

BOUNDARY STONES WASHINGTON LAID HERE STILL STAND

36, Placed in 1791 and 1792
Under His Supervision,
in Original Position.

MASONIC RITES, FETES ATTEND FIRST STEPS

Meridian and Jefferson Pier
Stones Are Enumerated
as Historical.

Washington, the Capital City, has been a mecca for tourists for many years; and practically everything of historical value has been extolled and displayed with pardonable pride by the people of our fair city, and it is only natural that intimate things dealing with George Washington should hold the place of honor in this category.

Some of the least-known remaining memorials to Washington are the original boundary stones laid in 1791 and 1792 under his supervision to bound the limits of the 10-mile-square area then called the Federal City, of which there are 38 still standing in their original positions.

On July 16, 1790, Congress passed an act designating a site to be selected between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and the Conococheague, on the Potomac River, and authorized Gen. Washington to select three commissioners, who would, under his personal supervision, survey a district or territory for the Capital of the Nation. At that time it was thought that Alexandria and the mouth of the Eastern Branch could be embraced within the limits designated by this act, and Gen. Washington issued a proclamation declaring that a part of the said district should be found by running four lines as an experiment, the southern point starting on Hunting Creek at most due south from Alexandria at Jones Point Lighthouse, the northern corner to be near what is now Woodside, Md., the eastern corner at the Present Chesapeake Beach Junction, and the western corner at West Falls Church, Va. Each line to be 10 miles long, thus forming a rectangle for the Federal City.

Commissioners Named.

To take charge of this newly created territory, supervise its survey and attend to the business growing out of the condemnation for public use, Washington appointed on January 22, 1790, three commissioners, Thomas Johnson, Daniel Carroll and Dr. Davis Stuart.

Two months later, March 28, 1791, Washington arrived in Georgetown from Philadelphia, and the next day made a tour of inspection of the District in company with the three commissioners and two surveyors, Andrew Ellicott and Maj. Peter Charles L'Enfant. Three days later the commissioners held their first meeting in Georgetown, and three days after that, on April 15, 1791, there was laid with solemn and elaborate Masonic ceremonials, the corner stone of the Capital City at Jones Point Light House, Alexandria, Va.

When Mr. Ellicott had ascertained the precise place from which the first line of the District was to proceed, the master of the lodge and Dr. Stuart, assisted by others of their brethren, placed the stone, after which a deposit of corn, wine and oil was made upon it, and the following interesting observations were delivered by the Rev. Mr. Mulr:

Land of Fountains.

"Of America, it may be said, as it was of Judea of old, that it is a good land, and large: a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills—a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive and honey; a land wherein we eat bread without scarceness, and have lack of nothing; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass—a land which the Lord thy God carest for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the ending of the year! May Americans be grateful and virtuous, they shall secure the indulgence of Providence—may they be unanimous and just, and they shall rise to greatness! May true patriotism actuate every heart—may it be the devout, and universal

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WASHINGTON'S BOUNDARY STONES STILL STANDING

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wish "Peace be within thy walls, O America!—and prosperity within thy palaces!" Amiable it is for brethren to dwell in unity. It is more fragrant than the perfumes on Aaron's garments! It is more refreshing than the dews on Herson's Hill!

"May this stone long commemorate the goodness of God in those uncommon events which have given America a name among the nations—under this stone, may jealousy and selfishness be forever buried! From this stone may a superstructure arise, whose glory, whose magnificence, whose stability, unequalled hitherto, shall astonish the world, and invite even the savage of the wilderness to take shelter under its roof."

Banquet Was Served.

After partaking of some liquid refreshments, the company returned to the house where the commissioners were staying, where a banquet was served and a number of toasts were offered, and the following, which was delivered by the master of the lodge, was received with every token of approbation

"May 'Jealousy, that green-eyed monster,' be buried deep under the work which we have this day completed, never to rise again within the Federal district!"

After the corner stone was laid the surveyors laid out their four lines with transit and chain bounding the District, and a path 40 feet wide was cut through the forests and cement boundary stones were placed at intervals of approximately 1 mile apart. These stones are inscribed with "Jurisdiction of the United States" on one side and on the other with either "Maryland" or "Virginia" and the date 1791 on the Virginia stones and 1792 on the Maryland stones.

They also had the variations of the compass and the mileage from the corner stone. There were originally 40 of these stones, 25 in the present District and 15 in Virginia, and today there are 36 still standing, thanks to the efforts of the Daughters of the American Revolution, whose efforts were instrumental in having these stones resurrected, and iron fences, with the proper placards, built around them.

Meridian and Jefferson Stones.

There are several other stones in different parts of the city that are well worth noting for their historic value and chief among these are the Meridian Stone and the Jefferson Pier Stone.

In 1804 President Thomas Jefferson ordered a meridian line to be laid to be used, first, to serve locally as a base line from which to lay out the new District, and, second, to serve as a first meridian from which to reckon longitudes in the very young and patriotic republic, but this last idea never materialized. This meridian line from the original corner stone extended through the President's house north along the center of Sixteenth street, and then over Peter's Hill, afterward called Meridian Hill, to the intersection of the diagonal lines at the north point of the District, about a mile due west from Silver Spring, Md. Upon this line, near the brow of Peter's Hill, Commodore David Porter had a mansion, the door of which was due north of the center door of the President's house. On the edge of the south lawn, close to the house, was placed the meridian stone, by Nicholas King, surveyor.

In the seventies, when Sixteenth street was cut through and graded, the contractor removed the stone to his home, where it was used for some years as a carriage step in front of his house at Fourteenth and R streets. This use of such a historical piece of property raised a storm of protest

from the citizens, to the War Department stepped in and claimed the stone as Government property and removed it to one of their buildings. This aroused the ire of the contractor and he recovered the stone on a writ of replevin from the court. He then built a 20-foot walled-in well and securely hid the stone therein, and from then on denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of the same. It was erroneously thought for some time that this stone was used for a hitching post in front of the Reform School on Bladensburg road.

Stone Is Photographed.

Some years ago Anton Heltmuller, authority on Washingtoniana, traced the whereabouts of the meridian stone and purchased the same, and this is the first photograph ever made of it.

The line crossing the meridian at a right angle near the Washington obelisk extends west across the Potomac River and passes near the site of old Fort Corcoran, and on to the intersection of the diagonal lines to a stone at the west point of the District, near West Falls Church, Va. Eastward it extends through the Rotunda of the Capitol and center of East Capitol street, crossing the Anacostia River, and on to the intersection of the diagonal lines to the stone at the east point of the District, about three miles east of Benning Bridge.

At the crossing of these lines near the Washington Monument was located on December 18, 1804, the stone that designates the center of the ten miles square, called the Jefferson Pier stone.

It has been used as the basis for the bench mark calculations for the city grades, and the original measurement for the Washington Monument was taken from it. It was situated about 150 yards northwest from the Monument, on the banks of the old Tiber Creek. It had a blue rock foundation, which was about six feet high on the creek side, and covered by a hewn sandstone cap about five feet square and about eight inches thick. On the south side, the shore earth partly covered it. This capstone and part of the foundation were removed by orders of Gen. Babcock, the commissioner of public buildings and grounds, in 1872, through a mistake in its identity.

What remained of the original masonry was covered by several feet of earth when the roadway was made. There was another stone close to the monument, that no doubt was placed to represent a point due west of the south end of the old Capitol Building. This fact seems to have been unknown to Gen. Babcock and his engineers, as they took this stone to be on a direct line with the President's house. Because of this error they made a road 30 feet too far to the east. The greatest blunder of all was made concerning the Washington obelisk after Congress passed an act to complete it. A board of Army engineers was detailed to examine the foundation of the Monument and determine the perpendicular of the structure, and its subsidence, if any.

After thorough tests they stated that the monument shaft had sunk bodily at the northwest angle 8.82 inches, that it had an inclination toward the north 1.82 inches at the top, and therefore it would not be advisable to add additional weight upon it. After the report of the engineers had been published the Monument Society reviewed the subject and decided that the engineers had taken the survey from the wrong pier and requested that a resurvey be taken, which was made in company of an officer of the society, who found the masonry of the foundation of the original center stone, which convinced them that a mistake had been made. So the original Jefferson pier stone was recovered and reerected on December 2, 1889.