



George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee Annual Report July 2023 – June 2024

Mission

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

Leadership and Membership

- Officers for the 2023-2024 year were Sue Johnson as Chair, Carol Myers as Vice Chair, and Michele Longo as Secretary.
- Michele Longo and Gretchen Bulova from the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) acted as the staff liaisons to George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee during the 2023-2024 year.
- During the course of the 2023-2024 year, membership included the following individuals
 - Edgar Bates, George Washington Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), 11/1/2022-10/31/2024
 - Colin Eilts, Citizen at Large, 11/1/2022-10/31/2024
 - Sandra Welch, Kate Waller Barrett Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 12/1/2022-11/30/2024
 - Jeanne Jacob, Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association, 1/1/2023-12/31/2024
 - Lauren Augustine, Veteran Citizen Member, 6/1/2023-5/31/2025
 - Peter Duggan, 1st Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line, 6/2/2023-5/31/2025
 - Tyler Vanice, George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 6/1/2023-5/31/2025
 - Allison Collender, Citizen at Large, 7/1/2023-6/30/2025
 - Susan Johnson, Citizen at Large, 10/2/2023-9/30/2025
 - Andrew McCarthy-Clark, Citizen at Large, 12/2/2023-11/30/2025
 - Jacqueline Martin, Citizen at Large, 1/1/2024-12/31/2025
 - Kristen Eastlick, Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society, 3/1/2024-2/28/2026
 - Laura Packard, Citizen at Large, 3/1/2024-2/28/2024
 - W. Patrick Wilson, Veteran Citizen Member, 7/1/2024-6/30/2026
 - Stephen Konya, Citizen at Large, 10/1/2024-9/30/2026
 - Carol Myers, American Legion Post 24, 10/1/2024-9/30/2026
 - Robert Garbacz, City of Alexandria Transportation Division, life term

Legislative Accomplishments

- Alexandria City Council approval of Proclamation recognizing the month of February as George Washington Birthday Celebration Month on February 13, 2024.

Attachments

1. Annual Attendance Sheet
2. George Washington Birthday Celebration Schedule for 2024
3. Press Releases for Parade and Cherry Challenge 2024
4. February 20 *Washington Post* article (front page of Metro section) featuring the Wreath Laying Ceremony.
5. Newsletter of the George Washington Chapter of the Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) describing February George Washington Birthday Celebration activities

Program Accomplishments

The 2024 George Washington Birthday Parade

All photos of the Parade can be viewed on the home page of www.washingtonbirthday.com.

The February 19, 2024 George Washington Birthday Parade returned to its traditional route east of Washington Street (<https://washingtonbirthday.com/parade-route>), after marching up King Street to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in 2023 to honor the 100th Anniversary of the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Memorial.

Approximately 1,500 individuals marched in the parade. Participants included drum corps, color guards, marching bands, city and community dignitaries, community and fraternal organizations, youth groups and, of course, General Washington and Martha Washington. A mandatory parade registration fee of \$75 was charged, with a \$125 fee for those units registering after January 15, 2024.

In honor of Alexandria's 275th Anniversary, the Parade Grand Marshals this year were the Living Legends of Alexandria, the mission of which is to identify, honor and chronicle the lives of individuals who have contributed to the community in an exemplary and lasting way that has significantly impacted the quality of life in Alexandria and serves as an inspiration to others. Dozens of Alexandria's Living Legends marched in the parade, or rode in a float designed by Jason and Loren Yates of Yates Corner in Alexandria.

The weather was sunny with a high temperature of 50 degrees, and the parade route was lined with many thousands of spectators.

A panel of judges gave awards in the categories of Antique Vehicles, Community Spirit, Floats, Historical Units, Honor Guards & Color Guards, Military Units & Drill Teams, Youth Groups, and The Spirit of George Washington. A list of winners can be viewed at <https://washingtonbirthday.com/2024-parade-winners>.

Sponsors of the parade included:

- **Gold Sponsors** – Hotel AKA Alexandria, Sue Johnson (GWBCC Member), *The Zebra Press*
- **Silver Sponsors** - Simpson Development and Wegmans
- **Cherry Challenge Sponsor** – George Washington's Mount Vernon
- **Bronze Sponsors** – Alexandria Washington Lodge No. 22; Fraternal Order of Eagles ALVA Aerie 871, Friendship Fire Veterans Engine Association; Hotel Indigo Old Town

Alexandria; Kate Waller Barrett Chapter, NSDAR; Media Tek USA Inc (GWBCC Member-owned); and the Old Dominion Boat Club Foundation

- **Grant** – George Washington Legacy Foundation
- **George Washington's Preferred Inn Sponsor** - Duvall House
- **Supporting Sponsors** – Alexandria Restaurant Partners, Bob & Edith's Diner, Carol Myers (GWBCC Member), Coldwell Banker Realty – Alexandria, McLaughlin Ryder Investments, Inc., and The Old Town Shop
- **Hunt for Washington Sponsor** – Lafayette College
- **Parade Donors** – Allison Collender (GWBCC Member), Davey's Tree Expert Company, Donald Dorr, Dr. Elisha Dick Chapter, NSDAR, Janet Barnett, Light Horse Restaurant, Military Orders of the World Wars (MOWW), Nancy A. Redman Hill, Sandra W. Welch, Kate Waller Barrett Chapter NSDAR (GWBCC Member); Sharon Anderson White, Kate Waller Barrett Chapter NSDAR; The Lucky Knot, Tyler Vanice (GWBCC Member) and Woodbine Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center.



Post-Parade Reception at Hotel AKA of Alexandria

The Hotel AKA of Alexandria, a Parade Gold Sponsor, hosted a post-parade reception for parade unit leaders, parade donors, parade volunteers, and city/community officials at the conclusion of the parade. General Washington joined the festivities to thank all who made the 2025 George Washington Birthday Parade a success.



The 2024 Cherry Challenge

Alexandria's "Cherry Challenge" culinary contest ran from February 1 through February 15 and included 20+ restaurants across the city competing to win by crafting their choice of a cherry-oriented appetizer, entrée, beverage, or dessert.

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

This year's #GWCherryChallenge participant list included Bastille Restaurant, BRABO Brasserie, Crazy Mason Milkshake Bar, Dishes of India, Don Taco, Evening Star Café, Julia's on the Potomac, Kiwi Pie Shop, Lost Boy Cider, Mae's Market and Café, Murphy's Grand Irish Pub, River Bend Bistro & Wine Bar, Taqueria el Poblano, The Italian Place, The Light Horse, The Tasting Room, Trattoria da Franco, and Whiskey and Oyster.

The winners of the 2024 #GWCherryChallenge were:



Honorable Mentions:

Beverage: Brabo Brasserie's "Shirley Blossom"

Beverage: The Light Horse's "Cherry Amour"

Entrée: Murphy's Grand Irish Pub, Old Town's "Cherry Duck Confit"

Dessert: Bastille Brasserie's "Cherry Cheesecake"

Dessert: The Italian Place's "Cream and Cherry Bomboloni"

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

On February 19, 2024, the GWBCC, with support of the Kate Waller Barrett Chapter NSDAR and the George Washington Chapter VSSAR, held a 30-minute wreath laying event in the burial grounds of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House. This event honors the memory of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution buried there as well as all Veterans and the current Grand Marshall of the event. The ceremony is free and was attended by approximately seventy members of the community and lineage organizations. It is open to the public without prior reservation. Before and after the event, members of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House host tours of the historic church. This year, the Kate Waller Barrett Chapter purchased posters for sandwich boards promoting the event which were placed on the sidewalks on both S. Fairfax and S. Royal Street, which likely enhanced the awareness and attendance of the event.

The Color Guard from the Sons of the Revolution began the program followed by comments from the President of the George Washington Chapter VSSAR, a representative of the Parade Grand Marshals (The Living Legends of Alexandria,) the Virginia State Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Virginia Society President of the Sons of the American Revolution. The Regent of the Kate Waller Barrett Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution closed the program.

A special part of this year's ceremony was the attendance and participation of historic reenactors for George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette. They solemnly walked together to the Tomb where they each placed a flower, then bowed their heads in a moment of silence. The 70+ attendees remained silent showing their reverence for this soldier. Then each attendee also approached the Tomb and placed their flower. The Historian of the Church tolled the church bell during the ceremony presentation of the individual flowers laid upon the tomb. This bell is forged from parts of the original bell which tolled when the death of Gen. George Washington was announced.

After all the flowers had been placed on the Tomb, a poem called "A Toast to the Flag" was recited by a member of the Col William Grayson Chapter of the VASSAR while the crowd gazed at the flag.





The George Washington Chapter of the Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR)

On the morning of February 19, the Chapter joined Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) members at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House Churchyard Burial Ground in Old Town Alexandria. There, before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution, newly elected Virginia SAR President William Greaf joined Chapter President Scott Walker and DAR leadership in a wreath laying ceremony that also featured the Virginia State Color Guard.

Next, SAR members marched in the George Washington Birthday Parade on the 275th Anniversary year of the founding of Alexandria. The Chapter brought together the U.S. Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps and reenactors dressed as George and Martha Washington, who led various elements of the Virginia SAR in the parade to pay tribute to our first and greatest president.



George Washington's Alexandria Tours

This free two-hour guided walking tour given by long-time GWBCC tour guides Sue Johnson and Danny Smith through Old Town Alexandria, given every Sunday in February, visited sites associated with Washington and his closest colleagues, including Christ Church, Light Horse Harry Lee's house, the Lord Fairfax home, Washington's townhouse, Gadsby's Tavern, Duvall Tavern, Wise's Tavern, the Carlyle House, Market Square, Ramsay House, the Apothecary Shop, and Gentry Row. Registrations, capped at 50 participants per tour, sold out quickly.



The Hunt for Washington

The Hunt for Washington is a fun and educational game in which individuals and families traverse through Old Town Alexandria to uncover Clues about George Washington. Individuals and families were invited to print Clue Sheets from the GWBCC website, after which they could walk to the sites on the date/time of their choosing February 1-28 and complete questions in the Clue Sheets. It's estimated that hundreds participated in the Hunt, and it was particularly popular with Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops. Many individuals and families submitted completed Clue Sheets to be eligible for a prize drawing in March. Three participants won a gift certificate from The Old Town Shoppe in the drawing, and three participants won a gift certificate from Bob & Edith's Diner.



An Intimate Evening with General Washington

Approximately 35 GWBCC supporters joined General Washington at the Historic Duvall House on February 10, 2024 in the very room in which he was feted by leading Alexandrians when he returned to Mount Vernon at the end of the Revolutionary War. The General shared his most memorable experiences about the War, and answered questions from the attendees. Proceeds from the event were used to support the George Washington Birthday Parade.



George Washington Masonic National Memorial Celebratory Events

The Memorial's George Washington Symposium is held annually to honor Washington's birthday by providing the public with enlightening contemporary research on the life of George Washington. The theme of the 2024 George Washington Symposium was "Commemorating Two-Hundred Twenty-five Year of George Washington's Death and Funerals" and was held on February 24, 2024 at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. The Keynote speaker was Dean Malissa, Mount Vernon's longtime and retired historic interpreter of George Washington.

The annual George Washington Memorial Society Reception, held exclusively for members of the Society, was held Friday night, February 23rd, at the Memorial.

The George Washington Birthday Gala was held on Saturday, February 24, which started with a reception at 5:00 p.m.; entertainment followed at 6:30 p.m. and the Gala banquet at 7:30 p.m. The banquet ended with the keynote speaker giving attendees a brief lecture and being presented with the George Washington Memorial Award.