

# BOUNDARY MARKERS of the NATION'S CAPITAL

In 1846 the Federal Government retroceded to the State of Virginia thirty-three square miles of land the State had ceded to the Federal Government in 1789. At the time of original survey of the Federal Territory forty markers were put in place along the boundary of the ten mile square. The majority are still in place. All of the markers have been designated as Category II Landmarks by the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital. Twenty-six are located along the District-Maryland boundary line.

*The District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution assumed responsibility for protection of the historic Boundary Markers of the Federal Territory.*





Map showing the original Federal Territory.

The boundary of the District of Columbia, originally ten square miles in size, was surveyed in 1791 by Major Andrew Ellicott at the request of President George Washington. During the survey forty small granite boundary marker stones were placed approximately one mile apart around the periphery. All but one of these remain today in various stages of deterioration.

Because of the historical significance of these milestones marking the original territory of the seat of government of the United States, their preservation is important. The National Capital Planning Commission report, *Boundary Stones of the Nation's Capital: A Proposal for their Preservation and Protection*, describes the location and current condition of the mile markers,

tells of previous efforts—particularly by the Daughters of the American Revolution—to protect them, and proposes recommendations for their preservation.

History of the placement of the stones goes back to 1791 when Andrew Ellicott accepted a commission to survey the ten mile square. He was assisted by

Benjamin Banneker, who made the astronomical observations and calculations necessary to establish the location of the south corner stone. Ellicott and his field crews did the actual surveying, which began in February 1791 at a base camp set up near Jones' Point where Hunting Creek met the Potomac River. After the preliminary survey had progressed far enough for

Ellicott to move his lodgings to Georgetown and establish an office there, he was joined by Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant—the person selected by President George Washington to prepare the actual plan of the new city to be created within the ten mile square.

Upon completion of the preliminary survey of the boundaries of the Federal Territory, the South Corner Stone was ceremoniously laid by George Washington at Jones' Point on April 15, 1791. Work then began on the final survey of the boundaries and of the major streets and avenues called for in L'Enfant's plan. However, as L'Enfant's relationship with the Presidentially appointed Commissioners steadily deteriorated, Ellicott was placed in charge of the entire project, including the plan of the city. On January 1, 1793 Ellicott submitted a formal report certifying that the boundary survey had been completed and square mile stones set. The stones were marked to include the number of miles from Jones' Point to the west, north, and east corners and back to the South Point. At several locations where it became necessary to place the stones in water or in some other undesirable location, they were moved to the nearest appropriate ground area and their true distances were enscribed upon them. Other inscriptions differed according to orientation of the stone—towards the Territory, Virginia or Maryland. The markers also included inscriptions stating the year they were placed and the position of the surveying compass needle at that point.

Over the years there has been a gradual deterioration of the markers—mainly because of neglect and a lack of concern. Many have even been buried. Through informative sources such as the Boundary Stone report, public enlightenment as to the location

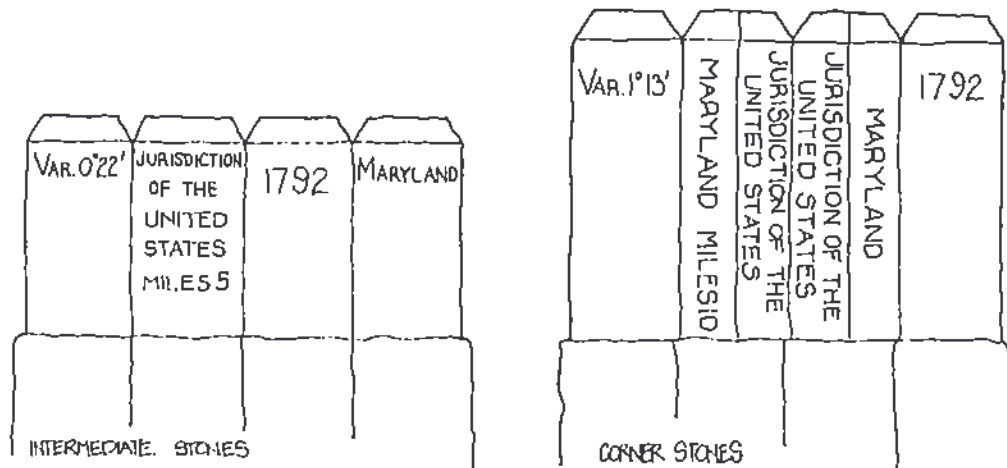
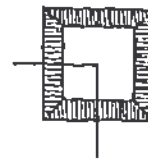
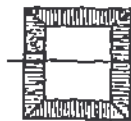
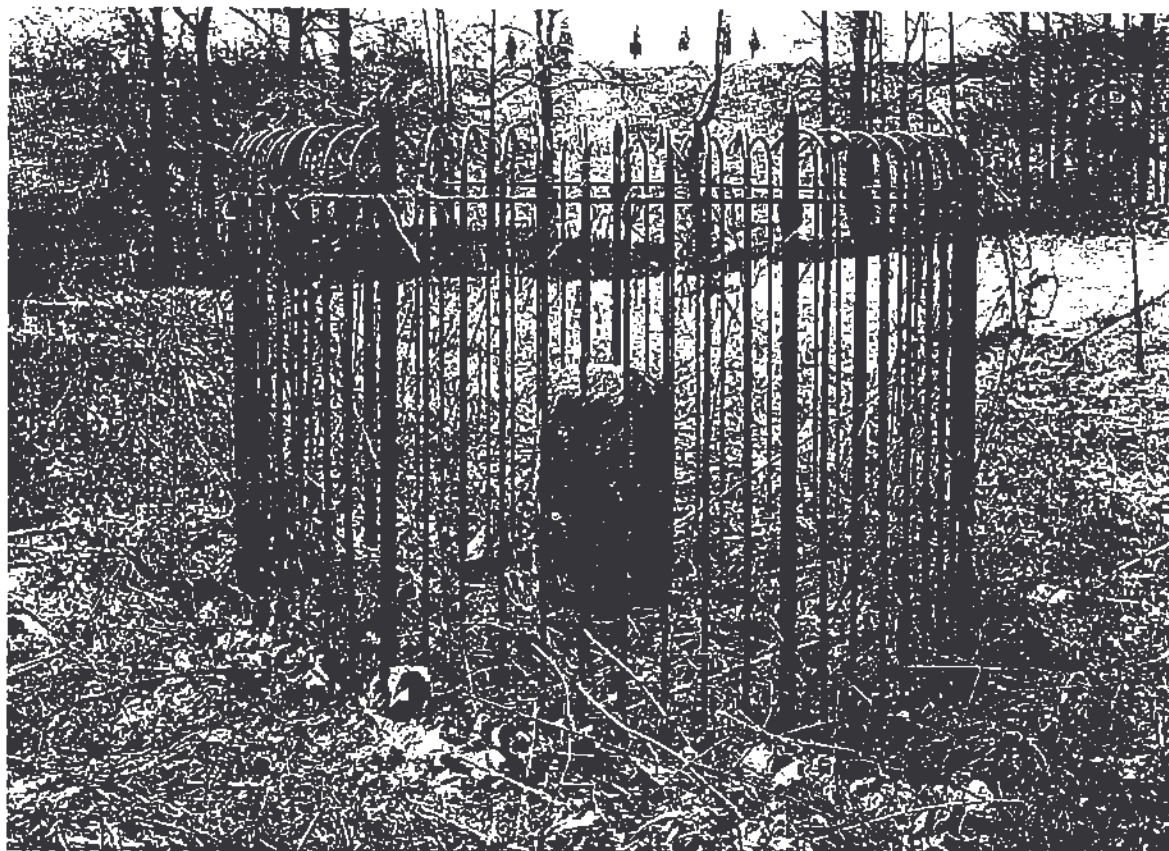
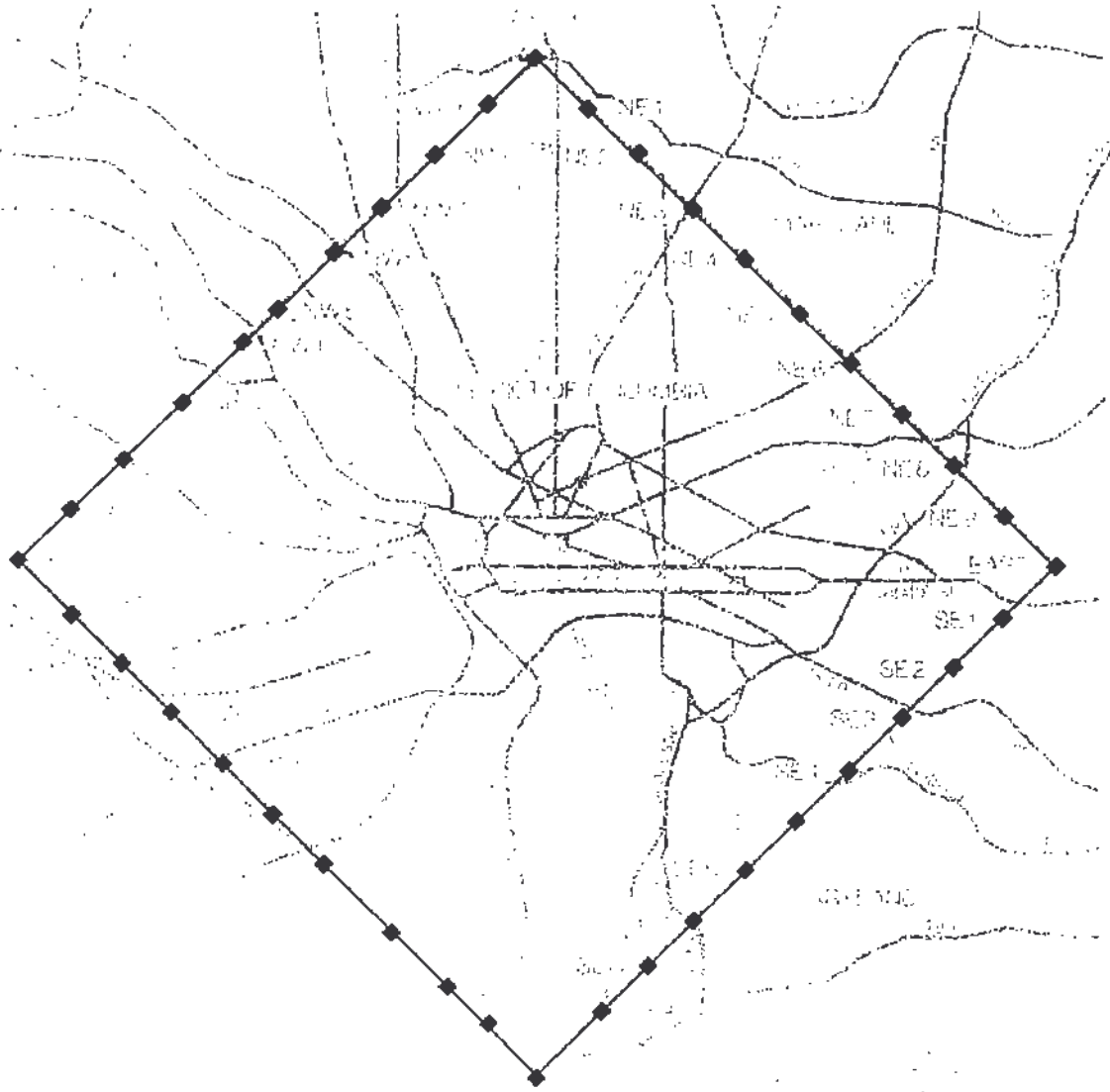


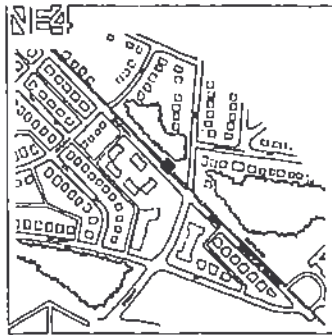
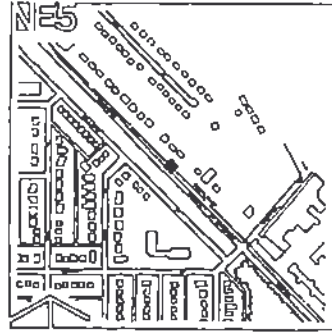
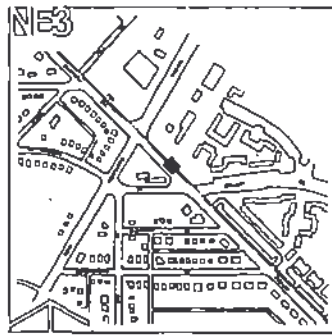
Diagram Showing Scheme of Lettering on the Mile and Corner Stones

In 1915 the DAR Committee on Preservation of Historic Spots and Records for the District of Columbia approved a resolution to protect the boundary stones by placing an iron fence around each one.





A sampling of neighborhood maps depicting the locations of the historic boundary markers.



and historical significance of the stones will create a new awareness of the importance of their protection.

One group, the DAR Committee on Preservation of Historic Spots and Records for the District of Columbia, has done much work to preserve the boundary markers. In 1915 the Committee approved a resolution to preserve and protect the stones by construction of an iron fence around each one. Each milestone had to be assessed and meetings arranged with District Commissioners, surveyors and others to discuss the findings.

Grants for use of the land upon which each stone was located were made with the sponsoring DAR Chapter paying for permission to erect the fences. After the fences were placed around each stone they were marked by a bronze DAR Plaque stating the name of the chapter which paid for the fence and accepted responsibility for care of the stone.

The Commission's report recommends future measures to be taken to ensure preservation of the markers. These include: U.S. Government ownership of the stones; their placement on the National Register of Historic Places; preservation and maintenance responsibility by an appropriate land managing agency; permanent preservation of one marker in the Smithsonian Institution; and continued DAR stewardship of the monuments.

The Boundary Stone Report format was designed to enable its use as a guide by teachers, students, historians and others interested in the unique history of the Federal Territory. Locational maps and descriptions of all the stones facilitate locating them in their approximate original setting. The markers may be viewed by touring a neighborhood, quadrant or State boundary sector on foot, by car or bicycle.