VIEW OF THE FOUR SIDES OF SW9

(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
Var. 1° 0' E	*JURISDIC TION* OF THE *UNITED STATES* 9 Miles	*1791*	*VIRGINIA*

(Original ground level)

FEDERAL TERRITORY BOUNDARY STONE NO. SOUTHWEST 9 (SW9) EMPLACED IN 1791

BENJAMIN BANNEKER NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK ASSIGNED IN 1980
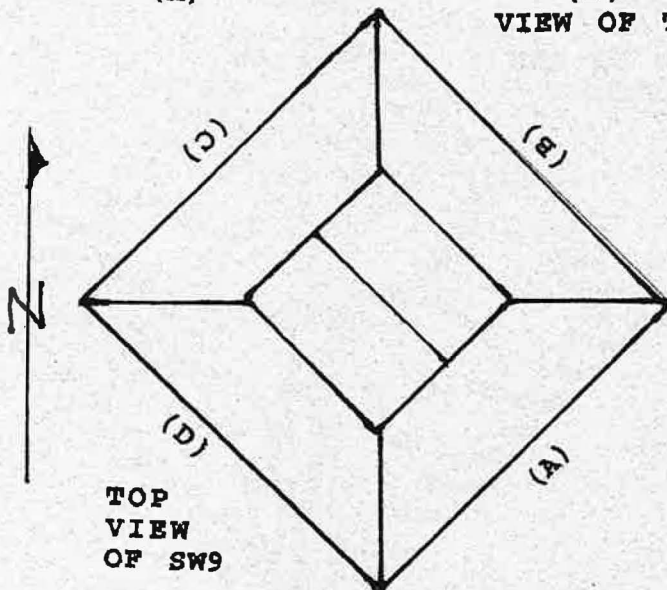
THE BOUNDARY STONES

The boundaries of the 10-mile square Federal Territory were marked with forty milestones. Each stone is identified by location: the corner stones are called South, West, North, and East; the boundary sides are named Southwest, Northwest, Northeast, and Southeast, and intermediate stones along each side are numbered clockwise from the previous corner. All stones are of grey-brown sandstone cut from quarries at Aquia Creek in Stafford County; markers are about one-foot on the sides with beveled tops, are four feet (intermediate stones) or five feet (cornerstones) long, and were set originally two feet into the ground. Inscriptions on the stones include names of the jurisdictions on the appropriate sides, distance from the previous corner, magnetic variation at that time and place, and the year set or inscribed; the 14 stones in Virginia are dated 1791, and the 26 along the Maryland border are dated 1792.

N

TOP VIEW OF SW9

(C) (B) (D) (A)

SCALE INCHES

THE FEDERAL TERRITORY

In 1787, a federal "district (not exceeding ten miles square)" was specified in the Constitution to "become the seat of the Government of the United States". In December 1788, Maryland offered to cede land for such a site, and, in December 1789, the Virginia legislature made a similar offer. In July 1790, an Act of Congress established that the Federal District would be on the Potomac River, and, in January 1791, President Washington proclaimed that the survey for the district should be made beginning at a point on Hunting Creek south of Alexandria, run due northwest for ten miles, thence into Maryland due northeast for ten miles, thence due southeast for ten miles, and finally due southwest for ten miles to the beginning on Hunting Creek.

THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson invited Major Andrew Ellicott, probably the foremost professional surveyor of that time, to conduct the survey. Ellicott accepted and rapidly assembled his equipment and staff. One key recruit was a 60-year old African-American astonomer, Benjamin Banneker, recently trained and recommended by Ellicott's cousin; Thomas Jefferson also concurred with his employment to make daily measurements at the observatory tent. Ellicott began his first survey from Alexandria on February 14, 1791, crossed the Potomac into Maryland on February 22, and, according to his expense accounts, completed the preliminary lines on March 1, or in 13 days . On March 30, the President issued a Proclamation identifying the boundaries of the Federal Territory and ordered them to be permanently marked.

THE PERMANENT SURVEY

On April 15, 1791, the South Cornerstone was dedicated with much ceremony at Jones Point in Alexandria. The permanent boundary lines were established by clearing a 40-foot wide path and setting the mile stones; the suvey accounts indicate this was done from June 4 to July 18, or in 44 days. Finally, the bookkeeper noted that Ellicott later spent 16 days in preparing his final report and plotting the lines for the "City of Washington" and "Territory of Columbia" (named September 8); the United States Gazette first used the term "District of Columbia" on January 4, 1792. Ellicott forwarded to Jefferson in early 1793 the final certificate of completion of the survey, the map of the district, and a statement of the survey expenses totalling $2.986.25.

[In 1995, the Northern Virginia Boundary Stones Committee noted the status of the 14 Virginia stones: 11 are easily accessible, 10 are still originals, 8 have correct position and orientation, but only 3, including SW9, are rated in good shape with completely readable inscriptions.]

THE RETROCESSION TO VIRGINIA

On September 7, 1846, Congress and President Polk, in response to Virginian requests , retroceded the 31 square miles of the District of Columbia in Virginia, and on March 20, 1847, state laws again were in force within the new Alexandria County. In 1870, part of this new jurisdiction became the City of Alexandria, and in 1920 the remainder became Arlington County. In 1936, part of the former District line also became the boundary between Arlington and the Town of Falls Church.

THE PROTECTION AND RECOGNITION

For a long time, the stones were generally ignored. Beginning in 1915, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) began erecting an iron picket fence around each stone. The three-feet square fence at SW9 was dedicated May 19, 1916, and rededicated during 1989. SW9 was recognized on the National Register of Historic Places on May 11, 1976, and in 1980 became a National Historic Landmark to honor Benjamin Banneker. The South Cornerstone was placed on the National Register on May 19, 1980, and the other 12 stones in Virginia were added to the Register on February 1,1991; the documentation for these first monuments to the Federal Capital was provided by the DAR.

Finally, the open space bordering Four Mile Run between Van Buren and Sycamore Streets was dedicated on July 17, 1999, by Arlington County and the City of Falls Church as the Benjamin Banneker Park.

PLAN VIEW OF THE
FORTY DISTRICT
BOUNDARY
STONES