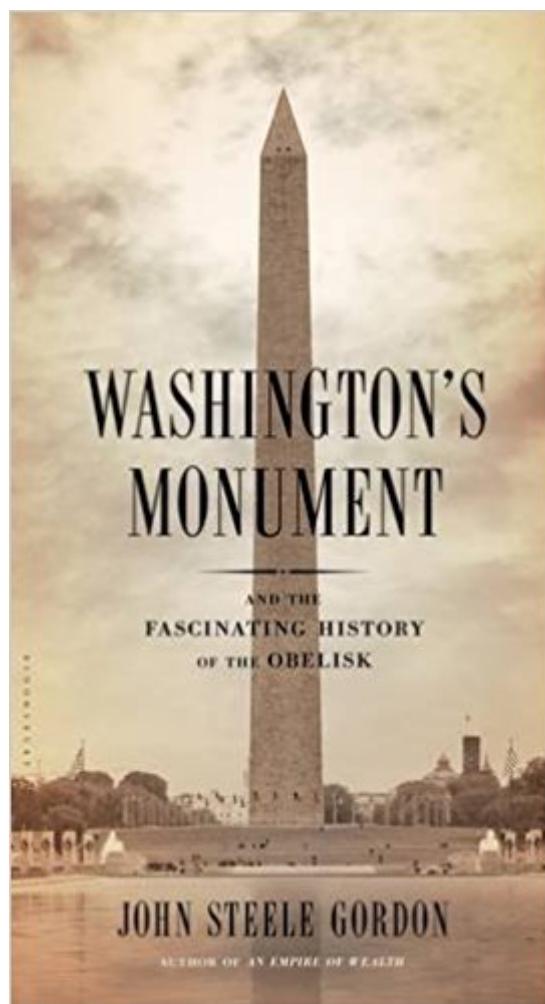


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Washington's Monument: And The Fascinating History Of The Obelisk



Synopsis

The colorful story behind one of America's greatest monuments and of the ancient obelisks of Egypt, now scattered around the world. Conceived soon after the American Revolution ended, the great monument to George Washington was not finally completed until almost a century later; the great obelisk was finished in 1884, and remains the tallest stone structure in the world at 555 feet. The story behind its construction is a largely untold and intriguing piece of American history, which acclaimed historian John Steele Gordon relates with verve, connecting it to the colorful saga of the ancient obelisks of Egypt. Nobody knows how many obelisks were crafted in ancient Egypt, or even exactly how they were created and erected since they are made out of hard granite and few known tools of the time were strong enough to work granite. Generally placed in pairs at the entrances to temples, they have in modern times been ingeniously transported around the world to Istanbul, Paris, London, New York, and many other locations. Their stories illuminate that of the Washington Monument, once again open to the public following earthquake damage, and offer a new appreciation for perhaps the most iconic memorial in the country.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[An] engaging history of the memorial . . . More than the history of a specific obelisk, Mr. Gordon's book is an account of the form itself . . . Shifting effortlessly over three continents and four millennia, Mr. Gordon's account moves briskly despite copious digressions, ranging from the history of the Know-Nothing Party to the conductive properties of aluminum.

It's a measure of the author's roving curiosity that there are more than 100 footnotes packed into the brief--and appropriately vertical--volume." *The Wall Street Journal* "Do yourself a favor by examining John Steele Gordon's Washington's Monument, everything you need to know--and some things you thought you'd never need to know--about one of the capital's most iconic landmarks . . . Even though historian Gordon's work is a short book on a tall subject, he has told it in rewarding detail. [A] thorough account." *Washington Post* "A delightful book that is just plain fun to read, packed with all kinds of curious facts and oddities." *starred review, Kirkus Reviews* "Filled with fascinating facts and interesting anecdotes, this is a book that will delight history and architecture buffs and enrich both past and planned visits to Washington, D.C., and its sights." *Carolyn Mulac, Booklist* "This is a story of intrinsic drama, but in Washington's Monument, John Steele Gordon successfully interweaves it with two others--that of the ancient Egyptian origins of the obelisk and of the much later mania for moving and re-erecting obelisks for reasons of political prestige. In his telling, the Washington Monument is only the latest episode in the 4,000-year history of the obelisk. These three stories are essentially independent of one another, but Gordon artfully cuts back and forth between them. His book itself is a marvel of ingenious construction."

Commentary "This is one of those books where you pursue every footnote, study each illustration, pick up and put down a dozen times over the course of a week. Washington's Monument is too well-researched and too well-written to be called a *divertissement*, but it's the kind of specialized, quietly elegant little history (narrower and taller than most books, suggestive of its subject) that surprises us with its wealth of detail and the richness of the panorama it unfolds."

Dallas Morning News

John Steele Gordon is one of America's leading historians, especially in the realm of business and financial history. He is the author of *The Scarlet Woman of Wall Street*, *Hamilton's Blessing*, *A Thread Across the Ocean*, *An Empire of Wealth*, and *The Great Game*. He has written for *Forbes*, *Worth*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, and his columns appear regularly in the *Wall Street Journal*. John Steele Gordon lives in North Salem, New York.

An interesting book. More about obelisks in general than the Washington Monument, but still was excellent. I personally think the Dublin Spire should have been added, but this is an understandable oversight.

I saw this book discussed on Book TV and decided to order it. I was not disappointed. I love learning odd facts of history and this book doesn't disappoint. The book alternates with a bit of info on the Monument, and then some about the Obelisk in history. Well written. Quick read. And enjoyable

I savored each chapter of this book! I especially enjoyed learning the history of obelisks about their creation, use and significance in ancient Egypt. I was awestruck by the stories of how ancient Egyptian obelisks were moved to Paris, London and New York. Mr. Gordon, thank you for writing this book!

This book was interesting and easy to read. My only complaint is that it spent way too much time of the history of the obelisk form itself. I was hoping for more of the book to focus on the design, building and history of this particular monument.

Interesting little known details about an iconic American structure. Most people aren't aware that the Washington Monument in D.C. is in fact the second Washington Monument, the original being built in the early 1800's in Maryland.

Gordon does a great job incorporating the origins and history of Egyptian obelisks into the long-term construction of the American obelisk honoring George Washington. Very well researched and written.

This book is so good! It sweeps so many interesting history tidbits along with the story of obelisks. Just the right length .

Not just about the Washington Monument but a history of the obelisk and Egyptian examples in major cities around the world. Well written and informative!

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