

# VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE



Founded in 1839, Virginia Military Institute is the nation's first state-supported military college.

*U.S. News & World Report* has ranked VMI among the nation's top undergraduate public liberal arts colleges since 2001.

For 2018, *Money* magazine ranked VMI 14th among the top 50 small colleges in the country.

VMI is part of the state-supported system of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The governor appoints the Board of Visitors, the Institute's governing body. The superintendent is the chief executive officer.

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Virginia Militia

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## GENERAL GEORGE CATLETT MARSHALL JR. VMI CLASS OF 1901

Perhaps VMI's most famous alumnus, Gen. George Catlett Marshall Jr., VMI Class of 1901, is best known as the architect of the Marshall Plan, which brought aid to war-torn Europe after World War II. However, his contributions to the Army and the nation as a whole during the critical middle decades of the 20th century were extensive and far-reaching.

Marshall is the only individual ever to have served the nation in three of its highest capacities: U.S. Army chief of staff, secretary of state, and secretary of defense. He is one of only five men—alongside Omar Bradley, Dwight Eisenhower, Hap Arnold, and Douglas MacArthur—to hold the rank of five-star general in the Army. He remains today the only career Army officer to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, an honor he received in 1953 for creation of the Marshall Plan.

Marshall was born Dec. 31, 1880, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, the youngest of three children. He followed his older brother, Stuart, to VMI, despite the fact that Stuart had warned their parents that his younger brother could never succeed at a school as challenging as the Institute. George Marshall quickly proved his brother wrong, playing left tackle on the VMI football team and serving as 1st Captain of the Corps of Cadets his 1st Class year. In later years, Marshall would credit VMI for instilling in him virtues such as self-control and discipline, as well as the skill of managing subordinates.

Upon graduation from VMI, Marshall served for six months as commandant of students at Danville Military Academy in Danville, Virginia, before receiving his commission in the Army in February 1902. Five years later, he was the honor graduate of his Infantry-Cavalry School Course, and the next year, in 1908, he graduated first in his Army Staff College class. During World War I, Marshall was assigned to the headquarters of the American



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**George C. Marshall Statue and Arch at VMI.**

Expeditionary Force, where he helped to plan the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

After World War I ended, Marshall became an aide-de-camp to Gen. John J. Pershing, at that time the Army's chief of staff, and later held a variety of positions both stateside and abroad. By 1938, Marshall held the rank of brigadier general and was appointed as the Army's deputy chief of staff. The next year, on the very day that World War II began—Sept. 1, 1939—Marshall became chief of staff of the Army, a position he would hold until the war's end in 1945.

As chief of staff, Marshall coordinated Allied operations in both the European and Pacific theaters during World War

II and presided over the largest military expansion in U.S. history. In recognition of this achievement, *Time* magazine named Marshall its Man of the Year for 1943.

Behind the scenes in 1943, Marshall had been pushing for an invasion of Europe that would result in the final defeat of the Axis powers. His plan—an invasion of France code-named Operation Overlord—became reality with the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944. A year later, thanks largely to the success of the D-Day invasion, the Allies won the war.

The end of the war did not mean the end of Marshall's service. Marshall next served as special ambassador to China before being named secretary of state by President Harry S. Truman. On June 5, 1947, Marshall gave a speech at Harvard University in which he outlined the European Recovery Program, which was quickly rechristened the Marshall Plan. Again, in 1947, *Time* magazine recognized Marshall as its Man of the Year.

A quick stint as president of the American Red Cross followed Marshall's tenure as secretary of state, after which he became secretary of defense during the beginning of the Korean War. In this role, he sought to rebuild military strength not only for the Korean War, but also for the Cold War in Europe. He resigned from his post in September 1951 to enjoy a final retirement at his home near Leesburg, Virginia.

Throughout his years of service to the nation, Marshall remained committed to his alma mater, serving as VMI's graduation speaker in 1929, 1940, 1950, and 1956. He was appointed to the VMI Board of Visitors in 1946 and served briefly as the board's president before resigning to focus on his duties as Secretary of Defense. He spoke at the dedication of Marshall Arch in 1951.

Marshall died on Oct. 16, 1959, in Washington, D.C., at the age of 78. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Since that time, his legacy at the Institute has endured. Since opening on the VMI post in 1964, the independently operated George C. Marshall Foundation has educated generations of Americans about Marshall's life. A statue of Marshall was erected in 1978 and stands on the Parade Ground in front of New Barracks. In 2010, Marshall Hall was constructed, and the programs it houses seek to inculcate ethical leadership in the 21st century.



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