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Unveiling scheduled for marker on Capitol Campus honoring Black pioneer George Bush and his family

Olympia, WA – A [new monument](#) honoring the legacy of Black pioneer George Bush and his family has been installed on the Capitol Campus in Olympia. A public unveiling celebration will take place at noon on Friday, November 19, 2021, with remarks by Washington State Historical Society's director Jennifer Kilmer, former state representative Eric Pettigrew, and others. Invited guests include legislators, the WSHS Black History Advisory Committee, and the Tumwater Historical Society. The public are invited to attend.

The granite and bronze monument commemorates pioneer George Bush, the first Black pioneer in Washington Territory, and his son William Owen Bush, who served in the first Washington State legislature. George Bush and his family settled near what is now Tumwater, and helped the U.S. establish a claim to this territory.

The monument's location on the capitol grounds is near a living feature that also marks the family's heritage. When the Bush party left Missouri to migrate west, they brought root stock to establish trees in their new home. From one of those trees, now more than a century old, a nut was cultivated, and was planted on the Capitol Campus in 2010. The Bush monument is located on the lawn south of the General Administration and Helen Sommers buildings in view of the [Bush Butternut Tree](#).

A duplicate of the Bush monument will also be dedicated on the Washington State University Tri-Cities campus in Richland, honoring William Owen Bush's role in founding the college that grew into WSU. That dedication is not yet scheduled.

The Bush monuments were developed as part of a project to celebrate and share the history of Black Washingtonians. In 2020, in response to an initiative led by Representative Eric Pettigrew and the Black Members Caucus of the Washington State Legislature, the Washington State Historical Society (WSHS) was allocated \$100,000 in the capital budget to lead a celebration of Black History Month. WSHS convened an advisory committee, which set project goals including the Bush monument, production of digital materials, and development of Black history curriculum for grades K-12. The committee's aim is to build resources that will connect Washingtonians to Black history across our state.

Stephanie Johnson-Toliver, a member of the advisory committee and president of the Black Heritage Society of Washington State, commented, "The monument is a visual reminder of the significant contributions by Black pioneer George Bush and the exceptional milestones we can attribute to his role in our state history. Beyond this honorary placement at our state capitol, this recognition champions true history and signals to people of all backgrounds that Black people were notably instrumental in building Washington State."

Jennifer Kilmer, director of the Washington State Historical Society, added, "We are honored to have facilitated the Bush monument, and proud to see this physical marker at the seat of our state's governance, recognizing the significance of George Bush and his family. The stories of Black Washingtonians have been underrepresented in our history, and this is one step in moving toward an inclusive telling of our state's past."

For more about the WSHS Black History in Washington project and advisory committee, visit www.WashingtonHistory.org/washington-black-history-project.

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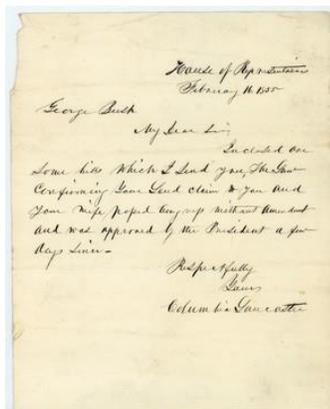


Image Credits

Top: Close up of the Bush monument. The new monument is located on the Washington State Capitol Campus lawn south of the General Administration and Helen Sommers buildings, in view of the Bush Butternut Tree. Photo courtesy Benjamin Helle, Washington State Archives.

Bottom left: William Owen Bush (1832-1907), son of pioneer George Bush, circa 1905. Washington State Historical Society, Catalog ID: 2015.0.74.

Bottom center: A letter from the U.S. House of Representatives to pioneer George Bush, the first Black settler in what is now the state of Washington, dated Feb. 16, 1855. It reads "My Dear Sir, Enclosed are some bills which I send you, the law confirming your land claim to you and your wife passed congress without amendment and was approved by the President a few days since. Respectfully yours, Columbia Lancaster." Washington State Historical Society, Catalog ID: 2010.70.18.

Bottom right: The Bush monument with the Bush Butternut Tree in the background, located on the Washington State Capitol Campus. Photo courtesy Washington State Department of Enterprise Services.

About The Washington State Historical Society

The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all. The Society's most visible activity, the Washington State History Museum is located in downtown Tacoma on Pacific Avenue among a thriving cultural scene. The museum features interactive permanent exhibitions about Washington's past in the Great Hall, unique rotating exhibitions highlighting the Society's collections, and exciting traveling

exhibitions, and hosts events and programs on a wide range of historical and cultural topics. The WSHS also offers curriculum, downloadable exhibitions, and statewide educational support as well as consultation, support and resources for museums and heritage organizations across Washington.

Address: 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

Hours: 10:00 AM–5:00 PM Tues.-Sun. Third Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM–8:00 PM.

Admission: [FREE for members](#); Adults \$14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) \$11; free for children 5 and under; family rate \$40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18). Patrons with a [Washington Quest card](#) and licensed Washington Foster Parents can attend for \$1 per person or \$2 per family. FREE for active duty military and up to 5 family members with ID as part of Blue Star Museums, through September 5, 2021.