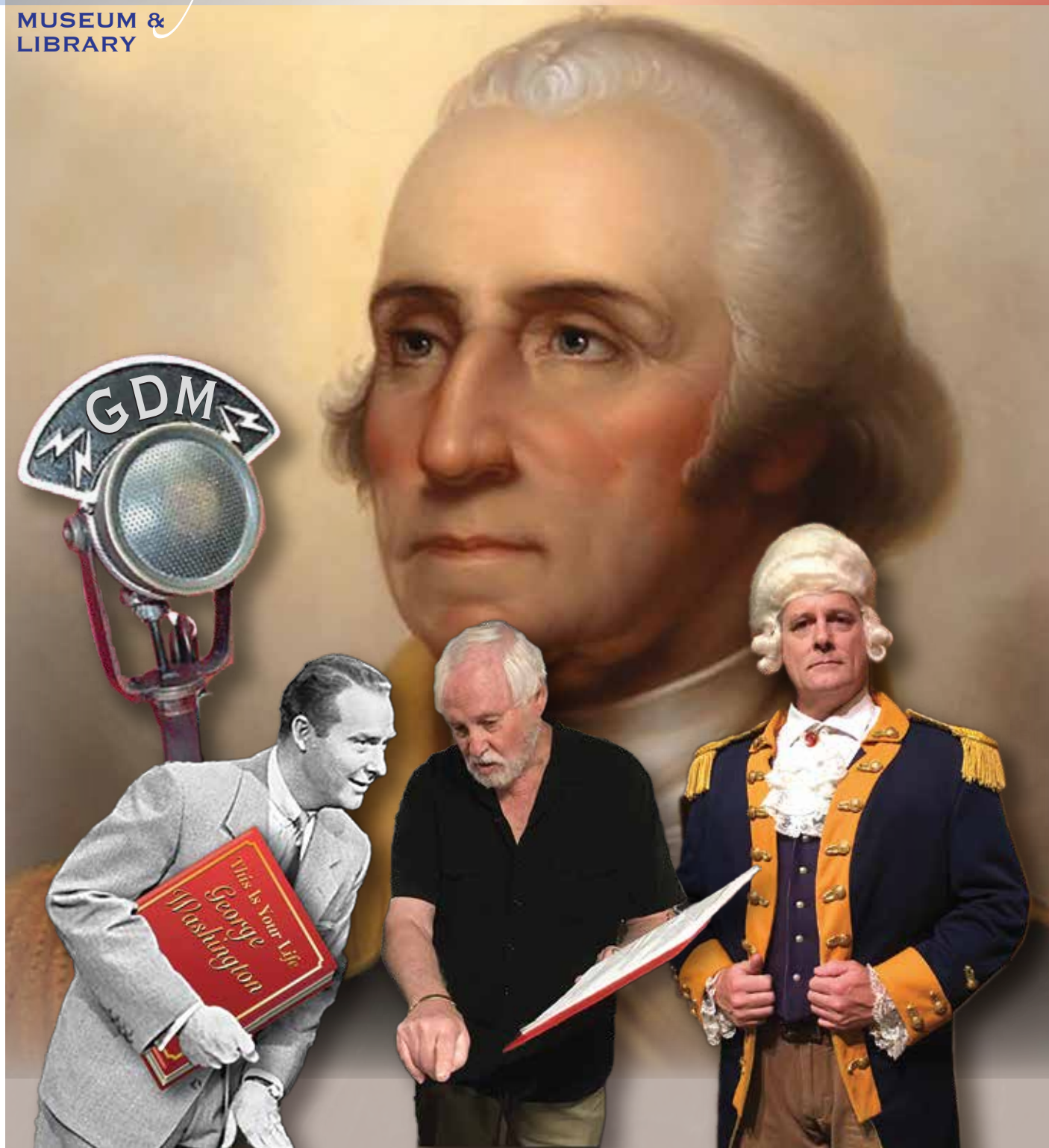


*Grace  
Dee May*

MUSEUM &  
LIBRARY

# ILLUMINATIONS

JULY / AUGUST 2024



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**ILLUMINATING THE LEGACY OF THE WEST**

# Grace Dee May

**MUSEUM &  
LIBRARY**

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In 2004, Audrey Marie Stein established the Grace Dee May Museum. Audrey believed that she had been richly blessed by the **Grace** of God. Audrey's nickname was **Dee** and she had been born in the month of **May**. So, as Director of the Foundation, she named the Museum the **Grace Dee May**.



JULY / AUGUST 2024 **ILLUMINATIONS**



*"Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness."  
– George Washington*

## Bringing Patriotic History to Life

Way back in the 1980's, I was asked to participate in an Independence Day celebration at Culver City -

Foshay Masonic Lodge No. 467. The program was created by New Zealand's acclaimed actor Clive Revill who is also a member of the Craft.

A multi-talented performer, Revill triumphed in Shakespearean roles at London's Old Vic Theater. He starred on Broadway and had featured roles in dramas and musicals including portraying Fagin in *Oliver!* Revill has also appeared in countless TV series and films including multiple appearances in the popular *Star Wars* franchise most notably as the diabolically evil voice of Emperor Palpatine in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

It may seem like a circuitous bit of time traveling in this column to pivot from the fantasy of *Star Wars* backwards to the era of the American Revolution. However, it is the knowledge of the universality of heroes (fictional or factual) overcoming daunting challenges that can light up our imaginations brighter than fireworks on the 4th of July.

In this issue of *Illuminations*, you will learn more about America's courageous Revolutionary heroes and heroines who bravely risked their lives in the cause of freedom. By sharing their stories, we also seek to encourage you to contact the Grace Dee May Museum to book a live theatrical "radio broadcast", of *This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington* for your organization or special event!

Sean Foran,  
Curator & Board President

*On the cover: An image of Ralph Edwards who inspired Sean Foran to create *This is Your Life...Bro. George Washington*. Also pictured is Jon Eric Preston portraying George Washington.*

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## Associations with Men of Good Quality

It's often said that in Masonic lodges that you will find "good men wanting to become better men". Perhaps, George Washington said it best: "Associate yourself with men of good quality, if you esteem your own reputation; for 'tis better to be alone than in bad company."



**Your Host** Sean Foran

The genesis of *This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington* stems from Grace Dee May Museum Curator, Sean Foran, being asked by his Masonic brother, renowned actor, Clive Revill, to be part of a patriotic show at Culver City - Foshay Lodge. Taking a role in Revill's program, inspired Sean to stretch his creative writing skills and set a goal of developing a theatrical production of his own based on the life of, perhaps, America's most famous Freemason – George Washington.



"I hit the books and expanded my knowledge of the Revolutionary War," explains Foran. "Combining my love for history with my pride in Freemasonry, I put pen to paper and the result was – *This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington*."

The 60 minute show, staged as a vintage radio broadcast, features a narrator and a cast of historical characters who influenced the life of Washington during the tumultuous Revolutionary War.

Since the opening of the Grace Dee May Museum in 2019, *This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington* has been performed at the Museum's main gallery.

The show also "goes on the road" in Southern California to share the patriotic history of the role of Freemasons at various venues, Masonic Lodges, and at civic and community organizations.



Preview a short video trailer of

***This is Your Life...Bro George Washington*** at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpu\\_q4mVrwg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpu_q4mVrwg)



### Masonic Patriots Who Stood for Liberty

The GDM is proud to showcase just a few of the patriots who fought for liberty and to create a new nation. Let us never forget the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Freemasons in America, from the northern ports of New England to the plantations of the southern colonies, championed the cause of liberty and human rights – making them committed to stand together to oppose rule by King George and the yoke of an hereditary monarchy.



In this issue, we'd like to introduce you to some of America's patriots who are featured in *This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington*.



Merrick Hamer as **The Narrator**

### Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Guiding audiences through the living history lessons found in *This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington* is a Town Crier aka the show's Narrator. Recalling the format of the legendary *This is Your Life* radio and later television show, the Narrator introduces surprise guests who have traveled from days of old to honor America's first President.



## George Washington

Like many colonial Americans of good character, George Washington became a Freemason. In 1752, Washington petitioned Fredericksburg Lodge in Virginia, at the age of 19. At this time, he was already working as a surveyor. Not only was membership in the Masons seen as a conduit to social and commercial advancement for young Washington, but the ideals and principles of brotherhood, relief, and truth helped set the path for Washington's future as Commander of the Continental Army and then as President of a new nation.

In 1775, following the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Washington was commissioned as the Commander of the Continental Army. Ultimately, over 40% of the generals serving under Washington during the Revolution were also Freemasons.

On April 30, 1788, Washington took the oath of office on a Bible borrowed from a Masonic lodge as he was sworn in as America's first President.

In 1790, Washington traveled to Rhode Island as the colony became a state and was met by a brother Mason from King David's Lodge and spoke on the need for brotherhood and religious freedom.

On September 18, 1793, Washington wearing his Masonic apron led the cornerstone ceremony for the Capitol building using the traditional corn, wine and oil.

Now in retirement, Washington enjoyed spending time with his fellow Masonic brothers and was named

an honorary member of Alexandria Lodge No. 39 which was then chartered by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. When that lodge was re-chartered under the Grand Lodge of Virginia Washington served as charter Master.



Following Washington's death in 1799, the lodge's name was changed to Alexandria-Washington Masonic Lodge No. 22.

Washington was the most famous person in America and as a result had sat for many portraits. So many, in fact, that he considered them a waste of his time as painters typically required scores of sittings over weeks and months.

New York artist, William Joseph Williams, was paid \$50 in 1793 by Alexandria-Washington Lodge to create a pastel portrait on paper of Washington. At first, Washington balked at sitting for yet another painting but when assured by the artist that no engraving of the finished portrait would be made or sold, Washington agreed to sit for Williams.

The finished portrait is considered to be one of the most accurate depictions of Washington. Williams created a true likeness including facial scars and blemishes resulting in a more realistic portrait than works by other artists. Washington is posed wearing his Masonic apron, jewels of his office, and a sash.

Certainly, Masonry played an important part in Washington's life. When news came of his passing, on December 14, 1799, at the age of 67, the Nation mourned together and his Masonic brothers led the funeral procession as Washington was laid to rest wearing his Masonic apron.



*Rusty Rotan as George Washington*

### Paul Revere

Paul Revere purchased a brick building in 1770 in Boston's North End as a home for his large family as well as a shop for his silversmithing business. Revere was a master craftsman, creating everything from cutlery to exquisite silver tea sets. He was a member of St. Andrew's Masonic Lodge along with other patriots including Dr. Joseph Warren and John Hancock. Revere, along with some Masonic brethren may have been part of the Boston Tea Party in 1773 but it is historically documented that he served on several occasions as a Patriot courier monitoring British troop movements which were later chronicled in 1860 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his poem, *Paul Revere's Ride*.



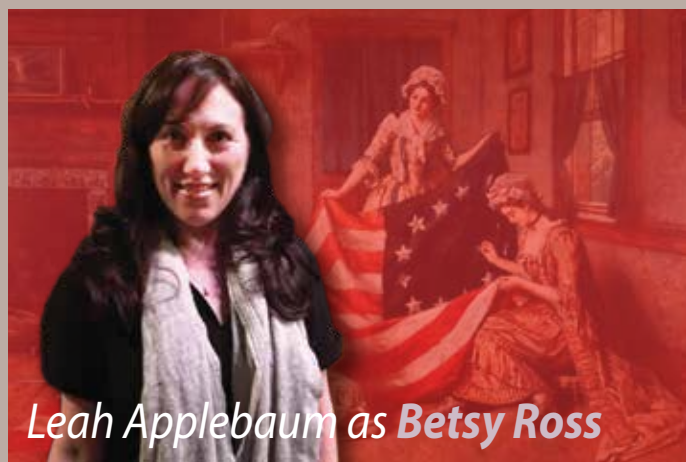
### Betsy Ross

One of history's most unique collaborations took place in 1777 as oral history relates that George Washington collaborated with Betsy Ross, a widow running an upholstery shop in Philadelphia. Her late husband and Freemason, John Ross, was the nephew of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, George Ross, Jr. Betsy later married Joseph Ashburn who may have been a Mason. Tragically, Ashburn was captured at sea in 1780 by the British, charged with treason and died in prison. Betsy would marry another Freemason, John Claypoole, in 1783 who became her third husband. Exactly who designed the iconic stars and stripes is uncertain but the seamstress, Betsy Ross, left her mark on history with these words, "Behind every stitch lies a story waiting to be told."



### Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry's fiery oratory ignited the sparks of patriotism across the 13 Colonies. On March 23, 1775, Henry spoke the immortal words, "Give me liberty or give me death," securing this Freemason's place in history. Less known is Henry's leadership in 1787, of the opposition to ratification of the proposed Constitution. Henry insisted on specific limits on powers of a Federal government and championed the inclusion of guarantees of individual liberties. He and a few others held steadfast, over the wrath of even his fellow Virginians Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Henry's conviction and courage resulted in one of our most treasured founding documents – the Bill of Rights





### **John Hancock**

The rise of John Hancock was, literally, a rags to riches story. Following the death of his father, a penniless country minister, John's uncle Thomas Hancock adopted 7 year old John. Young Hancock lived the life of a nobleman's son as his uncle was among Boston's richest citizens. As a young man, John inherited his uncles fortune, ran numerous businesses and was driven through Boston in splendid carriages – making him an unlikely person to join the Revolution. Yet, Hancock, a Freemason, financed Boston's Patriots, led militia into battle, and served as the first President of the Continental Congress. Today, Hancock is most famously known for his majestically large signature on the Declaration of Independence.

### **Benjamin Franklin**

As brash as America, with talents as vast as the continent, Benjamin Franklin was a Renaissance Man. Franklin's brilliance led him to excel as a scientist, inventor, writer, politician, humorist, and statesman. Throughout his life he attracted the attention of women, as well as having a constant entourage of intellectual friends and associates. Franklin, a noted Freemason, founded Pennsylvania's first lending library, and America's first postal service. One of his legendary accomplishments during the Revolution was gaining financial support of France which was a turning point in the War for Independence.



### **General Lafayette**

One of the unlikely heroes of the Revolution and a close friend of George Washington was a young member of France's aristocracy – the Marquis de Lafayette. Inspired by the Age of Enlightenment and Masonic lessons of



brotherhood, equality, and freedom of religious thought, Lafayette resigned his commission in the French military, bought his own ship and sailed to stand at the side of George Washington to fight for liberty. In 1779, he returned to France to champion the American cause then sailed back to America joined by a flotilla of French ships and soldiers who arrived in time to win the decisive battle at Yorktown which ended with the surrender of British forces on October 19, 1781.

# *This is Your Life ... Bro. George Washington*

**"It's a Home Run!"**

**"Humor, History & Heroes!"**

**"A flag-waving salute  
to our first President!"**

**"America's Founding Fathers -  
Bigger than Life!"**

**"The most exciting history lesson ever!"**



## **Our Vision:**

The Grace Dee May Museum will seek to present a thematic look at the American West by utilizing its extensive collection of Western Art, and incorporate California history to broaden and deepen the public knowledge and appreciation of the men and women that settled the western part of the United States.

## **Our Mission:**

The Grace Dee May Museum is committed to advancing the public knowledge and understanding of the American West and the contributions that Freemasonry has played in its development.

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## **Invite the Heroes of the Revolution To Your Lodge or Organization**

The Grace Dee May Museum prides itself on bringing the history and heritage of Freemasonry to life in our gallery exhibits and social media messages.

The entertaining live theatrical production, *This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington*, created by the GDM Museum Curator, Sean Foran, can now be booked for a special function at your Masonic or community organization.

*This is Your Life... Bro. George Washington* has been performed and enthusiastically received and garnered rave reviews!

Bookings of this entertaining history lesson are now being accepted by the Grace Dee May Museum. With a small cast of talented voice actors, the show will introduce your audience to little known facts about the incredible life of the Father of Our Country, as well as telling "the rest of the story" of famous Americans from Paul Revere to Betsy Ross.

The GDM ensemble will next be performing at Evergreen Lodge, No. 259, on July 27, 2024 – but our cast would be honored to perform for your organization.

To invite George Washington and other historical figures to entertain and inspire your group in Southern California, please contact Sean Foran, Curator of the Grace Dee May Museum.

Email: [info@gracedeemay.org](mailto:info@gracedeemay.org)

Call our Curator Sean Foran: **818-620-2058**

Sean Foran, BOARD PRESIDENT AND CURATOR  
818-620-2058 / [info@gracedeemay.org](mailto:info@gracedeemay.org)  
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*Grace Dee May*  
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*Grace Dee May*  
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