fair dealing, and the Compasses symbolize truth and loyalty.” See 50.

<sup>57</sup> Mackey, xi.

<sup>58</sup> Daniel Beresniak, *Symbols of Freemasonry* (Paris: Editions Assouline, 1997), 16.

To understand Freemasonry, it is necessary to define the previously referred distinction of operative and speculative Masonry. In *Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Mackey defines operative Masons as “workers in stone, who construct material edifices, in opposition to Speculative Masons, who build spiritual edifices.”<sup>59</sup>

Vail confirms in greater detail Freemasonry’s historical background:

The term Freemason, which originally meant a worker in free stone, came later on to be applied to all “Craftsmen who had obtained their freedom as Masons to work Lodges with the Fraternity after due apprenticeship and passing as Fellow Crafts.” As early even as the oldest “Charges” persons not operative Masons were admitted to the Order and were designated by the term “Accepted,” to distinguish them from the working Masons, for many of this class were attracted to Masonry by the moral principles, and perhaps the mystic knowledge of the Fraternity.<sup>60</sup>

Although it is initially stated that the rise of Masonry emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, shifting from operative to speculative, Mackey offers an alternative explanation for the founding of the Freemasons asserting that:

If we adopt the theory (as has been done by a few writers too iconoclastic in their views) that Speculative Masonry never was anything but that which its present organization presents, with the Grand Lodges, Grand Masters, and a ritual of distinct degrees, then we are compelled to place the commencement of the historic era at that period which has been called Revival in the second decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>61</sup>

However, he presents another perspective relating to origins:

If, with more liberal views, we entertain the opinion that Speculative Masonry was founded on, and is the offspring of, the Operative system of the Stonemasons, then we must extend our researchers to at least the Middle Ages, where we shall find abundant documentary evidence of the existence and character of the Operative parent to which the Freemasonry of the present day, by a well-marked transition, has succeeded.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Mackey, *Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, 737.

<sup>60</sup> Vail, 153.

<sup>61</sup> Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry*, 11.

<sup>62</sup> Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry*, 11.



In *The Ancient Mysteries and Modern Masonry*, Charles Vail argues that the evolution of the organization came about six centuries prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He says, “[...] prior to the reconstruction period of 1717, was something quite different from its present form—modern Masonry being an entirely new departure.”<sup>63</sup> Vail makes this assertion in reference to the initial forms of Masonry, which are acknowledged as possessing some form of Mystery<sup>64</sup> based on the level of knowledge exercised preceding to the 1700’s. He claims that the esoteric philosophies were learned much earlier on: “Although the origin of the Masonic movement is modern, we hold that it had its source in true the Mysticism, and is one of the channels of the Mystic teaching.”<sup>65</sup> However, it is important to note that the earlier date is only an approximation. As Vail claims the actual date of Masonry is unknown: “[W]e have no evidence, nor do we know the exact date of the beginning of the Masonic movement but, are assured it can lay claim to no great antiquity—the actual history of the Craft extending no further back than some six centuries.”<sup>66</sup>

Throughout history many assertions have been made as to whether or not the rites and rituals of Western Freemasons resemble those of the ancient Egyptian “Mystery Systems” (religious beliefs). Often referred to as “Secret Society” Freemasonry should instead be understood as a “Society of Secrets” in that its members use tools of stonemasonry to symbolically “make good men better men.”

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<sup>63</sup> Vail, 144.

<sup>64</sup> “It does not appear from the oldest manuscript they used signs, tokens, and words, such as later on were, employed to secure recognition; however, such may have been the case. There were certain secrets which pertained to the art of building, which the members of the Lodge were bound to keep, and it was these trade secrets which gave to the Order its monopoly” See Vail, 152.

<sup>65</sup> Vail, 145.

<sup>66</sup> Vail, 144.

Vail counters the notion of Freemasonry being secretive by affirming that “The real secrets of Masonry lie concealed in its symbols and legends”<sup>67</sup> [...and...] “[e]xcept for some portions of the Ceremony—the signs and passwords—which relate to the modes of recognition, there is nothing secret in Masonry.”<sup>68</sup> Here Vail conveys that the Masonic fraternity is not a secret society (based on the many publications on the organization) but rather, a private one. However, he does clarify that only when referring to the codes (process of initiation) and esoteric philosophies that the fraternity can be viewed as possessing secrets. Tabbert explores the ways in which the organization conceals these rituals, stating that:

Freemasonry is deeply rooted in oral tradition. [Therefore,] [i]n some grand lodges the rituals are never written out, while in others, they are reduced to writings that employ codes. By passing the rituals from mouth to ear and from one generation to the next, Freemasonry has been sustained.<sup>69</sup>

This quote expresses the traditional rituals of the basic operation of the Masonry lodge as a means to preserve the Freemasonry knowledge through its degrees of initiation into the craft. In addition, to preserving their rites and rituals, the Freemasons also, practice ceremonial bricklaying. This can be seen throughout the cornerstone placement in buildings during the construction of the District of Columbia; it is through Masonic rituals that the federal city is aligned to the stars, a concept derived from the ancient Egyptian belief systems.

In summary, historical evidence supports the assertion that ancient Egyptian culture and civilization influenced Europe, which explains how Egyptian ideas of art and architecture have filtered through Europe to America. It is due to the Greek, Roman and Egyptian revivals that Egyptian influences have been appropriated and

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<sup>67</sup> Vail, 182.

<sup>68</sup> Vail, 142.

<sup>69</sup> Tabbert, 5.

incorporated into the city planning and the architectural edifices of D.C. Retracing the historical ideas that connect Europe and Egypt historicizes the varied influences on the U.S. capital city. Thus, in acknowledging these observations, it can be concluded that the buildings and surveying of the District of Columbia by its city planners and governmental officials, (whom were predominately affiliated with the fraternal order of Freemasonry) were heavily influenced by the stellar works of the ancient Egyptians.

## CHAPTER 2:

### THE BLUEPRINT OF THE CITY OF SECRETS:

#### WASHINGTON, D.C.'S HISTORY OF PLANNING AND CONCEPTIONS

The establishment of the federal city was one of the offsprings of the revolutionary enthusiasm, which elevated the American mind....It had been said that the idea of creating a new city, better arranged in its local distribution of houses and streets, more magnificent in its public buildings, and superior in the advantages of its site to any other in the world, was the favorite folly of General Washington. Its existence at last was due to a compromise of interests between the Eastern and Southern States...<sup>70</sup>

---Capitol Architect,  
Benjamin H. Latrobe

Some of the great works of ancient Egyptian art and architectural influences have served as a blueprint for the United States capital, Washington, D.C. Therefore; this chapter gives a historical overview of the development of the American federal city and the contributions of its city planners. As a result, this chapter suggests that the Masonic symbolisms adopted from the belief systems (also, referred to as Mystery Systems<sup>71</sup>) of the ancient Egyptian. These are the elements that were incorporated in the mapping and planning of D.C. Furthermore, this chapter explores how Freemasons, particularly the city planners and government officials, attempted to convey certain messages through Masonic ideas, especially with the incorporation of ceremonial bricklaying. It is through the practices of Masonic rituals such as

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted from Capitol Architect Benjamin H. Latrobe to Italian Patriot Phillip Mazzei, John C. Van Horne, (ed.) *Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* 29 May 1806, 2:227-28.

<sup>71</sup> The Mystery System schools were a kind of university where every kind of discipline philosophy, religion, medicine, law, mathematics, geometry, astronomy and science were taught by priests [;] this group of disciplines was referred to as “the wisdom of the Egyptians; see Innocent C. Onyewuenyi. *African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism* (Oxford: African Books Colective, 1994), 44.

ceremonial bricklaying that Freemasons attempted to bring the heavens to the earth by aligning Washington, D.C.'s city streets and stately mansions in accordance with the stars.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was most common for elite men in the United States and Europe to become members of the social organization of Freemasonry.<sup>72</sup> This may explain why primarily all the contributors of the District of Columbia's city planning, most notably President George Washington, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker, shared this membership. Throughout the process of laying out Washington D.C., ancient Egyptian symbols were incorporated in the city's designs. These representations, forms of stellar lore that were originally practiced by the ancient Egyptians, were appropriated by the stonemasons over time and became part of Freemasons rites and rituals. Because of the intricate association among the planners it is somewhat difficult to pinpoint "[who] was responsible for [the] different aspects of the plans which lay behind the design of the federal city."<sup>73</sup> As a result, their individual and collective works as Freemasons will be discussed. However first, the rationale as to why the District of Columbia was the chosen site for the permanent seat for the U.S. government will be examined.

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<sup>72</sup> "The distinction of speculative (Freemasons) and operative (working) masons. He states: In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Freemasons took their inspiration from the rites and customs of the Guild of Masons in order to give their work structure, organization and symbols necessary to fulfill a specific purpose. This was to gather people of different origins and different opinions and enable them to work on a common project: the creation of a temple for the whole humanity;" see Daniel Beresniak. *Symbols of Freemasonry*. Paris: Editions Assouline, 1997.

<sup>73</sup> David Ovason, *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation's Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 42.

### *The History of the District of Columbia*

In 1775, the United States of America emerged from the thirteen “United Colonies,” thus, becoming a newly independent country. In this revolt (the Revolutionary War) against Great Britain, the U.S. formally proclaimed its sovereignty on July 4, 1776. Although victory was won, the U.S. faced other challenges. The main concern was the on-going issue of finalizing a permanent location for the federal city. *In Our Capital on the Potomac*, Helen Nicolay’s explains the representation of Congress. She expresses, “The Continental Congress, always homeless, spent its entire life as the guest of local authorities in one town after another.”<sup>74</sup> It was this contestation that placed urgency on choosing a permanent capital. Therefore, as early as 1783<sup>75</sup>, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were corresponding to determine the location of a new federal city. They too desired “[a] central location [that] was indispensable and commercially [...] desirable to be on navigable water, yet a capital [...] far enough inland to be safe from foreign invasion.”<sup>76</sup>

Interestingly enough, Congress had internal matters to address first. Unfortunately, due to several relocation costs of the Congress, they were unable to pay the debts accrued for the protective services provided by the soldiers of the Revolutionary Army. As a result, the government was forced to exit Philadelphia to avoid violent protests and embarrassment. A good example comes from *Origin and government of the District of Columbia* by author William Tindall, where he announces:

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<sup>74</sup> Helen Nicolay, *Our Capital on the Potomac* (New York, The Century Co., 1924), 25.

<sup>75</sup> This was the same year; the Treaty of Paris was signed (September 3, 1783).

<sup>76</sup> Nicolay, 26.

In June, 1783, the Continental Congress removed from Philadelphia in consequence of a hostile demonstration which was made toward it by a body of soldiers of the Revolutionary Army, impatient for the long neglect to pay them for their services, and the admission of the authorities of that city and of the States of Pennsylvania that they were unable to protect it from the threatened intimidation.<sup>77</sup>

Like Tindall, historian Helen Nicolay observes, “In June, 1783, when it was meeting in Philadelphia, mutinous Pennsylvania soldiers appeared before its doors, clamoring for pay long overdue, a reasonable request which could not be granted for the very best of reasons.”<sup>78</sup> This turmoil forced Congress to seek other cities to relocate. Therefore, “the Congress of the Confederation resolved on October 7, 1783, the buildings for the use of Congress be erected on or near the banks of the Delaware or of the Potomac.”<sup>79</sup> Now that this was in place, the next step was to conclude the exact location and the land space.

Initially, Congress proposed a three-mile square; however, others objected in favor of a larger land space. In *Benjamin Banneker: Surveyor, Astronomer, Publisher, Patriot*, Charles Cerami illustrates a Southerner’s tactic in proposing an expansion of the original space allotted for the permanent seat of government as a means to void out the competition of Northerners. He states:

At the Constitutional Convention [in 1787], a size of three miles square was first proposed. But South Carolina’s Charles Pinckney kept pushing to triple that figure, explaining privately to some of his colleagues, “The big northern cities are sure to keep trying to get the capital back if we set up just a small

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<sup>77</sup> William Tindall. *Standard History of the City of Washington from a Study of Original Sources* (Knoxville, Tennessee: H.W. Crew, 1914), 6.

<sup>78</sup> Nicolay, 25.

<sup>79</sup> Tindall, 7.

federal city. It's got to be big enough to show it is permanent." And in the end, Pinckney won his way. "Ten miles was written into the Constitution."<sup>80</sup>

This citation addresses the need to invalidate northern states as possible locations for the Federal District. It was at this time that "[t]he Constitution specified the size of the projected federal city, but not the location, for there was too much disagreement on that point" which will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>81</sup> However, a year later a suitable compromise was proposed, Tindall announces:

The requisite area for the present site of the seat of government was offered to Congress by the States of Maryland and Virginia. The former State, by an act of its general assembly passed December 23, 1788, directed its Representatives in the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States to cede to any district in said State not exceeding 10 miles square which the Congress might fix upon and accept for the seat of government.<sup>82</sup>

This reference clarifies the dimensions of land space approved by the United States Congress and the offering of a potential site for the federal city. Important also, is George Washington's appointed position as the overseer of selecting a land space for the national government. It was with this advantage that he not only kept the needs of Congress in mind, but also other desired needs of his own.

Upon the approval of the Residency Act of 1790, President Washington was granted the leadership responsibility of selecting the site for the Federal District. "[In essence,] Congress handed George Washington the sole power to choose and create a permanent national capital [...]. Within weeks, he announced the choice of a site that [...] virtually [could] be called his and his alone."<sup>83</sup> Browder further articulates upon Washington's position of authority, he states:

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<sup>80</sup> Charles Cerami, *Benjamin Banneker* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002), 119.

<sup>81</sup> Cerami, 113.

<sup>82</sup> Tindall, 82.

<sup>83</sup> Cerami, 113.



With the passage of the Residency Act on July 16, 1790, President George Washington was given authority to choose the location of “the seat of the government” and ten years to build it. While the new capital was being built, Congress decided to keep the seat of government in Philadelphia until 1800 when they moved into their permanent home.<sup>84</sup>

Cerami confirms this data and the assertion that President Washington was fulfilling a long held dream. He says:

The Congress passed the Residence Bill of July 16, 1790, naming George Washington the agent of Congress to choose the site---anywhere along a sixty-seven mile reach of the Potomac—for the permanent seat of government. [Thus,] he had won full power to turn his old dream into a living capital city, to mold it with his own hands.<sup>85</sup>

Motivated by this allowance, President Washington drew his conclusion of the new location by the end of 1790. However, “Washington made the official proclamation of the new District of Columbia on January 24, 1791 (with no mention yet of the city’s name), and he directed the survey of the ten-mile-square area to go forward.”<sup>86</sup>

Browder confirms that, “On January 24, 1791, Washington announced that the new federal capital would be located on the east and west banks the Potomac River and encompasses the ports of Alexandria, Virginia and Georgetown, Maryland.”<sup>87</sup>

Essentially, President Washington realized what had been suggested in speculations that he had had earlier interest of the U.S. government residing in Maryland and Virginia, long before this time period and even prior to the victory of the Revolutionary War.

According to Cerami, “[George Washington] positioned himself to accomplish [this goal of having the federal city seated in the District of Columbia];

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<sup>84</sup> Browder, *Egypt on The Potomac*, 21.

<sup>85</sup> Cerami, 120.

<sup>86</sup> Cerami, 121.

<sup>87</sup> Browder, *Egypt on the Potomac*, 21.

he was a patient and adroit strategist [...].”<sup>88</sup> Claims were made that he chose the center of Georgetown for its convenience and also, for the benefits of economic gain given that it was a highly valued location due to the long legacy of the tobacco-culture. Passonneau specifies this claim stating, “Georgetown was one of a number of Maryland and Virginia tidewater towns created as inspection stations and shipment points for tobacco.”<sup>89</sup> More specifically, Nicolay details how Washington took full advantage of his authority, she states:

President Washington favored the Potomac site, a preference that critics ascribed to its nearness to his own estates and to the active part he had long taken in efforts to make the Potomac River a direct line of communication with Ohio country. In this matter of selecting a home for the Government, he seemed inclined to exercise all his official authority and a little which might have been left to others under strict interpretation of the law.<sup>90</sup>

President Washington’s tactics insured that he had the final say in locating the permanent site for the federal city. As the president and the appointed leader, he persuaded Congress and the U.S. citizens that the Georgetown area was the best-suited location to house the government and in addition, it possessed promising benefits.

The land space allotted for the federal city was of primary benefit for those who would be interested in developing a new capital. It is with this offering that George Washington lured interested parties to Georgetown. David L. Lewis in *District of Columbia*, writes, “The remaining 1, 964 [of the 6,611 acres initially granted were] commercial plots [... which] proceeds [were to] equally [be distributed] to the national treasury and the proprietors. The potential value of this land was estimated to have

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<sup>88</sup> Cerami, 115.

<sup>89</sup> Joseph Passonneau, *Washington through Two Centuries* (New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 2004), 18.

<sup>90</sup> Nicolay, 28.

been enhanced tenfold.”<sup>91</sup> Hence, creating this “planned city” on “virgin land” gave the president more freedom to do as he pleased while, satisfying both, “the commissioners and other officials of the government [who] were eager for the removal to take place before December 1800 in order to stimulate lagging investment in Washington and to assure the early investors that Congress would actually come to the new city.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, the open land space around Georgetown therefore became financially appealing to potential investors. The choice of Georgetown put to rest all the other debates and discussions of the alternative sites. However, there were other cities initially offered to serve as the house of the United States government.

Initially, cities that had formally housed the capital, specifically Philadelphia<sup>93</sup> and New York had been considered. As mentioned earlier, “The location of the federal city had been a much contested issue, with a number of generous offers presented to the Congress seated at Philadelphia in the early summer [June] of 1783.”<sup>94</sup> However, George Washington opposed Philadelphia remaining the seat of the U.S. government, because he “wisely determined that the federal capital should be independent of any of the states it was designed to serve.”<sup>95</sup> Interestingly enough, selecting a site for the federal city independent from the existing states was significant for a far more important reason. While the arguments against utilizing an existing city for a federal capital noted an insufficiency of land space, it can also be argued that the existing

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<sup>91</sup> David Lewis, *District of Columbia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976), 7.

<sup>92</sup> Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon, 58.

<sup>93</sup> “The Congress of the Revolution first met in Philadelphia, Pa., on September 5, 1774, and remained there until Wednesday, December 12, 1776, when it adjourned to Baltimore, Md., in consequence of the approach of the British army”; see Tindall, 13.

<sup>94</sup> Lewis, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Ovason, 53.

cities were not used because they complicated traditions of colonialism, particularly those that had to do with slavery.

Slavery was one of the primary traditions of colonialism, in that the actual practice of slavery brought the necessary funding to the colonies and much effort was given by the governmental structures to uphold and retain it. It was, for this reason, that the already existing states posed as a threat to the U.S. Congressmen and other slave owners (in particular, in the South) because, it endangered their economic assets, free laborers. As a result, the United States citizens and governmental officials voiced their complaints in attempts to rule out anti-slavery states. For example, Southerners expressed their concerns of one of the initial cities that housed the U.S. government:

Philadelphia provided a special problem [...which was a...] law [that] stated [...] “any slave who remained in the state six months became free”. [Although,] the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery had agreed not to insist on enforcement against members of Congress and federal officials, [...] nothing prevented individual citizens from informing slaves about their rights. Thus, Washington for example, made certain that slaves left the state once every six months---if only for a few hours---so that he would not become embroiled with the state’s judiciary.<sup>96</sup>

This statement clearly explains that the primary reason Pennsylvania was ruled out as the permanent location to house the United States government was a six month residency before slaves would automatically become free. Eliminating Philadelphia thus eliminated any political and/or economic discomfort to government officials of slaves becoming freed people. Although, “Philadelphia was an elegant, comfortable place and there were powerful commercial and sectional interests which championed

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<sup>96</sup> Kenneth Bowling. *The Creation of Washington, D.C.* (Virginia, George Mason University Press, 1991), 212.

its superiority,” concerns of the freedom of slaves outweighed the allure of the established city.<sup>97</sup>

Secondly, political negotiations and fundamental political powers, in regards to trade and industry profits concerned Southerners as well. Southerners made claim that the “distance [between the South and the North] created problems for southerners who sought to purchase western lands, secure appointments or redress grievances at the seat of federal government.”<sup>98</sup> Therefore, the suggestion to relocate the permanent federal city in New York City<sup>99</sup> was halted as well. Basically, Southerners felt that with Congress residing in a northern state they faced the possibility of minimal representation.

Although Southerners may have had location concerns, the real concerns more so resided with Southerners’ belief that “New York City did not deserve the honor since the state had just given the death blow by means of the 1783 Amendment to the Articles of Confederation allowing the federal government to collect import duties.”<sup>100</sup> As a result of New York being in agreement with the Amendment thus, they “yield [ed] to Spain’s demands that the Mississippi River be closed to American trade for twenty-five years.”<sup>101</sup> Therefore, New York City was not a favorable place to lodge the U.S. government permanently because its delegates opposed Southerners interests to regulate commerce. Nicolay notes Congress’ refusal to reside in a state with restrictions, she states, “Congress [refused] to stay longer in any city where the

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<sup>97</sup> Lewis, 5.

<sup>98</sup> Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.*, 70.

<sup>99</sup> [Congress] met in New York City [temporarily] on January 11, 1785, and continued to meet there until March 4, 1789, when succeeded by the Congress provided for in the Constitution; see Tindall, 13.

<sup>100</sup> Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.*, 71.

<sup>101</sup> Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.*, 70.

treatment it received was seemingly a matter of difference.”<sup>102</sup> For this reason, among others, President George Washington desired to “develop the American Empire free from governmental restriction.”<sup>103</sup> As noted in Joseph Ellis’s *Founding Brothers*, he announces Congress’ primary purpose for relocating to D.C. He says, “By selecting the Potomac location, the Congress had implicitly decided to separate the political and financial capitals of the United States.”<sup>104</sup> This is what George Washington kept in mind when finalizing the Georgetown area; he knew that this particular land space would honor the government’s needs.

### ***“Founding Father” and United States President, George Washington***

General George Washington, the first president of the United States was a Freemason and as a member he became influenced by the works of the ancient Egyptians through practicing the Masonic rites and rituals which emerged from ancient Egypt. It is due to his membership as a Freemason, that “Egypt [was replicated] on The Potomac.”<sup>105</sup> His initial linkage to Freemasonry was on November 4, 1752, at which time he was made a Master Mason in Fredericksburg Lodge, Virginia. Jasper Ridley traces George Washington’s initial lax attitude towards his Freemasonry membership, “In his early years, Washington never took Freemasonry seriously; for him, as for so many other colonial gentlemen, it was originally just a social club. After he was raised to the third degree in August 1753, he only twice in his

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<sup>102</sup> Nicolay, 25.

<sup>103</sup> Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.*, 26.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Ellis, *Founding Fathers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 80.

<sup>105</sup> When using this phrase, Anthony Browder is referring to the repeated “Egyptian symbolism in numerous structures throughout the city [D.C.].” See *Egypt on the Potomac*, 6.

life attended one meeting of his Fredericksburg lodge.”<sup>106</sup> However, his interest grew with his political involvements as the President of the United States.



Figure 4: President George Washington dressed in Freemasonry regalia

Also, almost, four decades later, on December 20, 1788 he was elected as the first Master of the Alexandria Lodge No. 22 in Virginia (this election took place after the Revolution).<sup>107</sup> Lastly, he was elected honorary member of the Holland Lodge in New York. In addition to this, the second chapter of the Royal Arch Masons in New York was named in his honor as the “Washington Chapter.” He was the first and only Freemason to be simultaneously President (inaugurated as on April 30, 1779) and Master of his Lodge. These affiliations explain why Washington, D.C. encompasses

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<sup>106</sup> Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001), 94.

<sup>107</sup> “It was only after the Revolution, when he was President of the United States and the Freemasons had come to be regarded as the men who had made the Revolution, that he attended, in his [M]asonic apron, the laying foundation stone of the Capitol in the new city of Washington, DC, in 1793.” See Ridley, 94.

Masonic and Egyptian influences in the city planning and monumental constructions. Hence, for the city's creation, Washington sought after "skilled men" whom he personally handpicked, his fellow Freemason<sup>108</sup> brethren. These men were chosen "[i]n the early 1790's, [when Washington professed] to have no knowledge in architecture and told the commissioners of the Federal City that he would be governed by the established rules which are laid down by the professors of this Art."<sup>109</sup> For this reason, he hired those best fit to design the federal city to insure that the art and architecture not only replicated antiquity but that it was fashioned in a way that announced power and permanence.

### ***Virgin Territory: Creating a Space for the "Planned City"***

To begin the city planning process, President Washington "appointed three able trusted men [as commissioners; two of which were Freemasons (Carroll and Stuart)] Daniel Carroll and Thomas Johnson of Maryland, and Dr. David Stuart of Virginia,"<sup>110</sup> on January 22, 1791. Preceding their appointed positions, the commissioners agreed "that the federal District be called 'The Territory of Columbia' and the federal City the 'City of Washington'."<sup>111</sup> In addition, in March 1791, President Washington employed Pierre 'Peter' L'Enfant (another Freemason) as the chief architect of the Federal District. A French-born artist, architect and civil engineer, "at age twenty-three [L'Enfant first] came to America as a volunteer and was commissioned a lieutenant in the [Washington's] Continental Army."<sup>112</sup> These

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<sup>108</sup> Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon, *Establishing Congress: The Removal to Washington, D.C., and the Election of 1800*, 2005), 150.

<sup>110</sup> Lewis, 6.

<sup>111</sup> Passonneau, Joseph. *Washington through Two Centuries* (New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 2004), 18.

<sup>112</sup> Cerami, 125.



exceptional achievements, Washington found most intriguing of L'Enfant. Cerami tells us that "after the President had chosen the site for Washington, D.C., L'Enfant wrote to his old commander and offered his services in planning the new capital city" and Washington eagerly extended an offer.<sup>113</sup>

Eager to begin his work, L'Enfant announced his ideas to President Washington directly rather than to the commissioners. However, it was not until five months later that he completed the plan for the nation's capitol. "In August 1791, [...] L'Enfant presented Washington with the "Plan of the City, intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States."<sup>114</sup> While, his desire to build a "monumental city for the government and its citizens" had great intentions, Congress rejected his plans for being too extravagant.<sup>115</sup> L'Enfant's ideas were influenced by his visits to Paris. From 1783-1784, he lived in Paris thus, adopting influential concepts, also reflecting Freemasonry's Egyptian influences which he later integrated into the city planning of Washington D.C.<sup>116</sup> For example, "Versailles set the precedent for a type of monumental composition adopted throughout Europe and, together with the evolving central axis of Paris, provided an obvious prototype for the Plan of Pierre L'Enfant for Washington."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Cerami, 126.

<sup>114</sup> Passonneau, 16.

<sup>115</sup> Lois Craig and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project. *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1972), 214.

<sup>116</sup> "Early Washington, D.C., is popularly believed to have been a swamp. [However,] dozens of observers of the young town, [...] almost all agree that [...] it, had a stunning natural setting." See Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.*, 237.

<sup>117</sup> Norma Evenson, "Monumental Spaces." *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*. Robert Longstreth (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Washington: National Gallery of Art 2002, 21.

L'Enfant's plans were also influenced by Thomas Jefferson's suggestions as well. In the *Federal Presence* Lois Craig notes Jefferson's admiration of France's artistic and political abilities. Jefferson saw it befitting to use the French standards "linking of form and meaning, of form and moral standards, [...] for a unifying order and vision, for a national identity."<sup>118</sup> Jefferson was so enthusiastic about L'Enfant's ideas that Ovason tells us that he "even went to the trouble of providing L'Enfant with maps of European cities which he had considered to represent the finest ideals of architecture."<sup>119</sup> Craig summarizes the resulting plan emphasizing the influences that "the street plan envisioned in Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 scheme for the city of Washington rivaled that of European capitals and [thus] some of the celebrated cities of antiquity."<sup>120</sup>

Nicolay speculates upon L'Enfant's vision which influenced the city planning of D.C. He states "If L'Enfant's military eye saw in the radiating avenues a means of protecting the city in case of revolution from within, just as the chain of encircling hills would protect it against attacks from without, he loved them still more for the vistas they offered."<sup>121</sup> Passonneau confirms Nicolay's speculation, quoting L'Enfant's notes to Thomas Jefferson:

I propose that these [streets] be laid out at right angles as in Philadelphia, and that no street be narrower than 100 feet with footways of 15 feet I doubt much whether the obligation to build the houses at a given distance from the street, contributes to its beauty. It produces a disgusting monotony.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Lewsi Craig. *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 4), 1972.

<sup>119</sup> David Ovason. *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation's Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 42.

<sup>120</sup> Craig, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Nicolay, 38.

<sup>122</sup> Passonneau, 20.



*L'Enfant's city plan*

Figure 5: L'Enfant's Washington, D.C. city plan with radiating street blocks

Also the commissioners suggested, “[T]he gridiron system of the roads should be designated by numbers and letters.”<sup>123</sup> Similarly, William Tindall announces the commissioners proposals, “We also agreed, [that] the streets be named alphabetically one way, and numerically the other; the former divided into North and South letter the latter into East and West numbers from the Capitol.”<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, “it is safe to assume that the names now in use originated from [L'Enfant's] vision, since the 15 state avenues played a meaningful role in the symbolism of the city.”<sup>125</sup> In regards to the significance of naming the federal city streets; Browder raises a unique speculation. He states, “The avenues were each named after the 13 colonies. Avenues north of the Capitol were named after northern states, avenues south of the Capitol were named after southern states, and avenues in-between were named after middle

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<sup>123</sup> Ovason, 60.

<sup>124</sup> William Tindall. *Standard History of the City of Washington from a Study of Original Sources* (Knoxville, Tenn.: H.W. Crew, 1914), 121.

<sup>125</sup> Ovason, 60.

states.”<sup>126</sup> These were the significant details that made L’Enfant’s plans unique however, his arrogant demeanor created conflict.

Although President Washington approved Major L’Enfant’s designing plans for the federal city, L’Enfant’s behavioral problems out-weighed his extraordinary work. His refusal to follow directions and respect authority figures led to ongoing conflicts with the three commissioners (Carroll, Johnson and Stuart). Therefore, Washington discontinued L’Enfant’s employment on March 1, 1792. Bowling further explains L’Enfant’s disobedience and snobbish demeanor:

[L’Enfant refused to] serve under [the commissioners] and later take the blame for the failure of the dream of the Potomac capital. Washington attempted to mollify L’Enfant’s suspicions about the commissioners and to find a compromise acceptable to the planner, but L’Enfant’s response to him so offended Washington that he fired the planner.<sup>127</sup>

Another reason for this dismissal was that in early 1792, “[Washington] pressed L’Enfant to complete the engraving, and, when it was not ready by mid-February, [he] instructed Ellicott to complete it, authorizing him to make certain changes with Jefferson’s guidance.”<sup>128</sup>

President George Washington held Andrew Ellicott in high regard and “employed [him to make] a survey and maps of the Federal Territory,” thereby adjusting L’Enfant’s work for the sole purpose of creating spatial environments that could grow with the success of the capital.<sup>129</sup> Two years later in 1794, he was announced as the leading surveyor, although the initial and concluding maps unmistakably prove that L’Enfant’s plans were somewhat dominant in Ellicott’s

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<sup>126</sup> Anthony Browder, *Egypt on the Potomac*, 25.

<sup>127</sup> Bowling, *The Creation Washington, D.C.*, 229.

<sup>128</sup> Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.*, 228.

<sup>129</sup> Lewis, 8.

blueprint of the city planning. The minimal modifications to L'Enfant's plans by Ellicott show how his inspections served as only enhancements to the original plans.

Ellicott's proficiency in astronomy is what intrigued President Washington initially, which later influenced the esoteric conceptions that are incorporated into the federal city. Ovason further asserts Ellicott's influence:

The positions which Ellicott fixed were, by definition, determined by stellar coordinates. If the federal city was to become the City of the Stars, the City of Zodiacs, as I maintain, then it is more the doing of Andrew Ellicott than Pierre Charles L'Enfant.<sup>130</sup>

This excerpt announces the symbolism of Ellicott's contributions in comparison to those of L'Enfant's which, Ovason bases on the astrological elements incorporated into the city planning after L'Enfant's discharge thus, crediting Ellicott.

One of the most intriguing examples of his work was the measurement of Pennsylvania Avenue, where he centralized its "portion between [the] Capitol and the White House."<sup>131</sup> As a result, "from an arcane standpoint, the design of the federal city was centered upon the magic of a specific sunset, [thus linking] Washington, D.C., with the stars."<sup>132</sup> Ovason continues to explore the esoteric symbolism of D.C., he states, "The Sun sets at this point [271 degrees] on March 21 and September 21, which marks the spring and winter equinoxes."<sup>133</sup> Ovason further details the stellar lore incorporated in the Capitol:

[That] the designers of the city oriented it to the Sun --- specifically to the sunset. [...]. [As a result,] these measurements are made from the Capitol building, nominally from the center of the dome [...which] becomes a symbol

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<sup>130</sup> Ovason, 332.

<sup>131</sup> Ovason, 332.

<sup>132</sup> Ovason, 332-3.

<sup>133</sup> Ovason, 83.

of the half arch of the visible heavens, which marks the point where the equinoctial and solstitial points meet, and are reconciled.<sup>134</sup>

Hence, the city was stylized in an emblematic manner with the inclusion of cosmological elements. In positioning the sites for architectural structures, the city streets were carefully angled to align the governmental buildings to the heavens. Ovason also explores the grid streets and significance of Washington,

D.C. layout:

The avenue joining the first two important sites [the Capitol and the White House, which were] later called Pennsylvania Avenue determined the approximate angle of the radiants from the Capitol. These radiants were imposed upon a grid of streets oriented on a north-south line, in a fashion which some historians trace back to ancient Roman foundations [...].<sup>135</sup>

As shown in historical references, “[...the] design [put] into operation, [was] intended [to link] Pennsylvania Avenue [...] with the stars in a theatrical display which would rival the stellar achievements of Rome, Greece and Egypt.”<sup>136</sup> In addition to his capabilities, Ellicott “required someone with knowledge of astronomy and an ability to use scientific instruments for making daily observations.”<sup>137</sup> The person assigned to this position was Benjamin Banneker, who at the time did not receive the accreditations earned as one of the leading contributors to the mapping of Washington, D.C. due to the scarcity of works published.

Browder announced the initial stages of the surveying, stating that, “On February 7, 1791, [when] Banneker and Ellicott set out to survey the site, mark the

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<sup>134</sup> Ovason, 83.

<sup>135</sup> Ovason, 41.

<sup>136</sup> Ovason, 330.

<sup>137</sup> Bedini, 108.

boundaries, and lay out the streets and lots of the 100-square mile territory.”<sup>138</sup>

Bowling further articulates Banneker’s collaboration with Ellicott:

Early in February [Washington] dispatched Andrew Ellicott to Alexandria, where that surveyor, assisted by the free Black Benjamin Banneker, began to run the four boundary lines of the federal district as a preliminary step to a more exact survey to be made later. Even more important than the survey of the district was the plan for the federal city within it.<sup>139</sup>

Likewise, In the *District of Columbia*, David L. Lewis quotes an excerpt from the *Georgetown Weekly Ledger*:

Major Andrew Ellicott, a gentleman of superior astronomical abilities.... He [was] attended by Benjamin Banneker, an Ethiopian, whose abilities as a surveyor and astronomer clearly prove that Mr. Jefferson’s concluding that race of men were void of mental endowments was without foundation.<sup>140</sup>

Thus, Banneker whom Thomas Jefferson proclaimed as “the very respectable mathematician” came on board in 1791.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, Cerami alludes to the works of Martha E. Tyson’s book *Banneker, The Afric-American Astronomer*, further asserting Banneker’s influences despite the fact he was of African descent:

...Banneker’s deportment throughout the whole of this engagement, secured their respect, and there is good authority for believing, that his endowments led the commissioners to overlook the color of his skin to converse with him freely, and enjoy the clearness and originality of his remarks on various subjects....<sup>142</sup>

Although simply referred to as the assistant of L’Enfant’s, Lewis counters asserting that “Banneker was never [his] assistant; however, his instructions were relayed by

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<sup>138</sup> Browder, 22.

<sup>139</sup> Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D.C.*, 220.

<sup>140</sup> Lewis, 8.

<sup>141</sup> Lewis, 41.

<sup>142</sup> Cerami, 215.

Major Ellicott.”<sup>143</sup> Bedini clarifies Banneker’s position, announcing that “[his] job was to insure that the new city would be correctly aligned to the heavens so that the specific streets, buildings and locations would be properly oriented and favorably influenced by celestial bodies.”<sup>144</sup> And, so it was Benjamin Banneker a self-taught astronomer, mathematician and Freemason who was hired as “one of [the] chief directors in laying out the new Federal City on the Potomac” and thus, his participation resulted in the city’s esoteric alignments.<sup>145</sup>

Born a free Black, he was obscured by Whites for his many talents and astounding achievements. Cerami articulates this obscurity, stating that, “Having become dependent on him knowing his race, [Congress] clearly feared the political backlash if Southern leaders suspected a move to demonstrate that blacks were capable of more than manual labor and should not be considered mere chattel.”<sup>146</sup> However, in awe of his unique talents, “Jefferson [still] encouraged Ellicott to employ Banneker.”<sup>147</sup> Cerami displays his length of employment, articulating that “Banneker arrived at the site with Ellicott early in February 1791 and returned to his home at the end of April of the same year.”<sup>148</sup> In *The Life of Benjamin Banneker*, Silvio A. Bedini confirms his participation, stating “Banneker was certainly involved in the project as an assistant to Ellicott during the preliminary survey of the ten-mile square and in establishing lines for some of the major points in the city.”<sup>149</sup> “Banneker was a historic

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<sup>143</sup> Lewis, 41.

<sup>144</sup> Browder, *Egypt on the Potomac*, 23.

<sup>145</sup> Silvio Bedini, *The Life of Benjamin Banneker* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 109.

<sup>146</sup> Cerami, *Intro*, ix.

<sup>147</sup> Bedini, 108.

<sup>148</sup> Cerami, 126.

<sup>149</sup> Bedini, 126.



personage [... he made] the preliminary observations [which were] so essential to the laying out the boundaries for the new federal district.”<sup>150</sup> However, unlike Ellicott, Banneker did not receive proper acknowledgments for his contributions to the District of Columbia.

Throughout historical references of the Federal Districts city planning, Banneker’s contributions have often times been written out or been misleading due to his race. To publicly praise Banneker would have meant to contradict the stereotypical images painted from the Western perspective that Africans were servile and incompetent. Lewis announces the use of this tactic, stating that

“[M]isinformation and myth [was used] to envelop the contribution to the District of Columbia of the Maryland mathematician, making it exceedingly difficult to know the truth.”<sup>151</sup> Cerami articulates the misrepresentation of Banneker’s work, he states:

Benjamin Banneker’s name does not appear on any of the contemporary documents or records relating to the selection, planning, and survey of the City of Washington. [...]. Nevertheless, Banneker was certainly involved in the project as an assistant to Ellicott during the preliminary survey of the ten-mile square and in establishing lines for some of the major points in the city.<sup>152</sup>

Although as previously stated, Banneker was involved in the city planning of D.C. the effects of racial disparities were used to discredit Banneker’s work and moreover, his participation. Cerami presents acts of dishonesty exercised to remove Banneker’s credibility thus, proving his inclusion, he states:

Details of the nature of Banneker’s participation in the survey of the Federal Territory undoubtedly existed in the field notes, journals, private diary of

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<sup>150</sup> Ovason, 6.

<sup>151</sup> Lewis, 41.

<sup>152</sup> Cerami, 126.

Andrew Ellicott. [However,] some of these papers were pillaged and never returned to the surveyor. They must be presumed to have been destroyed.<sup>153</sup>

These excerpts thus prove that Banneker's contributions were minimally recognized. Although, his work may be rarely publicized, if at all, the fact still remains that Banneker was hired therefore, a substance much greater than racism permitted his involvement.

From another perspective, it can be argued that Banneker's relationship to Freemasonry was the primary reason he was offered the position as surveyor. As earlier noted, his knowledge of mathematics and astronomy deemed him credible in the eyes of the elitist government officials thus, his affiliation with Freemasonry sealed the deal. Therefore, with the possession of these unique talents, Banneker had the ability "to reconstruct from memory a faithful duplicate" of L'Enfant's master plans upon his dismissal, in addition to mapping the District of Columbia in correspondence to the constellations of the stars in the heavens; a strategy adopted by the ancient Egyptians.<sup>154</sup>

***"Bring the Heavens to Earth": Masonic Ceremonial Bricklaying***

In the well-researched works of Ovason, he illustrates the primary symbol used in esoteric practices amongst both the ancient Egyptians and the Freemasons. He states, "The new world was tied to the hermetic ancient world by several symbols, but the most secret of these was the Egyptian star."<sup>155</sup> As Freemasons, the city planners (especially, Banneker and Ellicott) understood the esoteric philosophies and how the use of these elements would assist in creating a uniquely designed nation state.

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<sup>153</sup> Cerami, 136.

<sup>154</sup> Lewis, 41.

<sup>155</sup> Ovason, 118.

Therefore, they incorporated these elements in when surveying D.C. Ovason confirms, announcing that “the importance of the Egyptian star was recognized by Masons, who introduced its symbolism into their rituals, first in France and then in the United States.”<sup>156</sup>

Ovason continues his claim by referencing John Fellows book, *American Freemason*, where he indicates why the Egyptian star; Sirius (the god *Anubus*) served as a primary source for the Masonic rituals. Ovason quotes John Fellows excerpt from *American Freemason*, “The Blazing Star is Anubis; the Dog-star; whose rising forewarned the Egyptians of the approach of the overflowing of the Nile.”<sup>157</sup> Curl confirms the significance of the “Dog-star” stating that it served as a “cosmic deity, with powers over the heavens and the earth.”<sup>158</sup> Thus, in analyzing these excerpts of the incorporation of the Sirius star, Curl demonstrates how it worked as a source of prophecy. Therefore, the city planners of the American capital used this method in mapping the federal city and as a result, the architectural structures adorning the city streets were aligned by constellations. In addition to mapping D.C. parallel to the stars, the Freemasons also, baptized the soil as a means to consecrate it, another ritual practiced by the ancient Egyptians.

Ovason illustrates the inclusion of the consecration method, he states, “[Once] the location [of the federal city] was completed, a deposit of corn, wine and oil was made upon it, according to Masonic practice.”<sup>159</sup> It was this Masonic toast, coupled with the words, “May the Stone which we are about to place on the ground remain an

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<sup>156</sup> Ovason, 118.

<sup>157</sup> Ovason, 118.

<sup>158</sup> Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, 420.

<sup>159</sup> Ovason, 48. “The corn was put into the ground [when the colonies] were first established.” See also Albert Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1996), 180.

immovable monument of the wisdom and unanimity of North America,” which led to the laying of the first marker stone of the new federal city.<sup>160</sup> Nicolay’s speaks upon the preparation for the ceremony, she articulates:

The commissioners of the federal district were on hand to meet the mayor and city officers and the local Masonic lodge of Alexandria, at Mr. Wise’s tavern at three o’clock in the afternoon, and drink a toast before marching to the appointed spot in as good an imitation of a procession as their limited numbers allowed.<sup>161</sup>

Also, Browder describes the initial site for the laying of D.C.’s first cornerstone. He says:

The first boundary marker erected was the cornerstone set in place at Jones Point in Alexandria, Virginia, the starting point for the survey. The cornerstone was laid on [March 15, 1791], in an elaborate Masonic ceremony officiated by the members of George Washington’s Alexandria Lodge Number 22.<sup>162</sup>

Ovason further examines by detailing the celestial elements included in the ceremony.

He states:

At exactly 3:30 P.M., Jupiter, the most beneficial planet in the skies, began to rise over the horizon. It was in 23 degrees of Virgo. [...] They [Mason’s] were initiating the building of the new city that would serve not only the 15 states that had agreed to the creation of a new federal center, but the whole of what would eventually expand into the United States of America.”<sup>163</sup>

Here Ovason informs us that timing was essential to the art of Masonry. In addition, he announces that with inclusion of Masonic rituals the federal city’s success was destined thus, possessing this “knowledge of the stars played an important part in every stage of the creative phases in the construction of the city.”<sup>164</sup> Nicolay speaks of

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<sup>160</sup> Ovason, 50.

<sup>161</sup> Nicolay, 30.

<sup>162</sup> Browder, *Egypt on The Potomac*, 24.

<sup>163</sup> Ovason, 49.

<sup>164</sup> Ovason, 66.

how the ceremony not only represented the present but, the future as well, she states, “The first stone was set up with Masonic ceremonies on March 15, 1791, on a spot now covered by the foundations of the lighthouse on Jones’s Point, Alexandria.”<sup>165</sup>

Ovason conveys the significance of the ceremonial bricklaying, he expresses:

[N]ot only were the efforts being made to ensure that the new federal city was consecrated to the heavens, by way of a satisfactory foundation chart and ceremony, but that the preparations had been made for the future spiritual life of the new city, in the form of a Masonic Lodge.<sup>166</sup>

It was during this Masonic ceremony that the Freemasons replicated the stellar lore adopted from the Egyptian belief systems (often referred to as ‘Mystery Systems’). Concluding his thoughts, Ovason examines functions of the ceremony even further, stating that:

In essence, the cornerstone ceremonial was designed not only to gain the approval of the spiritual beings but, also to ensure that these were content that the building was being brought into the world at the right time. That is one reason why it was a commonplace for those designing cornerstone rituals to examine the time of the ceremonial in the light of astrology.<sup>167</sup>

These excerpts illustrate the process of ceremonial bricklaying through Masonic rituals and ideas which were incorporated into the city planning of Washington, D.C. as a means to connect the heavens to the earth; a method adopted from the ancient Egyptian belief systems to create structural designs. It is with the inclusion of astronomy and geometry that the United States capital was built upon, in hopes to obtain a unique and powerful image as those of antiquity through the construction of stately mansions. To further explore this aspect, in chapter three the monumental edifices of the federal city (in particular, The House of the Temple, the U.S. Capitol

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<sup>165</sup> Nicolay, 29.

<sup>166</sup> Ovason, 70.

<sup>167</sup> Ovason, 71.

and the Washington Monument) will be examined not only to illustrate their resemblance to the colossal structures of the ancient Egyptian era but also, to articulate the significance and reason behind the U.S. governmental officials and city planners (Freemasons) choice of such architectural concepts as emblematic symbols to represent a premature nation state, Washington, D.C.

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**EGYPTIAN IDEAS, POWER, SPACE AND STATELY MANSIONS:**  
**THREE CASE STUDIES**

Architectural imaging has nowhere been so concentrated as in the capital city. And nowhere were the political restraints so close to the planning and design processes. Each building stands as a monument of something---an agency, an architect, a legislator, economy or cost overruns, conflict, power.<sup>168</sup>

---Lois Craig

Imitating imagery [...] deliberately meant to awe and overpower the beholder....What we call ‘monumental architecture’ is first of all the expression of power....The purpose of this art was to produce respectful fear.<sup>169</sup>

--- Norma Evenson

Nothing had changed in the heavens [...]. It was this promise of stellar immutability which first led the ancient Egyptian priests, and their pupils the Greek architects, to orientate their temples to the stars. It was this same promise that led the designers of D.C., to ensure that their own new city was also laid out in accordance with a geometry which reflected the wisdom of the stellar lore.<sup>170</sup>

--- David Ovason

Washington, D.C. is best known as the repository for governmental affairs for the United States of America. It is also popular for the richly designed architectural monuments that adorn its city streets. What is so significant about these monumental

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<sup>168</sup> Lois Craig and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project. *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1972), 516.

<sup>169</sup> Norma Evenson. “Monumental Spaces.” In *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Robert Longstreth. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 20.

<sup>170</sup> David Ovason. *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation's Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 5.

edifices is that they were built in attempts to emulate those of antiquity as a means to display a newly established nation state that would take its place among the older and more established countries. Among the many uniquely designed architectural structures of the District of Columbia are the Capitol building, the Washington Monument and the former House of the Temple (presently known as The Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.) with its twin-like sphinxes and Step Pyramid rooftop. These architectural monuments are three of the many ancient Egyptian influenced artifacts of Washington, D.C., which will be examined in Chapter 3 as case studies to illustrate the varied art and architectural influences of Egyptian antiquities and ideas.

Throughout time, Europeans have been fascinated with Egyptian art and architecture, (as demonstrated in Chapter 1) thereby, often reviving and appropriating these elements into their own arts, culture, and the built environments. As a result, these ideas have influenced the designs of D.C.'s architects and city planners, in particular, Elliott Woods, architect of the U.S. Capitol and Robert Mills architect of the Washington Monument. Both Woods and Mills shared membership as Freemasons, while Russell John Pope (the architect of the House of the Temple) did not; therefore, city planners invited Woods to represent Pope during the bricklaying and consecration ceremonies for the Masonic temple's construction. The need for Woods to stand-in for Pope had to do with Freemasons desire to maintain a unified front because without this interconnectedness it silently illustrated disorder of the building's productivity and the overall prosperity of the federal city. It is due to the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian Revivals that art and architectural influences of ancient Egypt have been incorporated into the monumental constructions of the District of Columbia primarily through the affiliation of Freemasonry hence, the necessity to have its members inclusively involved on every aspect of D.C.'s construction. As



illustrated in William A. Fox's "How the Sphinx Came to Washington," "Freemasonry was [...] one among several intellectual midwives [of the Enlightenment Period] to help deliver the rebirth of ancient Egypt into modernity."<sup>171</sup> It is this association with Freemasonry that provides the rationale of how Egyptian architectural concepts impacted Washington, D.C.

### ***The U.S. Capitol: Stages of Construction and Reconstruction***

Acknowledged as one of "the most symbolically important and architecturally impressive buildings in the nation" the United States Capitol was designed specifically to serve the U.S. Congress.<sup>172</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, the U.S. Congress was initially housed in established states such as Pennsylvania and New York, and it was not until 1791 that a permanent site was chosen; the District of Columbia. Therefore, in need of a new building, the Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and President George Washington in 1792 proposed a competition open to the public to find an architectural concept for the United States Capitol building. After several unsatisfying entries, the U.S. Commissioners finally approved a submission. *The National Park Service* website reflects upon the discovery of the winning competition entry:

None of the 17 plans submitted were satisfactory. [...]. Dr. William Thornton, a Scottish-trained physician [...], request [ed] an opportunity to submit his plan after the competition was closed. The Commissioners granted his request and President Washington commended the plan that was soon accepted by the Commissioners.<sup>173</sup>

Although Thornton's entry was late, his sketch of the future Capitol building managed to resemble the monumental expectations of the federal city's buildings. In *Our*

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<sup>171</sup> William L. Fox. "How the Sphinx Came to Washington." 19 July 2007. *Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.* <<http://www.srmason-j.org/council/temple/Templetour/sphinxhist.html>>.

<sup>172</sup> *National Park Services*. 13 June 2007. <<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/wash/dc76.htm>>.

<sup>173</sup> *National Park Services*. 13 June 2007. <<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/wash/dc76.htm>>.

*Capital on the Potomac*, Helen Nicolay details the rationale as to why Thornton's drawing was approved over the other entries:

The design he submitted was so far superior to the others in beauty that there was no question of its acceptance, but, true to the casual manner in which things were being done, his plan for the Capitol must have been chosen entirely "on its looks," since it was unaccompanied by estimates.<sup>174</sup>

With Thornton's design ultimately winning over the Commissioners; the richness of detail to his blueprints necessitated additional cost and; thus, delayed the Capitol building's construction. In *A Creation of Washington, D.C.*, Bowling speaks of the financial issue that arose stating that "[a] final major problem [President] Washington faced was funding [the project]. [T]he vast project needed more than the \$192,000 provided by Virginia and Maryland" to begin the construction of the federal city's projects; especially, the Capitol building.<sup>175</sup> Searching for other financial resources, "Washington gave his blessing to a land speculation scheme to provide funds [and] speed construction."<sup>176</sup> Unfortunately, the idea of selling the federal city's lot fell through; therefore, leaving President Washington to resort to turning to the U.S. Congress and the state legislatures for financial support. Bowling details the reassessment of negotiating cost which led to the Compromise of 1790:

Beginning with a direct appeal from Washington, Maryland lent the Commissioners \$250,000 between 1797 and 1799. Once committed to borrowing money, the federal government assumed the full cost of the development of its capital.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Helen Nicolay. *Our Capital on the Potomac* (New York: The Century Co., 1924), 49.

<sup>175</sup> Kenneth R. Bowling. *The Creation Washington, D.C.* (Virginia: George Mason University Press, 1991), 231.

<sup>176</sup> Bowling, 231.

<sup>177</sup> Bowling, 233.

It was at this particular point that the Commissioners shifted the gear of D.C.'s constructional developments. However, a few years prior to the monies allotted, President Washington front-lined the construction of the Capitol building.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, bricklaying ceremonies were significant to the constructional process of D.C.'s buildings. Hence, on September 18, 1793, President Washington who had recently been re-elected for a second term laid the cornerstone for the Capitol building. His involvement in the cornerstone bricklaying; therefore, drew emphasis on his Masonic affiliation. Nicolay describes the processional:

[T]he corner-stone of the Capitol was laid with all possible pomp, as befitted the important occasion. Two bands of music marched in the procession which moved from the President's Square to the spot where the exercises took place. Masonic lodges from three towns participated; volleys of Virginia artillery punctuated the orations and prayers; and Washington himself was present in three separate capacities-as world-famous general, as member of the ancient fraternity of masons, and as President of the United States.<sup>178</sup>

By detailing the processional of the bricklaying ceremony, Allen provides the importance of the cornerstone laying and the significance of the Masonic rituals performed. Also, it conveys other aspects as well: America's independence, George Washington's tenure as president, and his membership as a Freemason as well as the Masonic legacy; thus, celebrating the linkage between the ancient and modern worlds. Nicolay elaborates on the interconnectedness of the three aspects:

The silver plate deposited in the cavity under the stone had engraved upon it the fact that the ceremony took place in the thirteenth year of American independence, in the first year of the second year term of the presidency of George Washington, and in the year of masonry 5793-a comprehensive linking together of ancient and modern history.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Nicolay, 50.

<sup>179</sup> Nicolay, 50.

This quote explains the symbolism of “[...] the Masonic ritual of the cornerstone [and how it] was linked with the union of the polarities of light-darkness, of Heaven-Earth.”<sup>180</sup> As Ovason details further:

The formal laying of a cornerstone was no new thing, even in America. It was already a ritual sanctified by Masonic tradition, a throwback to an age when it was believed that all human activities were overseen by the gods. In essence the cornerstone ceremonial was designed not only to gain approval of the spiritual beings, but also to ensure that these were content that the building was being brought into the world at the right time. That is one reason why it was a commonplace for those designing cornerstone rituals to examine the time of the ceremonial in the light of astrology.<sup>181</sup>

Specifying the sacred and astrological elements incorporated into the laying of a cornerstone, Ovason reveals its historical usage and clarifies how they are key to the construction of monumental edifices not just in D.C. but throughout both the ancient and modern worlds. As a result, “[...] the Capitol building was oriented by L’Enfant and Ellicott on an east-west axis. In doing this they were arranging the building —and, of course, the entire city — in a particular relationship with the Sun” a practice adopted from the ancient Egyptians.<sup>182</sup>

Although, the preparation for the Capitol building was set, its construction was interrupted by the War of 1812. Infuriated with ill-mannered treatment exercised by the United Kingdom and its colonies (in particular, Canada, Nova Scotia and Bermuda), America declared war, which lasted from June 18, 1812 to February 18, 1815.<sup>183</sup> It is suggested that this war primarily arose as a means to separate America

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<sup>180</sup> Ovason, 85.

<sup>181</sup> Ovason, 71.

<sup>182</sup> Ovason, 82.

<sup>183</sup> “The [major] reason for a war was because the Royal Navy was boarding US ships and taking back English sailors.” See; *The Emmitsburg Area Historical Society* website. 19 July 2007. <[http://emmitsburg.net/archive\\_list/articles/history/rev\\_war/1814.htm](http://emmitsburg.net/archive_list/articles/history/rev_war/1814.htm)>.

from England. Invading U.S. soil in August 1814, British troops pillaged and set a flame the unfinished Capitol building. The *Emmitsburg Area Historical Society* website details the actions of the British troops:

[The British troops] went on to burn and destroy every building connected to the government. This was a major embarrassment to [the] nation. The British stayed in Washington for two nights as the city laid in agony. The weather had turned for the worst, as a hurricane made landfall. This forced the British to abandon Washington the next night.<sup>184</sup>

Fortunately for the U.S., the rainstorm prevented the Capitol building from being entirely demolished. Although portions of the building survived, it was still in the need of reconstruction; Benjamin Latrobe was called upon to return to Washington, D.C. under the supervision of professional architect, William Thornton.

In *The Federal City: Plans and Realities*, author Frederick Gutheim reflects upon the Capitol building's origin and the extensions added on during the stages of reconstruction:

The original Capitol, designed by William Thornton and consisting of two separate wings, was burned by the British during the War 1812. Benjamin Latrobe and Charles Bulfinch redesigned the Capitol following the fire. Latrobe's two wings, temporarily joined by an arcaded passageway, were eventually united by Bulfinch as a central section capped by a low dome.<sup>185</sup>

This quote announces the change of responsibility amongst the original and the former architects of the U.S. Capitol building. Passonneau explains Benjamin Latrobe's<sup>186</sup> architectural contributions, stating that he "[...] completed the south wing of the Capitol for the House of Representatives, connecting it to the north Senate wing with a

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<sup>184</sup> *The Emmitsburg Area Historical Society* website. 19 July 2007.  
<[http://emmitsburg.net/archive\\_list/articles/history/rev\\_war/1814.htm](http://emmitsburg.net/archive_list/articles/history/rev_war/1814.htm)>.

<sup>185</sup> Frederick Gutheim. *The Federal City: Plans and Realities* (Smithsonian Institution Press Washington, D.C., 1976), 129.

<sup>186</sup> Benjamin Latrobe was a member of the Lodge of Antiquity in London and he also, became a Grand Master Mason on November 22, 1870.

wooden arcade.”<sup>187</sup> Also, Nicolay communicates Latrobe’s reassignment to restore the Capitol after the tragic fire as well as his period of employment as following:

The work of the restoration on the real Capitol proceeded as rapidly as possible in view of the thorough destruction it had undergone. Benjamin Latrobe, who had built the south wing and put in strengthening walls and arches in the north wing during his ten years of service between 1803 and 1813, was recalled to superintend the work.<sup>188</sup>

Important to note is that Latrobe’s work was further enhanced several decades later. Craig claims that “the Capitol building had [finally] been completed by 1859 in accordance with Thomas U. Walter’s scheme of 1851.”<sup>189</sup> Craig then quotes Horatio Greenough’s perspective that “[Thomas U. Walter] who has been honored with the task of adding the wings of the Capitol [was an] architect, trained in the severest school of ancient art.”<sup>190</sup> Similar to the other architects, Walter was a Freemason as well. His membership was with the Colombia Lodge No. 91 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The previously stated excerpts entail the contributions of the architects’ that led to the final stages of the completion of the U.S. Capitol building reconstruction. However, it was not to its finishing point until the rooftop of the building was complete; therefore, granting the victory of the federal city.

Barely surviving the aftermath of the Civil War, the governmental officials and architects pushed towards the Capitol building’s completion without coming to a standstill. Passonneau reflects upon the construction time frame stating that “[t] he Capitol dome, [...] was under construction throughout the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln decided to continue construction as an important symbol of the

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<sup>187</sup> Joseph Passonneau. *Washington through Two Centuries* (New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 2004), 40.

<sup>188</sup> Nicolay, 121.

<sup>189</sup> Craig, 133.

<sup>190</sup> Craig, 134.

permanence of the Union.”<sup>191</sup> Although, President Lincoln strived to maintain unification of the Capitol building’s completion, separatist attitudes arose amongst the architects and their architectural ideas. The debates surrounded the concerns of the concluding element, the redesigning of the Capitol building’s rooftop. Passonneau reveals the disagreement of two architects: “Latrobe and Thornton, surprisingly, had both wanted a low structure and considered Bulfinch’s dome too large.”<sup>192</sup> Latrobe and Thornton were more reserved in their architectural perspectives and therefore, wanted a smaller rooftop. However, based on the times of massive adornments Bulfinch’s design appeared more appealing for the scheme and future architectural structures of Washington, D.C. Thus, “[t]he Capitol’s first dome was finished in 1824 to the design of Charles Bulfinch, a Boston architect who was bringing the building to completion after more than 30 years of sporadic construction.”<sup>193</sup> Although, Bulfinch’s idea was favored, the materials used in his design drew some concerns. The *Architect of the Capitol* website reveals that:

Bulfinch’s low dome was constructed of wood covered by copper. Light was admitted through an oculus. By the 1850s, this dome was considered too small for the vastly enlarged Capitol. It was also a fire hazard and was in constant need of repair. For these reasons, a new fireproof dome was considered a necessary and practical improvement to the Capitol.<sup>194</sup>

Attempting to reconstruct the Capitol building’s fire damages caused by the War of 1812, the architects decided it was in the city’s best interest to avoid the inclusion of any hazardous substances especially, wood in the dome’s rooftop; therefore, another architect’s idea was interconnected with Bulfinch’s design to complete the dome. The

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<sup>191</sup> Passonneau, 49.

<sup>192</sup> Passonneau, 41.

<sup>193</sup> *The Architect of the Capitol*. 19 July 2007. <<http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/dome.cfm>>.

<sup>194</sup> *The Architect of the Capitol*. 19 July 2007. <<http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/dome.cfm>>.

*Architect of the Capitol* website details Thomas U. Walker's contributions to the Capitol dome creation:

On December 16, 1854, Walter hung in his office a drawing of the Capitol as it would appear once the extensions were finished, but without the Bulfinch dome. Instead the drawing showed a new cast-iron dome with columns, pilasters, brackets, scores of windows, and a crowning statue. While it was only a suggestion of what a new dome might look like, the drawing caused an immediate sensation among Congressmen and Senators who visited the Architect's office. Within 10 weeks, without committee hearings and after little debate, the House of Representatives appropriated \$100,000 to begin construction of a new dome. The Senate agreed a few days later, and President Franklin Pierce signed the legislation on March 3, 1855.<sup>195</sup>

With the government's approval, Thornton's design overshadowed Bulfinch's wooden dome and the construction of the Capitol dome was put into motion. Craig describes the outcome of the concluding feature to the stately mansion:

Finished in 1866, the dome was the crowning touch to all the previous building and rebuilding that had taken place in Washington since turn of the century. The symbolic significance of the dome would be hard to estimate; [...]. To embattled Abraham Lincoln, completion of the dome meant that the Union, though battered by divisive conflict, was structurally sound.<sup>196</sup>

With the rooftop as its final completion, the U.S. government expressed to the British that nothing could prevent the Union (the United States) from its intended success and future endeavors of becoming the most politically powerful country. Ovason speculates that the completion of the dome not only represented political power, but that it also hearkened to cosmological importance, he states:

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<sup>195</sup> *The Architect of the Capitol*. 19 July 19 2007. <<http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/dome.cfm>>.

<sup>196</sup> Craig, 93.



[...] symbolically [the Capitol dome] represent [ed] the first transition of the building from the Earth plane into the upper realm. It [was] viewed in terms of the form the building [would] take as a structure rising into the light, toward the eye of the Sun [...].<sup>197</sup>

Ovason further elaborates upon the dome's significance in stating:

This dome [was...] the horizon, in the western section of which the Sun would set in regulated arch, and in the eastern section of which it would rise in a similar regulated arch. The dome would not only be the center of the Capitol — it would also be the center of the visible world. Thus, the original founding acknowledged the cosmic idea behind the building.<sup>198</sup>

The sunrise correlated with the materialization process of creating a new spirit, similar, to the initiation stages practiced by the ancient Egyptians' and later, the Freemasons who incorporated this process to bring forth new life. The Capitol's dome in a sense was a mirror of the Holy of Holies replicating the center of the ancient Egyptian temples. The Holy of Holies served as the most sacred place within the inner sanctuaries.<sup>199</sup> It was the place where members of the priesthood and their apprentices would gather to engage in the rites and rituals of their belief systems, a practice adopted the Freemasons had adopted. Then and still, the United States Capitol and its oval-shaped dome continues to maintain a connectedness with the cosmological traditions of ancient Egypt through Masonic concepts. The eyelid of the dome serving as the center, where “[t]he Sun sets at [a specific] point on March 21 and September 21, which marks the spring and the winter equinoxes.”<sup>200</sup> It is with this functionality

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<sup>197</sup> Ovason, 77.

<sup>198</sup> Ovason, 84.

<sup>199</sup> “In the temple, the cult included three services: morning, noon, and evening, together with processions, prayers, chants, and music to the glory of the god—who at times came to dwell in his place, the statue in the sanctuary, the holy of holies [...]” See; Cheikh Diop. *Civilization or Barbarism* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 335.

<sup>200</sup> Ovason, 83.

that “[t]he dome of the United States Capitol may well be the most famous man-made landmark in America.”<sup>201</sup>



Figure 6: Dome of the U.S. Capitol building

While the abovementioned references offer an historical overview of the construction of the Capitol, the *National Park Services* website invites the present day usage of the building. It reads:

Today, the Capitol covers a ground area of 175, 170 square feet and has a floor area of about 16.5 acres. In addition to its use by Congress, the Capitol is a museum of American art and history. It stands as a focal point of the government’s legislative branch and as a centerpiece of the Capitol Hill and the National Mall.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> *The Architect of the Capitol*. 19 July 2007. <<http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/dome.cfm>>.

<sup>202</sup> *National Park Society*. 13 June 2007. <<http://www.nps.gov>>. *The Architect of the Capitol*. 19 July 2007. <<http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/dome.cfm>>.



Figure 7: Front entrance view of the U.S. Capitol building

An international landmark, the Capitol building is the immediate iconic emblem of the federal city, which has served as “the center of the city’s political life since 1800 when the first joint session of Congress was called in order. Today, [with] nearly 20,000 Congressional staff members [the building’s prominence is maintained and continues to provide services for governmental affairs].”<sup>203</sup>

Other distinguishable interior segments of the Capitol building are the Old Senate Chambers and the National Statuary Hall. “The Old Senate Chamber is a “semicircular, half domed chamber, located north of the Rotunda, [which] was occupied by the Senate between 1810 and 1859. After the Senate moved to its present chamber, this room was used by the Supreme Court from 1860 until 1935.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Bell, Brian, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. *Insight City Guide: Washington, D.C.* (Singapore: APA Publications Branch, 2005), 101.

<sup>204</sup> *National Park Society*. 13 June 2007. <<http://www.nps.gov>>.



Figure 8: Interior of the Old Senate Chambers

Today, it functions as one of the highly favored tourist sites and maintains the general appearance as well as the previous furnishings from when the U.S. Senate occupied it. Another exhibition room is The National Statuary Hall (The Old Hall of the House) which is unfurnished yet it has a distinctive appearance with its 38 remaining statues of distinguishable US citizens of the Capitol.



Figure 9: A view of the National Statuary Hall

The *National Park Society* website presents a historical timeline:

The House of Representatives first occupied this space south of the Rotunda in 1809 and used it as their meeting room for almost 50 years. In 1857 the House moved to its present chamber, and in 1864 Congress invited each state to contribute two statues of prominent citizens for permanent display in the room,

which was renamed National Statuary Hall. Today it houses part of the National Statuary Hall Collection.<sup>205</sup>

Overall, the U.S. Capitol which was formerly known as Jenkins Hill is one of the most commonly visited structures of the federal city. Although, it is said to be influenced by neoclassical the colonnades along with other significant features prove otherwise. Another uniquely designed building influenced by ancient Egyptian architectural concepts is the Washington Monument, which was the world's tallest structure until the construction of the Eiffel Tower in 1889.

### ***Monument of Government: The Washington Monument Project***

In 1832, a group of private citizens became impatient with the uncertainty of Congress' ability to specify a dedication monument to celebrate President George Washington's legacy. As a result, these men united to form the *Washington National Monument Society*. Allen asserts in greater detail the founding of the Monument Society and its purpose. He elaborates:

By the time of the centennial of Washington's birth came and went in 1832, everyone concerned with honoring him realized that congress would never erect a fitting monument. The *National Intelligencer*, a respected newspaper, after condemning Congress for its inaction, on September 24, 1833, announced a meeting at the District of Columbia's City Hall for "Those gentlemen who have expressed their desire" to join a group planning a monument to George Washington.<sup>206</sup>

Dedicated to the cause, these men assembled to promote fund-raisers, thus, "in 1836, with about \$28,000 invested [...] the society launched a competition [;] open only to American artists, for designs of a monument [...]"<sup>207</sup> Among the many candidates was Robert, a fellow Freemason and architect of Public Buildings in Washington,

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<sup>205</sup> *National Park Society*. 13 June 2007. <<http://www.nps.gov>>.

<sup>206</sup> Thomas B. Allen. *The Washington Monument: It Stands For All* (New York: Discovery Communications, Inc., 2000), 36.

<sup>207</sup> Allen, 36.

D.C. His sketch of an obelisk enclosed by a row of pillars constituted his entry into the competition and resulted in his winning. Unfortunately, his drawing was not completely satisfying to the *Washington National Monument Society* (WNMS); however, portions of his ideas were implemented in the concluding product. In *The Federal City: Plans & Realities*, Frederick Guthrie details the *Washington National Monument Society's* consent of particular elements of Mills' sketch of the Washington Monument as follows:

Robert Mills the architect, won the competition with a design for a six-hundred-foot obelisk, surrounded at its base by a circular colonnade. The monument society approved the obelisk, but not the colonnaded base. Construction on the monument began in 1848.<sup>208</sup>

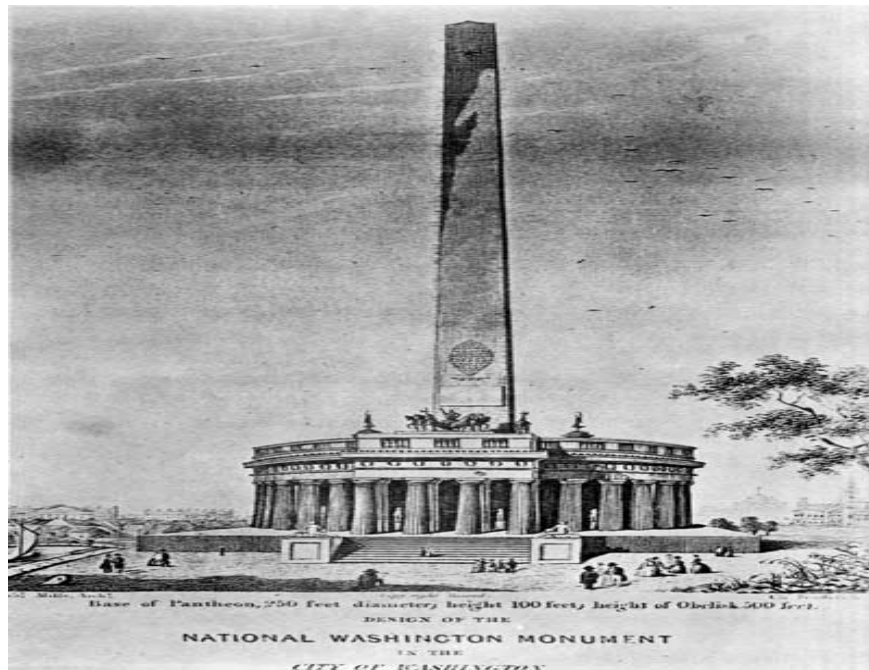


Figure 10: Sketch of the Washington National Monument by Robert Mills

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<sup>208</sup> Guthrie, 136.

Perhaps the rationale behind excluding the colonnade was because the *Washington National Monument Society* felt it would weaken the significance of the obelisk. With predominately all its members being of the Masonic order to them (the Freemasons) “[... an] obelisk [was] of Egyptian origin [and it] showed the Mason’s mystic connection with Egyptian stone builders.”<sup>209</sup> Therefore, “[t]he circular building, [at] 250 feet in diameter, [which] looked like a Greek temple,” was opposed by the monument society because the sketch conflicted with the original designs of the Egyptian obelisk.<sup>210</sup> Finally coming to an agreement to remove the colonnade the *Washington National Monument Society* set out to begin the construction process of the monument; however, this did not take place until 12 years later.

In March of 1855, the construction for the Washington Monument was temporarily halted due to the sudden death of Robert Mills, thereby, leaving the Washington National Monument Society in need of a replacement. To take on Mills’ responsibilities they hired military engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who also assisted in the construction of the Library of Congress. Casey, a Freemason himself, was supervised by fellow brethren (also a Freemason), classical scholar and U.S. Ambassador of Italy, George Perkins Marsh. Marsh having a better understanding of the obelisk’s origin influenced Casey’s decision in making it the centerpiece. Allen declares:

Casey had only a general idea about the form of a true obelisk. Marsh had closely studied the thirteen Egyptian obelisks that had been brought to Rome as booty, beginning with the reign of Caesar Augustus 927 B.C. to 14 A.D.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Allen, 34.

<sup>210</sup> Allen, 36.

<sup>211</sup> Allen, 73.

This excerpt acknowledges the architectural concept of the Washington Monument and also its influences of an ancient Egyptian obelisk.

While Allen presents the ways in which art and architectural ideas and concepts of ancient Egypt traveled through time; Browder examines the functionality and significance of the obelisk's origin. He describes the Egyptian obelisk as “[a] tapered four-sided pillar used for measuring shadow length, usually inscribed with hieroglyphs proclaiming the achievements of a King.”<sup>212</sup> He continues stating that:

Most were made of granite and inscribed with the Medu Netcher [hieroglyphics], which recorded the accomplishments of the ruler who was responsible for their construction. These structures were also used as time keeping devices, and the length of their shadow was measured to determine the time of day. These early sundials also played a key role in ascertaining the precise moment of the solstice and the equinox.<sup>213</sup>

As noted in chapter two, Freemasons often used allegorical emblems to convey specific messages; therefore, the logic of selecting an obelisk to represent President George Washington's legacy was located within the Egyptian historic symbology of the edifice.

As earlier mentioned, during the ancient Egyptian era, Kings erected obelisks in their own honor, whereas, the Washington Monument was built by citizens as opposed to President Washington himself. As architectural concepts and ideas traveled through time, the obelisk became known as a memorializing monument to represent the accomplishments of the deceased. In *The Freemasons*, Jeremy Harwood expresses the importance of the obelisk in the Masonic order stating that “In Freemasonry obelisks are associated with the sun and various mythologized astronomical

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<sup>212</sup> Anthony Browder. *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization* (Washington, D.C.: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 278.

<sup>213</sup> Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*, 122.



phenomena. They are symbols of continuity, power, stability, resurrection and immortality.”<sup>214</sup> Therefore, by defining what an obelisk’s function is, Harwood provides the specific reasoning as to why the *Washington National Monument Society* preferred this particular artifact to honor President George Washington over other unique structural designs.

The Washington Monument was erected to demonstrate the president’s stellar achievements which similarly emulate the cultural and political practices of the ancient Egyptian kings. In this sense, President Washington was celebrated in a pharaoh-like manner. The obelisk symbolically served three purposes in his favor: one; it acknowledged his status as a founding leader, and two; it recognized his attribute as a U.S. general and three; it significantly represented his position as a Master Mason. The monument, thus, conveyed the message that George Washington was not only a high ranking member of the Masonic order but, an affiliate who so happened to be the 1<sup>st</sup> president of the United States of America. However, although the Washington Monument’s purpose appears to be similar to the functionality of an ancient Egyptian obelisk, the two are proven to be distinctively designed.

In the *Magic of the Obelisk*, Peter Tompkins describes the difference of the Washington Monument to the obelisks of ancient Egypt. He states, “not truly an obelisk, because it [was] not quarried from a single piece [as the Egyptian obelisk, the Washington Monument was] put together from 36,000 separate blocks of granite faced with marble.”<sup>215</sup> This reference illustrates their distinctions; the Egyptian obelisk being created from one single stone while, the Washington Monument’s design included multiple stone pieces. As mentioned earlier, during the process of attempting to build

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<sup>214</sup> Jeremy Harwood, *The Freemasons* (London: Hermes House, 2007), 39.

<sup>215</sup> Peter Tompkins. *Magic of the Obelisk* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 1.

the monument; the *Washington National Monument Society* faced funding issues; therefore, to assist with its construction stones were donated for its completion.

Ovason details the Washington Monument's first donated stone:

In accordance with Masonic practices, construction of the obelisk began on July 4, 1848 [a day after Washington's Birthday], with the ceremonial laying of the enormous cornerstone, which had been donated by the Mason Thomas Symington who owned the quarries from which the monument's marble was taken.<sup>216</sup>

While Symington donated the cornerstone, some of the interior blocks of the Washington Monument were gifts from Masonic Lodges (21 to be exact). Allen confirms the use of the donated stones stating that "Mills had designed a [...] fifty-foot iron column on a pedestal made of stones from all states."<sup>217</sup> By the time the monument was complete, the initial stone donations emerged extensively. Allen outlines the origins of the many stones announcing:

The City of Washington stone was one of many such interior stones being contributed to get native stones from every part of the nation. Mills did his part by arranging for suitable heraldry and inscriptions for the state stones"<sup>218</sup> and upon the completion of the monument "[a] long the East and West [walls] of its interior [were] 193 memorial stones and 2 descriptive stones."<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Ovason, 129.

<sup>217</sup> Allen, 48.

<sup>218</sup> Allen, 46.

<sup>219</sup> Allen, 97-98. Figure 6:2, The National Park Service <<http://www.nps.gov/wamo>>. Figure 6:3, Allen, 81.

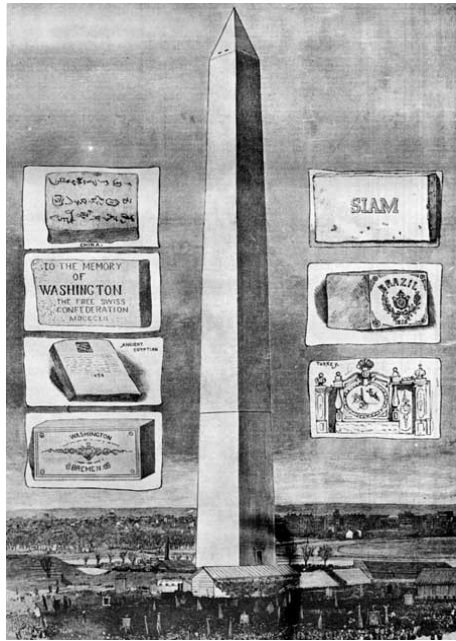


Figure 11: Contemporary sketch of scene at dedication of monument and some memorial stones, February 22, 1885

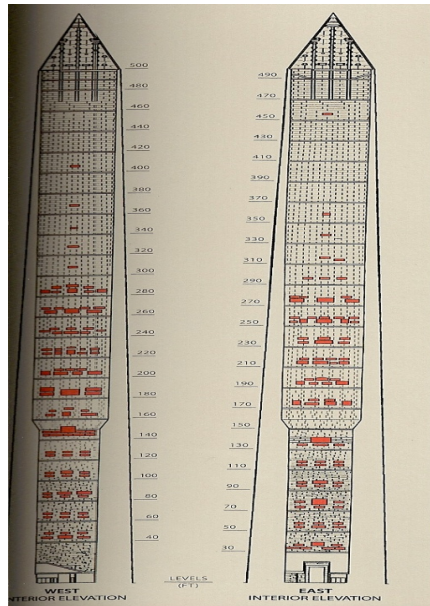


Figure 12: Illustration of interior elevation of the east and west walls of Washington Monument's 193 memorial stones

Here Allen demonstrates how the donation process began; thus, leading up to the construction the Washington Monument. However, financial circumstances delayed its completion for almost four decades.

The first delay took place in 1861 when the project was halted by the Civil War. As a result, the Washington Monument did not resume its construction process until 15 years later. According to Allen, “Construction took a total of 36 years and included a Civil War and 11 presidential administrations.”<sup>220</sup> Finally, in 1884 the monument was completed (after an additional 21 year cost-related delay).

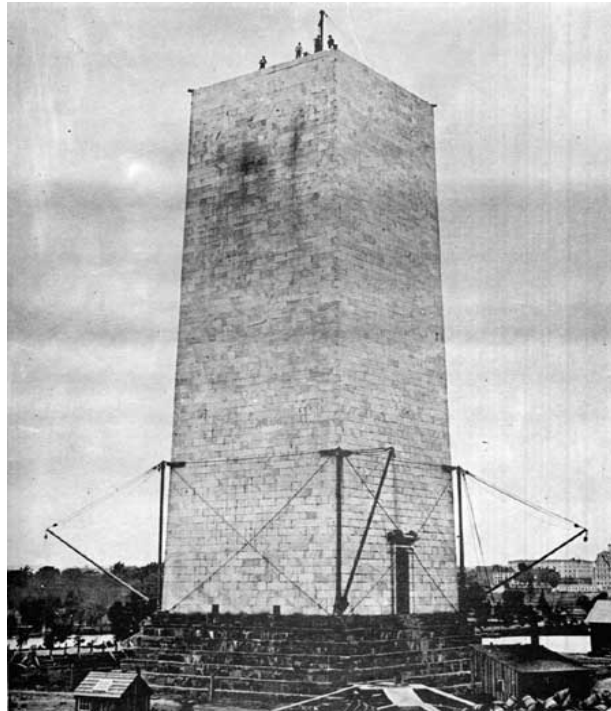


Figure 13: Original foundation and preparations for monument enlargement, 1879

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<sup>220</sup> Allen, 97.



Figure 14: Monument built to the 500 foot level on February 13, 1881

On December 6, 1884, the first president of America, George Washington was honored with the completion of the Washington Monument. Standing at 555 feet, 5/8 inches, this iconic figure (obelisk) stood as the world's largest Masonic influenced structure. In addition, Congress mandated a law to maintain its superior status. In 1894, U.S. officials restricted building constructions in Washington, D.C. to 13 stories high and as a result, "[t]hen and now [the Monument stands as] the world's tallest freestanding [Masonic] stone structure."<sup>221</sup> It is due to its significant purpose and colossal structure that the Washington Monument has become popularly known worldwide and continues (after a century and two decades) to draw crowds of people to visit year round. Freidel and Aikman's, *Man and Monument*, displays the monument's popularity by detailing the visitation rates of the building stating that

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<sup>221</sup> Allen, 104.

“Since its completion in 1884, more than 43 million people have ridden or trudged to the top for a breathtaking view of the Capital.”<sup>222</sup> Also, according to the *National Park Service* website, “the total number of recreational visits in 2004 [alone] was 309,961.”<sup>223</sup> The previously stated references confirm the Washington Monument’s popularity.



Figure 15: Full view of the Washington Monument

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<sup>222</sup> Frank Freidel and Lonelle Aikman. *G. Washington: Man and Monument* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington National Monument Association, 1965), 29-30.

<sup>223</sup> *National Park Society*. 13 June 2007. <<http://www.nps.gov>>. Picture can be found <[http://www.davidpride.com/USA/DC/images/DC\\_118.jpg](http://www.davidpride.com/USA/DC/images/DC_118.jpg)>.

Weighing over 90,000 tons with a staircase spiraling through its center, the Washington Monument's uniquely designed interior provides the luxury of elevator as well as an observatory, there is truly nothing comparable to this ancient Egyptian influenced edifice. "[The] elevator complete with recorded message about the Monument from National Park Service, offers standing room only for the one-minute ascent."<sup>224</sup> The other option to reaching the top of the Monument is by stairs, there is a "walk up the 898 steps to the top, pausing to view the memorial stones."<sup>225</sup> After reaching the top of the Masonic influenced obelisk, I saw the most incredible sight; each window had a birds-eye view of the uniquely designed architectural structures of The Washington Mall. Attached to each window seal was a description of the historical overview of each building as well as their significant purposes. This observatory room was definitely a wait in the making although; the building was complete in 1884, "it was [it was not until] 1888 before the public could climb the stairs or ride the slow steam hoist and peer through the observation room's eight windows."<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Freidel and Aikman, 58.

<sup>225</sup> Freidel and Aikman, 59.

<sup>226</sup> Frank Freidel and Lonelle Aikman, 55.



Figure 16: Washington Monument at its moment of completion



Figure 17: Sketch of the men who constructed the building and a sketch of a competition entry for the Monument



### *House of the Temple and Its Twin-like Sphinxes*

Another popularly known Masonic structure of the U.S. capital which illustrates Egyptian architectural concepts is the former House of the Temple. Presently referred to as the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, the House of the Temple is located on 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW in Washington, D.C. and was specifically designed to serve as the headquarters of the Southern District of American states.



Figure 18: The Scottish Rite Temple, formerly known as the House of the Temple. Located on 16th Street NW; designed by John Russell Pope

When approaching the main entrance of the House of the Temple, the first thing one faces is the twenty-four steps which lead directly up to the front doorway. Beside the oversized granite doors the following inscription reads “The temple of the Supreme Council of the Thirty-third and last degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States,

Erected to God and Dedicated to the Service of humanity, *Salve Frater!*”<sup>227</sup> This message informs visitors of the buildings significant purpose. Similar to other Masonic lodges, the House of the Temple has “a special social, educational, or philanthropic focus [where a] man becomes a Mason in his local Lodge.”<sup>228</sup> In the *American Freemason*, Mark Tabbert acknowledges the selectivity of its members, stating:

[... The] Supreme Council has the authority to confer the 33<sup>rd</sup> degree; [it] is by invitation only and is presented to a limited number of Scottish Rite Masons in recognition of their contribution to Freemasonry, their community, the nation or the world.<sup>229</sup>



Figure 19: Staircase and entryway to the House of the Temple

The 33<sup>rd</sup> degree is the highest level one could achieve within the Scottish Rites of Freemasonry; thus, the significance of its ceremonies emphasizes the high esteem

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<sup>227</sup> The Scottish Rite, <<http://www.scottishrite.org/where/hq.html>>; 19 July 2007.

<sup>228</sup> Supreme Council, 33, S.J. USA. 1733 16<sup>th</sup>, St. NW, Washington, DC, 1996-2006. <<http://www.srmason-sj.org/web>>.

<sup>229</sup> Mark, A. Tabbert. *American Freemasons*. Lexington, Massachusetts: National Heritage Museum, 2005), 195-196.

given to the Masonic lodge due to its exclusivity.

Instantly, the twin-like sphinxes that guard the front entryway are noticed. The “two sphinxes [are] adorned with Kemetite symbols and hieroglyphics [...] guard [ing] over the entrance to the Temple, and a Step Pyramid rest[s] on the rooftop like a magnificent crown.”<sup>230</sup> English architect, John Russell Pope, who designed the House of the Temple, was “[...] a devotee of classical and Beaux Arts arrangements, [he] blended many Egyptian lines and details into his discerning plan,” thus, creating the most esoteric structure in Washington, D.C.<sup>231</sup> *The Scottish Rites of Freemasonry* website announces Pope’s involvement stating that “[t]he House of the Temple was his first major commission in the District of Columbia. He was only [thirty six] years old at the time he signed his contract for the building.”<sup>232</sup> In *John Russell Pope Architect of Empire*, Steven Bedford details Pope’s participation, as well, expressing that he served until the completion of the House of the Temple’s project. He states, “After serious consultation with Pope, who was not a Mason, a contract was signed [in] April 1910. Pope then set to work, and initial plans for the site were completed by the end of June.”<sup>233</sup> On May 6, 1911, Pope requested that the pyramid cap of the temple be added completing the sketch. It has often been suggested that the Masonic

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<sup>230</sup> Anthony Browder. *Egypt on The Potomac* (Washington, D.C.: IKG, 2004), 34.

<sup>231</sup> *The Supreme Council*. 27 January 2007. <<http://www.sr.mason-sj.org/web/temple-files/sphinxes.htm>>.

<sup>232</sup> *The Supreme Council: Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rites, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.* 19 July 2007. <<http://www.scottishrite.org/where/hq.html>>.

<sup>233</sup> Steven McLeod Bedford. *John Russell Pope Architect of Empire* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1998), 123.

temple resembles one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient Worlds, the Halicarnassus Mausoleum in Bodrum, Turkey.<sup>234</sup>



Figure 20: Halicarnassus Mausoleum in Bodrum, Turkey

Known for its enormous presence, the House of the Temple immediately captivates all of its on-lookers with a mixture of intimidation and curiosity.

[Entering] the Atrium, the spacious and inviting [atmosphere] sounds the first notes of light, life, and welcome, [all of] which are characteristic of the building. The foyer (between the two front doors) contains two tablets with inscriptions. One commemorates the cornerstone laying, October 18, 1911, while the other commemorates the dedication and opening of the building on October 18, 1915. [It was at this] time, [that] the House of the Temple cost two million dollars to complete.<sup>235</sup>

In addition, Ovason also captures the details of these groundbreaking and bricklaying ceremonies. As he states, “The exact time for the breaking of the ground for the temple was recorded as 9:00 am on May 31, 1911 [and] the exact time for the laying

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<sup>234</sup> “In the terminus there were vague references to the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, a source Pope consulted in his roughly contemporary Temple of the Scottish Rite in Washington, D.C.” See; Bedford, 32.

<sup>235</sup> <[www.scottishrite.org](http://www.scottishrite.org); 07 July 2007>.

of the cornerstone held on October 18, 1911”.<sup>236</sup> During the bricklaying ceremony, Pope was not allowed to participate because he was not a Freemason nor did he have any intentions of becoming a member. Therefore, Robert Woods, a noted architect of the United States Capitol and a highly ranked thirty two degree Freemason, stood in Pope’s place. The inclusion of solely Freemasons was restricted to their participation only to exercise the proper Masonic ritual performances. During the ceremony, stonemasonry tools were used as a symbolic representation of the historical linkage between the stonemasons (operative) and the Freemasons (speculative) which is mentioned in chapter two. Fox details the Masonic rituals, stating that:

After the cornerstone was lowered into place, the consulting architect, Elliott Woods, representing John Russell Pope, the principal architect, presented the square, level, plumb to the Grand Master for the purpose of having the appropriate Grand Lodge officers ascertain...Craft.<sup>237</sup>

The square, plumb, and level are three of the significant tools used in Masonic rituals. In *Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia*, he defines the diverse functionalities of the *square* and the *plumb*:

In Freemasonry, the square is a symbol of morality. This is its general signification, and is applied in various ways: (1) It presents itself the neophyte as one of the Three Great Lights. (2) To the Fellow Craft as one of his Working-tools. (3) To the Master Mason as the official emblem of the Master of the Lodge.<sup>238</sup>

As for the *plumb*, “[i]t is a symbol of rectitude of conduct, and inculcates that integrity of life and undeviating course of moral uprightness which can alone distinguish the good and just man.”<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> David Ovason. *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation’s Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 222. See also; Arcturus is defined as “The brightest star in the constellation Bootes” (a constellation in the Northern Hemisphere), see *Webster’s Dictionary II. : New College Dictionary* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 59 and 128.

<sup>237</sup> Fox, 162.

<sup>238</sup> Mackey, *Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia*, 963.

<sup>239</sup> Mackey, *Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia*, 784.

Lastly, the Level related to equality; an attribute the Senior Warden was expected to possess in his obligatory role to insure that all the lodge's members received equal and fair treatments. Together these three masonry tools "[t] he Square, Level, and Plumb Line are the moveable Jewels in the English and Scottish lodges and the Immovable Jewels in North America."<sup>240</sup> As earlier mentioned, these devices were used by the stonemasons who were introduced to them by the architects of the ancient era, in particular, the Egyptians who used them especially, to build the temples and Step Pyramids.

After entering the House of the Temple, visitors view the central court and also experience their first glance of the inner layout of the Temple. The Scottish rite's website details the interior architectural designs and its furnishings:

The Atrium is paved with Tavernelle marble, centered and bordered with dark green antique marble. Eight marble benches, echoing the design of the central table, are located in recesses in the ambulatory formed by eight huge Doric columns of polished green Windsor granite. The limestone walls reach up to the ceiling beams.<sup>241</sup>

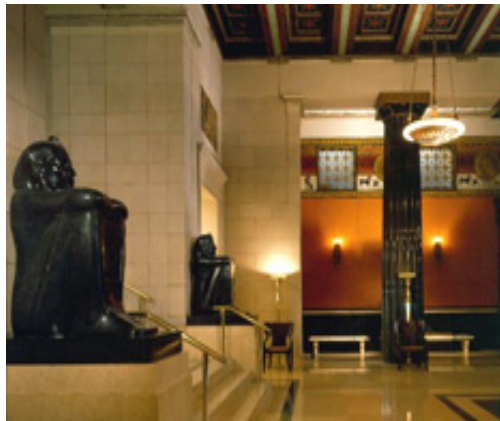


Figure 21: Egyptian style guards to portal or entrance of the Atrium

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<sup>240</sup> Harwood, 85.

<sup>241</sup> *The Supreme Council: Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rites, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.* 19 July 2007. <<http://www.scottishrite.org/where/hq.html>>.



Figure 22: Full view image of the Atrium



Figure 23: Sphinx seated on the right side of the staircase

Approaching the inner stairway, another set of sphinx-like statues are adjacently positioned which signifies protection for what lies beyond its doorway.

The Egyptian style statues at the foot of the Grand Staircase are representative of guards to a portal or entrance. [...]. Each statue carries a hieroglyphic inscription. Freely translated by the Metropolitan Museum of New York, they

read: “Established to the Glory of God” and “Dedicated to the teaching of wisdom to those men working to make a strong nation.”<sup>242</sup>

These words mentioned above speak to the work and dedication of both the Grand Commander and Grand Executive Director, the offices of which are directly located parallel to one another near the Atrium. According to the Scottish Rites website, immediately:

Leaving the Atrium, we enter the Executive Chamber; the room in which the Supreme Council meets in session. The room contains 33 seats, one for each of the 33 members of the Council. The Grand Commander’s chair is under the canopy and is, as all the woodwork in the room, of walnut. The ceiling has gold inlay, while the walls are heavy plaster, beautifully marbled and accented with black leaf and vine painting.<sup>243</sup>

Next, the Pillars of Charity, an original architectural insert of John Russell Pope’s 1911 design, were intended to serve as a “light well.” From this point onward there were several significant enhancements made to this area. One in particular was made “[i]n 1990, [when] The Supreme Council, 33°, decided to enhance and utilize this area by creating an exquisite memorial alcove as a place of special recognition for those whose generous gifts have advanced the work of the Scottish Rite.” (3) In addition, “The result of refining several proposed versions, the present window depicts the Scottish Rite Eagle with 33 beams of light radiating to an exterior view of the House of the Temple itself. The window was constructed by one of America’s premier stained-glass companies, the Willet Stained Glass Studios of Philadelphia.” (3)

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<sup>242</sup> <<http://www.scottishrite.org/where/hq.html>>; 19 July 2007.

<sup>243</sup> <<http://www.scottishrite.org/where/hq.html>>; 19 July 2007.





Figure 24: Image of the Pillars of Charity entryway; the pillar on the left represents the past and the one on the right is symbolic to the future. While the middle is the present; hence, the illuminating sun beams and radiant colors.



Figure 25: Full view image of the Atrium; the interior walls to the left and right shelve miniature pillars of the donators

Directly located to the right of The Pillars of Charity resides “the oldest library open to the public in the District of Columbia, [which the House of the Temple eagerly] welcome[s] [its] visitors to tour ... and enjoy [the] magnificent collections.”<sup>244</sup> Inside the library one not only finds stacks of books but in addition, display cases that hold significant Freemason regalia such as fez’s, Masonic aprons and jewelry and most significant to the fraternal order; the working tools. These tools as earlier mentioned served as symbolic emblems of the ancient and modern forms of Freemasonry.



Figure 26: Library seating room which connects to the stacks

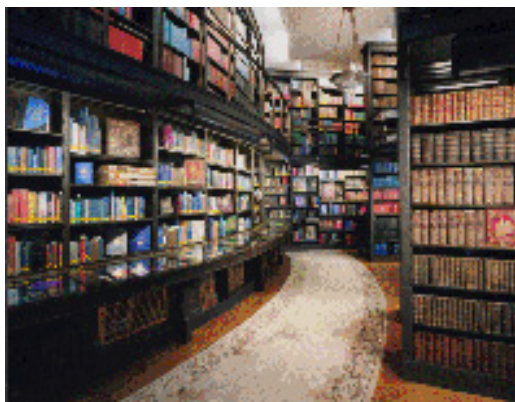


Figure 27: Library stacks also, the location of Masonry regalia display cases

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<sup>244</sup> <<http://www.scottishrite.org/where/hq.html>>; 19 July 2007.

Reverting back to the significance of ceremonies, the anniversary of the House of the Temple's dedication ceremony took place four years later, in attempts to resurrect the cornerstone bricklaying ceremony of 1911 as a means to consecrate the building. Ovason continues detailing the four year anniversary of the dedication ceremony, stating that:

On October 18, 1915, when the Sun was within the Arcturus degree” a ritual was performed “The Grand Minister of State consecrated the building by sprinkling wheat upon the floor, in the name of Justice, Right and Truth. He performed this ritual after pointing out that these three qualities represent [ed] the Three Stars in the belt of the constellation Orion.<sup>245</sup>

To the Freemasons, timing was essential to all the ceremonial practices especially, the bricklaying rituals which pertained to the manufacturing of buildings. The Freemasons relied on cosmological sources; a strategy adopted from the ancient Egyptian belief systems to insure accuracy of aligning buildings to the stars. It is due to the architectural concepts of ancient Egypt that architects have adopted the idea of bringing the heavens to the earth, which was practiced during the construction process of the D.C.'s monumental edifices and city planning. Browder details the importance of the orientation of Egyptian buildings and their significance in being aligned to the constellations. He states:

[These] [b]uildings were oriented to the sun, or a specific star or constellation in an effort to connect them to an unseen force that permeates the universe. Kemetic architects and engineers knew that a properly constructed and oriented temple would attract a celestial energy, a presence that resided in the Holy of Holies---the most sacred chamber of the temple.<sup>246</sup>

The priests of ancient Egypt and their apprentices would gather at temples to engage

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<sup>245</sup> Ovason, 86.

<sup>246</sup> Anthony Browder. *Egypt on The Potomac: A Guide to Decoding Egyptian Architecture and Symbolism in Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Karmic Guidance, 2004), 9-10.

in higher learning by undergoing the process of transformation with their primary principle being to live a righteous life while on earth. Hence, a person needed to be transformed into a god-like figure in the mortal world in order to be transmitted to the spiritual realm--the heavens. To reach this level, the Egyptians went through an initiation stage; a practice mirrored by the Freemasons. Also, it was through these levels of transformation that both the Egyptians, and later the Freemasons, became god-like in a sense. While the Egyptian priesthood and the Freemasons share the initiation stage and the concept of orienting buildings to the stars to attract celestial energies, the two differ in other aspects.

Dissimilar to the ancient Egyptians, Freemasons interact in rites and rituals that are not theologically oriented, but rather have to do with self-improvement. Author Daniel Beresniak reflects in his book entitled *Symbols of Freemasonry*, that, “[a] rite is a formal act, and a ritual is a set order for the carrying out of rites.”<sup>247</sup> It is through “Masonic symbolism [that these practices are] based on the notion of building: building, becoming and making [because] “to make” is understood as “to make something of oneself.”<sup>248</sup> (It is this notion of “recreating” that links with the modifications of Egyptian architecture and its incorporation into modern designs seen throughout D.C.). Also, there is a distinction of their procedures of recruitment. The Freemasons restrict their lodges only to persons they personally recruit; whereas, the Egyptian priesthood permitted commoners within their sanctuaries (temples/lodges) without any restrictions involved (aside from the commitment to live righteously and the willingness to learn the Egyptian belief systems).

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<sup>247</sup> Daniel Beresniak. *Symbols of Freemasonry* (Paris: Editions Assouline, 1997), 10.

<sup>248</sup> Beresniak, 7.

In “Bringing Maat, Destroying Isfet: The African and African Diasporan Presence in the Study of Ancient Kmt.,” distinguished author and educator, Asa Hilliard makes claim that the focal point of the ancient Egyptians educational process was chiefly based upon the achievement of deliverance.

The process of education was not seen primarily as a process of acquiring knowledge. It was seen as a process of the transformation of the learner who progressed through successive stages of rebirth to become more godlike. Disciplined study under the guidance of a master teacher was the single path to becoming a new person [Also, that] the education system was an open admission system that was not tied to heredity.<sup>249</sup>

The belief systems of ancient Egypt followed a cultural pattern that formed a unique core curriculum: the three stages of completion, which were required in order for one to become part of the priesthood. Author and researcher, Dr. Yosef A.A. ben-Jochannan details the stages, stating that “[t]he three steps were [...] called: initiation, illumination, and perfection, all of which contained the 10 virtues of eternal happiness taught in the 7 liberal arts.”<sup>250</sup> The foundation for esoteric studies was founded under the basic theory of philosophy---salvation. The ancient Egyptians “most important objective was the ‘deification of man’ ... and that the soul of man, if liberated from its bodily abode, could enable him to be in reality god-like.”<sup>251</sup> The previously mentioned quotes support the implication that Freemasons adopted the Masonic lodges’ initiation process and architectural concepts from the ancient Egyptians. However, the Freemasons believed as stated on the *Supreme Council 33 degree* website that:

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<sup>249</sup> Asa G. Hilliard. “Bringing Maat, Destroying Isfet: The African and African Diasporan Presence in the Study of Ancient Kmt.” *Egypt: Child of Africa*. Edited by Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick: Journal of African Civilizations, 1994) 127-47.

<sup>250</sup> Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan. *Africa: Mother of Western Civilization* (Baltimore: Black Press, 1998), 376.

<sup>251</sup> Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan. *Black Man of the Nile and His Family* (Baltimore: Black Press, 1989), 313-4.

As a fraternal association dedicated to making good men better, Freemasonry respects the religious beliefs of all its members. Freemasonry has no theology and does not teach any method of salvation. In particular it does not claim that good works gain or guarantee salvation.<sup>252</sup>

It is due to the Freemasonry's exemption of a faith based structure, that the original transformation stages produced by the ancient Egyptians have been altered. (Instead of practicing a form of religion, the Freemason's engage in a performance of rites and rituals). The Supreme Council website details the mission of the Scottish Rites of Freemasonry which is:

[T]o improve its members and enhance the communities in which they live by teaching and emulating the principles of Brotherly Love, Tolerance, Charity, and Truth while actively embracing high social, moral, and spiritual values including fellowship, compassion, and dedication to God, family and country.<sup>253</sup>

Although the Freemason's mission is aimed towards the enhancement of a man's character through the initiation stages (similar to the functions of the self-improving principles of the ancient Egyptians' belief systems), unlike the ancient Egyptians, the Freemasons do not give surety to the deliverance of its members but rather, offers the possibility.

In addition to the significance of the Masonic temple, the twin-like sphinx placed overpoweringly upon the House of the Temple's entryway is another ancient Egyptian influence added to its design. In *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation's Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.*, Ovason describes the sphinxes' symbolism:

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<sup>252</sup> *Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.* 27 January 2007. <<http://www.srmasons.org/web/library/Lnk/SRpublications/facts.htm>>.

<sup>253</sup> *Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.* 19 July 2007. <<http://www.srmasons.org/srmasons/strategic-plan.html>>.

In Washington, D.C., the two guardian sphinxes on the outside of the former House of the Temple---the Supreme Council building on 16<sup>th</sup> Street---are perhaps the most obvious examples of this nouveau-Egyptian symbolism.<sup>254</sup>



Figure 28: Sphinx, seated at the left of the door entrance, the symbol of power with its eyes wide open and alert



Figure 29: Sphinx, seated at the right of the door entrance, the symbol of wisdom with its eyes half closed. Each sphinx weighs 17 tons and was carved out of a solid piece of stone quarried in Bedford, Indiana

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<sup>254</sup> Ovason, 386.

Although at first glance they appear to be identical, the two are designed in a slightly different manner. Positioned adjacent from the other, the sphinx seated on the right represents *wisdom* and *knowledge*, thus, it wears an expression of contemplation (its eyes are closed); whereas, the sphinx on the left, exhibits *power* and *action* which explains the significance of its opened eyelids. Together, these semi-replicas symbolically represent deep thought and awareness. By replicating this particular Egyptian artifact, the architects and members of the House of the Temple, thereby, “openly acknowledge *Kemet* as the birthplace of Freemasonry”.<sup>255</sup>

The exhibition of “[t]he matched sphinxes flanking the entry [of the House of the Temple that] symboliz [es] power and wisdom, are obviously Egyptian, [... and also] the building’s roof [... which] echoes Egypt.”<sup>256</sup> This architectural concept derived from the Great Sphinx of Giza [which is] known as “the most monumental of human sculptures.”<sup>257</sup> In *The Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*, Anthony Browder confirms that:

The Sphinx is the largest and the oldest monument ever sculpted from a single rock, limestone. [...]. The great statue is 240 [73 m] feet long and 66 feet [20 m] high, it has a shoulder span of 38 feet, a head that is almost 14 feet wide and a 7 foot smile.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Browder, 32. See also; Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*. “The “Land of Blacks.” The indigenous name for the Northeast African nation now called Egypt” 274.

<sup>256</sup> See; Fox, 5 19 July 2007. <<http://www.srmason-sj.org/web/temple-files/sphinxes.htm> >.

<sup>257</sup> Ivan Van Sertima. *Egypt of Africa*. 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 3.

<sup>258</sup> Browder, *The Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*, 112.





Figure 30: Full body image of Giza Sphinx

Built strategically at the base of the Great Pyramid, Giza Plateau, the monument held great significance to the ancient Egyptians. John Anthony West specifies in his book *The Traveler's Key to Ancient Egypt*, the significant meaning of the sphinx:

The Sphinx in some sense reflects that understanding: the body of the lion symbolizing the power and the might of the spiritual in its physical form; the head of the man symbolizing intelligence and consciousness, the ability to partake of divinity.

[T]he animal nature which exists in man and the lion exemplifies the royalty and the power of the divine spirit that exists in its lower physical form. The head of the sphinx symbolizes the intelligence of the mind which must be cultivated in order to elevate the consciousness into a higher spiritual state so that it may become divine.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> John Anthony West. *The Traveler's Key to Ancient Egypt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 137.



Figure 31: Frontal view of the head of the Great Sphinx of Giza

Hence, this quote conveys the rationale as to why the Freemasons felt the need to incorporate the sphinx in the exterior design of the House of the Temple (similar to the sphinxes that protectively guarded the entryway of the ancient Egyptian temples). Perhaps, it was due to the correlation of the sphinx significance to the underlying principle of the Freemasonry motto “to make men, better men” which is clearly an influence of the House of the Temple architects. With the head of the sphinx representing the complexity of man and his thinking abilities, the creation of this statue thereby, possessed a dualistic meaning of both the mind and the body. In metaphorical terms, it represented man’s control over the body through the process of mental reflection and control which advanced his spiritual connections.

As the aforementioned case studies demonstrates, ancient Egyptian culture has filtered to the United States through European art, architecture, and Masonic ideas which have influenced and shaped the construction of the colossal edifices that adorn

D.C.'s city streets. It is through the close study of three architectural structures: the Capitol building, the Washington Monument, and the House of the Temple and its twin-like sphinxes that we can openly acknowledge the fact that Washington, D.C.'s architects and city planners have been influenced by the art and architectural concepts and ideas of ancient Egypt. These monumental edifices not only display a unique artistic ability but also the political power that the United States government possessed and continues to maintain.

The buildings strategically positioned in the District of Columbia “[signals] the governmental presence---massiveness, official emblems, towering spaces, setbacks, and more often not, a neoclassical white exterior” similar to the buildings of the ancient Egypt.<sup>260</sup> In addition, “[...] the new federal city was consecrated to the heavens, by way of a satisfactory foundation chart and ceremony [and the] preparations [...] made for the future spiritual life of the new city, in the form of a Masonic Lodge.”<sup>261</sup> It symbolically unifies the practices of Masonic rituals and rites to the ancient Egyptian belief systems. Noted scholar and academic professor, Martin Bernal addresses the misconceptions of the stately mansions and monumental constructional influences that garnish the federal city best when he states, “[W]ith some degree of self depreciation, Masons have maintained [an admiration for Egypt] until today, [which must be regarded] as an anomaly in a world where ‘true’ history is seen to have begun with the Greeks.”<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Craig, 538.

<sup>261</sup> Ovason, 70.

<sup>262</sup> Martin Bernal. *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 25. Also see; <<http://www.srmason-sj.org/web/temple-files/sphinxes.htm>>.

## CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have explored the ways in which the United States capital's city planning and colossal edifices have been influenced by ancient Egyptian art and architectural conceptions and free Masonry ideas. First, the origins and development of Egypt's civilization was revisited to investigate the influence of the ancient Egyptian art and architecture on Greeks and Romans ones; thereby, emphasizing the ancient Egyptians as their antecedents. Martin Bernal refers to this juncture as the 'Ancient Model' which has been examined in Chapter one to illustrate the prolific role the ancient Egyptians played in their advancement which also, was recognized and became the inspiration behind the development of the Greek and Roman empires. In opposition during the rise of racism, the 'Aryan Model' was produced to discredit the Egyptians when in fact; the Greeks and Romans were mere students visiting the Egypt land.

Similar, the term 'Egyptomania' was investigated in relation to European's scientific racism as a weapon to lessen the credibility of the ancient Egyptian culture and belief systems by investigating images through public and private displays held in such places as the Museum of London, which was demonstrated in Chapter one. Lastly, the evolution of Freemasonry was discussed in attempt to explain the significance of Western Freemasonry and their adoption of the ancient Egyptian belief systems which formed the rites and rituals of their fraternal order. In this manner, the rationale as to why "Egypt is on the Potomac" is explored and in turn explains the significance of the District of Columbia's need for stately mansions and monumental constructions to garnish its city streets; all of which were initiated by the Freemasonry bricklaying ceremonies.

In chapter two, an historical overview of Washington D.C.'s development was investigated to incorporate its city planners, architects and their specific affiliations with the Freemasons; thereby, revealing the ancient Egyptian art and architectural influences in D.C. The final chapter examined the ancient Egyptian designs seen within three major buildings of D.C., in particular, the US Capitol, the Washington Monument, and the House of the Temple within case studies. As a result, the similarities of the stately mansions and monumental constructions of the federal city were related to those of ancient Egypt as a means to acknowledge the city planners and architects incorporations of ancient Egyptian influences also, demonstrating how they have filtered through European art, architecture, and/or Masonic ideas. Historically the varied ancient Egyptian influences have been hidden in plain sight as a means to develop and maintain a newly established nation state equal if not superior to its predecessors of antiquity.

In the Bradford Grant's article, "Accommodation, Resistance, and Appropriation in African-American Building," he provides an insight on the tactics used by the District of Columbia's city planners and architects asserting that:

Environmental appropriation as resistance is the reclaiming or redesigning of an existing building or landscape to present a new identity through cultural expression. Appropriation reclaims and redefines a built environment, ultimately instilling in it a new sense of place and memory, defying its former past by adopting new cultural and social aspects. This resistance strategy is an assertive act opposing the authority of established design standards through the execution of adjusted or alternative environmental design concepts. Environmental appropriation and resistance are integral to the empowerment of communities to promote cultural identity.<sup>263</sup>

The above-mentioned quote outlines the strategies used to formulate governmental empowerment through the construction of the D.C.'s stately mansions and

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<sup>263</sup>Bradford Grant. "Accommodation, resistance, and appropriation in African-American building," in Craig Barton *Sites of Memory* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press), 109.

monumental edifices, therefore; attempting to oppose the fact that ancient Egyptians chiefly influenced the structural designs of D.C., which are predominately recognized as the art and architectural concepts of the Greeks and the Romans. This misconception is what led to the countering of the ‘Ancient Model’ as a means to damage the reputation of the ancient Egyptians through a race paradigm. As result, the ‘Aryan Model’ was created to acclaim the Greeks and their civilization as the initial contributors to cultural and philosophical development. Ancient Egypt’s creditability was thus diminished by not only the invasions performed by the Greeks and the Romans but also, due to “the rise of black slavery and racism, European thinkers were concerned to keep black Africans as far as possible from European civilization.”<sup>264</sup>

Throughout history books and other forms of literature on Africa, Africans have been and continue to be defined as the uncivilized and servile peoples who lack historical and cultural identity. Further exploring this historical notion in greater detail, Walter Rodney states in his book *How Europe Undeveloped Africa* the following:

From history [due to] the loss of power which colonialism represented. The power to act independently was the guarantee to participate actively and consciously in history. To be colonized [was] to be removed from history, except in the most passive sense.<sup>265</sup>

Colonization was the tactic used by Europeans to displace the evolution and contributions of African descended people from historical documentation. Fully aware of the many inaccuracies in historical recordings, Martin Bernal audaciously expresses the following: “You Greeks are always children: there is no such thing as an old Greek [...]. You are always young in soul, every one of you. For [...you] possess not a single

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<sup>264</sup> Bernal, 30; 1987.

<sup>265</sup> Rodney, 225.

belief that is ancient [...].”<sup>266</sup> With this said, although in a sense mocking the Greeks, the resurfacing of historical factors has proven Bernal’s statements to be true. For example, the art and architectural conceptions of D.C. not only prove to have been inspired by ancient Egyptian belief systems but also, clearly expand upon why I refer to Washington, D.C. as “The Secret African City.” This thesis thus, addresses the city planners and architects of the District of Columbia’s need to establish sacred buildings as a means to replicate the uniquely designed influences of antiquity but it also, recognizes their desire to validate power and reinforce it through governmental authority.

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<sup>266</sup> Bernal, 208; 1987.

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