

Washington Monument,  
Mount Vernon Place, Baltimore

HABS MD-71

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
John H. Scarff - District Officer,  
1012 Keyser Building, Baltimore, Md.

ADDENDUM TO:  
WASHINGTON MONUMENT  
Mount Vernon Place, intersection of St. Paul's Street and Mount  
Vernon Place  
Baltimore  
Independent City  
Maryland

HABS MD-71  
*HABS MD,4-BALT,33-*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### WASHINGTON MONUMENT, MOUNT VERNON PLACE

HABS NO. MD-71

- Location: The monument sits within a circular rotary at the heart of Mount Vernon Square at the intersection of St. Paul Street and Mount Vernon Place, Baltimore, MD.
- Owner: City of Baltimore
- Present Use: A monument to the memory of George Washington, the structure contains an exhibit hall within the base and an outlook at the top with a view of the city. It is the centerpiece of an urban park with four radiating squares.
- Significance: The Washington Monument in Mount Vernon Square was begun in 1815 as both the first significant architectural monument to be erected in the United States, and the first structure erect in memory of Revolutionary War hero and first president, George Washington. Although Congress advocated for a national monument to Washington even before his passing in 1799, it was not until 1848 that the grand obelisk in Washington, D.C. was begun. Instead, it was the citizens of Baltimore who first rose to the occasion to create a structure worthy of the memory of our Nation's most famous founding father. Even in life George Washington was recognized as an icon and is still today the most revered and memorialized figure in American history.

The monument was planned and built under the direction of a Board of Managers comprised of the city's most prominent citizens and lead by Baltimore's foremost patron of the arts, Robert Gilmore, Jr. The design was that of renowned architect, Robert Mills. Often considered America's first native born and trained architect, Mills capitalized upon that position to secure the commission. Yet despite his all-American pretense, Mills' design is evocative of European models. Headed by contractors Towson & Steuart, the monument was constructed by Baltimore craftsmen, utilizing locally quarried stone and other indigenous materials. The only exception was the statue of Washington, sculpted by Italian Enrico Causici.

The Washington Monument was also instrumental in earning Baltimore the title of "The Monumental City." Its construction brought attention to the city and sparked a rash of monument and statuary building that lasted for over a century. While it was erected well outside the limits of the early nineteenth century city, the monument first became the center of Mount Vernon Square, and eventually of the growing city itself. The monument and its surrounding park landscape set the tone for the development of a fashionable residential neighborhood and cultural center that remains one of America's most sophisticated urban squares. As such, it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1971.

Historian: Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS Historian, 2005

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The cornerstone was laid with great fanfare on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1815, and the monument was largely completed, with the Washington statue in place, by 1829. However, architect Robert Mills and the Board of Managers for Baltimore's Washington Monument did not consider it truly completed until 1840, when the last of the finishes was made to the structure and all the landscape features were in place.<sup>1</sup>

Excavation for the foundation began in the spring of 1815, and by June the first load of stone was delivered. An elaborate ceremony and an all day event were planned for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July laying of the cornerstone. As many as 30,000 people were in attendance for the occasion, some of the highlights of which were a band and a thirty-nine gun salute, representing one shot for each year after 1776. As a backdrop for the day's events, portraits of Washington and of the proposed monument were made available for public viewing, richly draped and leaning against a nearby tree. The opening address was given by James Buchanan of the board of Managers (later to be replaced by Robert Gilmor, Jr.), followed by a lengthy prayer by Bishop Kemp.

The ceremony was officiated by the Honorable Levin Winder, Grandmaster of the Masons, who looked on while "operative masons" Robert Mills, and the principals of the contracting firm responsible for the monument, William Steuart and Thomas Towson, conducted the actual placing of the stone. Also presiding were dignitaries, Colonel John Egar Howard, upon whose former estate the statue was being erected; General Samuel Smith, President of the Order of the Cincinnati in Maryland; and Edward Johnson, Mayor of Baltimore. Along with the cornerstone were placed a number of historical items including an engraved copper plate announcing the purpose of the monument and listing the board members, a glass bottle containing a picture of Washington, a copy of his farewell address, copies of Baltimore newspapers from the time, and a few U.S. coins. Robert Mills then gave a short speech, followed by a prayer. To close, there was a grand salute of 100 guns, followed by three volleys fired by the 3rd Brigade of the Maryland Militia. With all the reverie, even for those Baltimoreans not in attendance, the day certainly could not have passed without notice! The band played on as the celebration continued through the afternoon and into the night.<sup>2</sup>

Following the cornerstone ceremony, work on the monument structure began in earnest. Throughout the next couple of years, architect Robert Mills was on hand to help contractors Towson & Steuart, direct the work and make changes as needed. Mills also

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the finish elements that were originally planned were never made, however, due to financial constraints. These included the bronze trophies that Mills designed for the base of the monument. Mills viewed them as an integral part of the memorial and put much time into their design as he did in lobbying the state legislature for their inclusion.

<sup>2</sup> *Washington Monument, Baltimore; An Account of Laying the Cornerstone, Raising the Statue, Description, etc.*, 1849, 15-22, Rare MF 241.W1W2, Special Collections, Maryland Historical Society. Also see J. Jefferson Miller, II. "Baltimore's Washington Monument" (PhD dissertation, March 1962), 64-67.

worked on the sidelines, lobbying for fiscal and municipal support for his plans for both the monument and its surrounding landscape. By the spring of 1816, the base of the monument was ready to receive its marble facing, and by May, the first marble block of the shaft of the monument was laid. Also underway was the establishment of a blacksmith shop on site to manufacture the special bolts, clamps, and brackets required by the contractors for the monument construction. As the year came to a close, the shaft of the column was 10' in height.

By early 1818, the column had risen to 42'-6" above the pavement. It was at this point that a number of changes were made to the original design in the interest of economy (see original plans and construction). As the first of many financial shortfalls was being felt, it became apparent that the monument as planned would cost much more than the \$100,000.00 appropriated. Despite considerable lapses in cash flow, work on the monument continued— a testimony to the dedication of those involved. The column had reached 137'-4" in height as the year 1819 came to a close, and by the fall of 1820, the column was for all intents and purposes finished. It rose 140'-4" from the base, for a total of 165' above grade.

The shaft of the monument was far from complete, however. Work was still needed on the column capital and the interior circular stairway. Financial constraints delayed completion of these components, and it was not until late summer of 1824, that the work was completed and the scaffolding was finally removed from the exterior. Mills was largely absent during this period. Unable to justify the time with so little work being generated, he returned to his native South Carolina. What *was* accomplished during this time was done under the supervision of carpenter, William Holliday. In addition to some of the marble work, still to be done was the statue of Washington and work at the grand base of the monument including the planned bronzes and other ornaments and ironwork such as railings and gates, as well as the landscaping and paving.

In 1827, a design competition was held for the statue of Washington that was to sit atop the column. The winner was Italian born sculptor Enrico Causici, who commenced work in the spring of 1828, using local marble that was the gift of F.T.D. Taylor. The statue was completed in September of 1829. Although Causici's contract called for him to arrange for the placement of the statue on this base, this proved to be a far greater task than anyone had anticipated. The placement of the three stone blocks that comprised the statue, weighing seven tons each, required the ingenuity of Navy engineer, Capt. James D. Woodside, who designed a raising apparatus especially for the occasion. The first block was lifted into place on October 29, 1829, the second in early November, and the third and finally section, on November 25.

The placement of the final piece was cause for celebration. Baltimoreans gathered to watch the head of George Washington being lifted into place, a process that was undertaken with musical accompaniment in thirty-nine minutes time. A military band played "Yankee Doodle" as the head was moved into position. A signal gun fired as it reached its highest elevation, "Auld Land Syne" played as it was lowered into place, and a thirteen gun salute registered its final placement.<sup>5</sup> On December 3, 1830, the managers

took “great pleasure” in announcing that the marble work of the column and grand base undertaken by contractor, Col. Stewart was complete. According to a letter from Mills to the President and Managers, dated July 28, 1831, Col. Stuart had completed all stone work “in the most substantial & permanent manner & with the best materials.”<sup>4</sup>

The trophies and ancillary decorations, into which Mills put much thought and research, were among the last items required to finish the monument according to plan, and also among the most difficult to achieve. With bills already in the rears, finding the money to undertake these final details was extremely difficult. As a result, the process dragged on for years, and in the end, some elements of the plan were never realized. Mills proposed that plaques be mounted at each elevation of the base of the monument marking seminal points in Washington’s life, and that the base be ornamented on all sides by wreaths with stars, one for each state. These elements were to be cast in bronze to emphasize the military character of the honors bestowed upon Washington. The lower portion of the column was to include a band of shields each containing the coat of arms for the thirteen original colonies. At the corners of the base were to be located trophies or statues of four of Washington’s generals, or the use of symbolic imagery to evoke civic themes such as patriotism. At the corners below the base, Mills proposed to place four tripods or urns as symbols of immortality, and to promote the “civil character” of the monument. And finally, decorative iron railings were to enclose the base of the monument.<sup>5</sup>

Mills turned to French sources for inspiration as to the proper classical forms for the various decorative elements (at the suggestion of others such as South Carolina scholar, Joel Poinsett). The designs for the iron railings, for example, were derived from those depicted in “Costumes des Anciens Peuples a l’arage des Astriles,” by M. Dandre Bardon, and completed in March of 1838.<sup>6</sup> Although both Mills and Gilmore lobbied fiercely for their execution, the trophies would never come to fruition. However, the inscriptions were cast and affixed to the base in 1838. And in January of 1839, the tripods executed by the Savage Monument Company—the last major pieces of the monument installation—were put in place. However, it was not until 1840 that the monument and the immediate landscape features were completed. By then, Baltimore’s Washington Monument was already recognized as the city’s leading tourist attraction, with over 5,000 visitors registered in the official guest book.<sup>7</sup>

2. Architect: The architect of the monument and its immediate landscape as originally conceived was Robert Mills (1781-1885). Often touted as America’s first native-born and trained architect, Mills learned the trade under the tutelage of the renowned architect of the U.S. Capitol, Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Among the building techniques for which Robert Mills is best known is fireproof construction, which he applied to numerous designs for state and federal building projects, such as the County Records Office,

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<sup>4</sup> “Report of the Treasurer of the Western Shore Concerning the Washington Monument, 1831” (Annapolis: Printed by Jonas Green, 183), 13; PAM 1150, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>5</sup> J. Jefferson Miller, 118.

<sup>6</sup> J. Jefferson Miller, 152; Roberts Mills, “Rejected Design of the Washington Monument, Baltimore,” Mills Papers, MHS, Manuscript Collection, 1820-1835.

<sup>7</sup> J. Jefferson Miller, 159.

Charleston, South Carolina (1822-27); and offices for the U.S. Treasury Building (1830-36), Monumental Church, Richmond, Virginia (1812-17), and the First Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland (1816-18). As a federal architect for a period of time, Mills developed prototypes for the design a number of significant government building forms such as customs houses (Mobile, Alabama; New Bedford, Massachusetts; New London, Connecticut; and Newburyport, Massachusetts), marine hospitals (beginning with the one in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1832-33), and courthouses and jails (Burlington County Jail, Mount Holly, New Jersey (1811)). Mills took a more progressive stance on architectural style than his mentor, favoring the up-and-coming Greek Revival. As Mills once wrote in reference to Latrobe proposal for a Gothic design for the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Baltimore, “The Gothic style of Cathedrals is impracticable to the uses of common life, while the Greek and Roman architecture has descended from the most magnificent temples to the decoration of our meanest furniture. On this account, I conceive that the former has a peculiar claim to preference, especially as the expense is not greater in proportion to the effect” (John M. Bryan, 53).

Mills’s rise to fame came at a time when most architects still struggled for recognition and respect as professionals. Mills worked almost the entire length of the eastern seaboard, designing landmark structures in important cities such as Charleston, Richmond, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. He worked not only as an architect, but as an engineer as well, designing and proposing improvements to canals, roadways and other civil engineering features. Yet despite all this, he often found himself living pay-check-to-pay-check. His tenacity got him through slow periods with little work. Mills was a master at self-promotion. In fact, an architectural rendering of one of his most successful designs, Monumental Church, is recognized as one of the earliest architectural illustrations intended for distribution. He clearly capitalized on the sentimental value of the church, built to commemorate those who died in a theater fire on that site.<sup>8</sup> His confidence in his own skills was not ill founded, however. Mills gave his all to his work. In the case of Baltimore’s Washington Monument, Mills not only produced dozens of drawings for each and every aspect of the structure and carefully supervising its erection, he successfully lobbied for funding for the monument and for a larger urban park landscape than originally considered.

The Washington Monument commission provided Mills with an introduction to Baltimore. As historian John M. Bryan points out, Mills arrived at a critical period in the city’s growth.<sup>9</sup> Thus, there was a market for the services of a qualified architect. While in Baltimore working on the monument, Mills also designed a number of residences including an entire row of twelve townhouses on Calvert Street (Waterloo Row), the First Baptist Church of Baltimore, St. John’s Church. Mills also designed other monuments in addition to Washington’s including the Winchester, 1816; Aquilla Randall, ca. 1815; and the Calhoun-Buchanan Tomb, 1819. He is also responsible for heating systems and other civic improvements, as well as design proposals for many other structures that were not accepted. He involved himself with local concerns, proposing and devising a plan to transform the flood plain of the Jones Falls in order to avoid future floods, and even served a year as president of the Baltimore Water Company.<sup>10</sup> Mills was also appointed as

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<sup>9</sup> John M. Bryan , 120.

a commissioner and essentially served as the engineer for the “opening, extending, and improving” of Belvedere Street, from Baltimore Street to Calvert Street.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The site of the monument, and indeed much of the current Mount Vernon Square neighborhood, was once the country estate of Colonel John Eggar Howard known as “Belvedere.” Since then, the monument and environs have been owned and maintained by the City of Baltimore. Early on, the property bordering on the squares was subdivided and sold to private individuals as building lots thus constituting largely residential development. With the locating of the Peabody Institute in the 1860s, Mount Vernon Square became known for its civic, as well as its residential, splendor, which was further enhanced by the additions of Walters Art Gallery and the Pratt Library.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

Excavations: John McNulty, excavator, dug the foundation.

Building & Masonry Contractor: Towson & Steuart, William Towson and Thomas Steuart, principals, supervised the construction of the monument and executed the marble work. Arguably the unsung heroes of this project, they were steadfast in their commitment, establishing a complex work site that included a brick manufactory and blacksmith operation, and often proceeding without scheduled payment for long periods of time.

Stone: Much of the marble came from the quarry belonging to Charles Ridgley of Hampton. The marble used for the base of the monument was given to the project and the remainder was purchased from them. Clackner & Toss supplied stone for the foundations. The statue of Washington was sculpted with local marble, the gift of F.T.D. Taylor

Masonry: Sater Stevenson, stonemason, conducted the work for the rough stone and brick work at the base of the monument, “In the best and most workmen-like manner agreeably to the designs of Robert Mills, grouting the whole work at least every two feet in height.”<sup>11</sup>

Carpentry: Robert Tunworth, carpenter, whose duties included general laborer, carpenter, and caretaker of site. John Mowton, carpenter, also oversaw much of the early work. William Constable & Company supplied lumber.

Iron railings: Amos A. William, Savage Factory Co. for the east iron railing around the monument. It is likely that the same manufacturer made the bronze doors, and gave an estimate for creating the bronze tripods that were planned for the base of the monument.

5. Original plans and construction: Planning for the monument began in 1809 when a group of prominent citizens of the City of Baltimore petitioned the Maryland General Assembly for permission to hold a lottery for the purpose of raising funds for the

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<sup>11</sup> “Certificate of Agreement between Board of Managers of the Washington Monument and Sater Stevenson, Stonemason,” 10 January 1815, Vol. III, .Washington Monument Records, Maryland Historical Society.

construction of a monument to George Washington. With all the best intentions, the petition presented by the group outlined Washington's many achievements and the reasons for erecting a monument in his memory, cited principally the didactic value of such a structure:

Trophies to the memories of great and good men are an encouragement to victorious and heroic deeds. They stimulate the young to emulation, to noble and honorable actions. On beholding the statue of Washington is there one citizen of America, is there one honest man on earth, whose bosom would not glow with veneration and gratitude?<sup>12</sup>

In 1810, the Legislature agreed to the plan and named a board of managers to both fund-raise and to supervise the construction of the monument. The managers were authorized to conduct a lottery in order to collect the \$100,000.00 projected cost for the monument. Lotteries had become a popular mechanism for raising money for civic projects, and were used to fund the construction of other important local institutions such as the Medical College, Baltimore Hospital, and the Susquehanna Canal. Whereas the first lottery managed to raise \$30,604.25, the ineffectiveness of additional lotteries held on behalf of the monument contributed to construction delays. By 1813, however, enough money was raised to begin plans for the monument, the first step of which was to hold a design competition.

The call for design proposals did little to lay out the architectural parameters for the monument other than to define the site and set a budgetary cap of \$100,000. The limitations of the proposal are not surprising considering the fact that a memorial of this magnitude had never been built in the United States. The \$100,000 figure may have been based upon preliminary discussions between the Board of Managers and architect Maximilian Godefroy, whom they first contacted in 1810. Godefroy was among Baltimore's preeminent architects. At the end of a year's time he presented the board with a wide range of possibilities, perhaps an indication of his uncertainty over an appropriate form. Looking backward into ancient history, Godefroy presented an array of classical forms that included as the major structural component a triumphal arch, rotunda, Greek temple, and public square. Each design was ornamented with various combinations of classical columns and fountains, and culminated in the requisite statue of George Washington. As none of these proposed schemes were adopted, it appears that the board was not satisfied with what they received. Or perhaps it was their desire to procure an *American* designer that prompted the board to look beyond Godefroy's proposals. In any event, the effects of the War of 1812 upon the city served to delay action on the memorial for some time. It was finally determined that a cash prize was needed in order to attract a well thought-out design, and an award of \$500.00 was offered for the winning submission. An ad appeared in March of 1813 stipulating the, albeit limited, requirements for the monument:

It may be proper to mention that the monument whether sculptural, architectural, or both, is intended to be placed in the center of a square three hundred feet long and one hundred forty feet wide, crossed at its length by a principal street. The whole space appropriated

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<sup>12</sup> "Petition of the Citizens of Baltimore to the General Assembly of Maryland"

for it is about sixty-five feet square. The Sculptors, architects and other artists of Europe, are invited to enter into a competition for the premium now offered, but it is hoped that the American artists will evince by their productions, that there will be no occasion to resort to any other country for a monument to their illustrious fellow citizen.<sup>13</sup>

A closing date for the competition was set at January 1, 1814. Only four entries are known to have been submitted, and of them, only three were received by the deadline. One, by Maximilian Godefroy, was of a triumphal arch of the Doric order with a statue underneath. A similar design was submitted by French architect Joseph Ramee. An anonymous entry, believed to have been that of Benjamin Latrobe, was of a squat obelisk or attenuated pyramid. The finally design was submitted by Robert Mills and consisted of a gigantic column topped with a full-size statue. Mills was able to induce the board to extend the deadline to April 15, 1814 by shamelessly playing upon their desires to create a uniquely American monument. Mills' letter to the board touts his supposedly unique qualifications in this regard, contending the following:

Being an American by birth and having also the honor of being the first American who has passed through a regular course of study of architecture in his own country, it is natural for me to feel much solicitude to aspire to the honor of raising a monument to the memory of our illustrious countryman. The education that I have received being altogether American and unmixed with European habits, I can safely present the design submitted as American founded upon the general principles prefaced in the description contained in the Book of Designs. For the hone of our country, my sincere wish is that it may not be said; to foreign genius and to foreign hands we are indebted for a monument to perpetuate the glory of our beloved Chief.<sup>14</sup>

Despite all his posturing before the board with claims to uniquely American habits, Mills original design for the Washington Monument was clearly based upon European Precedent. The earliest and most obvious model for Mill's design is Trajan's Column, built in honor of the great Roman Emperor, Marcus Ulpius Traianus who ruled from 98 AD to 117 AD. The column was intended both as a memorial and tomb for the illustrious conqueror and ruler. Trajanus brought great wealth to the city of Rome, and used that wealth to erect roads, aqueducts, and most importantly, a massive Forum that included an open piazza and basilica. The monument built to him consisted of a 100' tall marble column set atop a rectangular base and topped with a statue of the Emperor (since lost). The column was carved on the outside in detailed relief depicting significant events in his battle campaigns, thus telling the story of his military conquests. While the chamber within the base held his ashes, a spiral staircase within the shaft led to a viewing platform at its top.

According to Mills' proposal, monuments in general should present a sense of strength and stability while also being inspirational. As he writes, "The character that ought to designate all monuments should be solidity, simplicity, and that degree of cheerfulness which would tempt the contemplation of the mind." With regard to Washington, in

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<sup>13</sup> As cited in J. Jefferson Miller.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Mills to the Board of Manager, 12 January 1814, George Washington Monument, Papers, 1810-43, Box 1, folder 1, MS 876, Maryland Historical Society.

particular, Mills goes on to state that, “The monument which now claims our attention, is intended to be erected not only to hand down to posterity, the virtue of a man, but the glory of a Hero” (underline his). In presenting a design that reflected the high caliber of Washington’s moral character, Mills proposed a monument in the form of a Greek column in the Doric order. This form, according to Mills, “possess solidity and simplicity of character emblematic of that of the illustrious personage to whose memory it is dedicated, and (is) harmonizing with the spirit of our government.” Mills further suggested the monument serve as a sarcophagus while paying homage to Washington’s military exploits. By suggesting a sarcophagus form, Mills evokes the memorial nature of the structure being proposed not as an actual, but as a symbolic sepulcher or receptacle to hold forth Washington as a sacred relic. The military nature of the monument is intended to honor Washington the Hero, and by so doing, the heroics exhibited by our nation as a whole in the fight for democratic self-rule. The latter idea is supported by Mills suggestion that the monument include the names and accounts of the services of those “illustrious men who were his compatriots in arms and whom he delighted to honor.”<sup>15</sup> This is but one example of what Mills speaks of as the need for monuments to record historical facts.

With this in mind, Mills proposes taking advantage of as much of the surface of the monument as possible to include emblems and other symbolic representations, as well as inscriptions; so much for simplicity! Emblematic devices were to include the coat-of-arms of the United States, a depiction of Washington on a board frieze, various trophies of victory, and the arms of both Maryland (the monument’s location) and Virginia (Washington’s home state) encircled with wreaths. Inscriptions were to convey a record of the “eventful years of the Revolution” beginning with 1776 and culminating with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at York in 1781. Perhaps most importantly for its local context, Mills suggested that the monument include a sculpture of an event in the life of Washington that was relevant to Maryland’s history. That event was Washington resigning his military commission as Commander in Chief of the Army of the United States to the President of Maryland Congress, in Annapolis. While the Maryland backdrop was important, the event was one significant to all Americans as an act indicative of Washington’s character. Washington is surrendering not just his sword but his power and leadership. As Mills points out, “as Maryland first erects public testimony of her gratitude to the Hero it may present itself as a subject for consideration.”<sup>16</sup>

While Mills proposed that a statue depicting Washington surrendering his military commission be included as part of the monument, it was not original intended that it be exhibited atop of it. Mills original proposal called for the column to be topped by a “chariot of victory in which is represented the immortal Washington in military costume guided by Victory.” Mills mythic portrayal of Washington is interesting to us, but likely would have been disturbing to the humble Washington. According to Michael Kammen, the leaders of the American Revolution worried that the magnitude of what they had done

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Mills, “Designs for a Monument Proposal to be erected in the City of Baltimore To the memory of General George Washington submitted to the honorable Board of Managers by Robert Mills of South Carolina, Architect, from Philadelphia, 1814,” Washington Monument, Box 3, MS 876, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Mills, “Designs for a Monument.”

would be distorted in just such a manner, “So much so, in fact, that they counseled extreme caution and patience in writing the history of the revolutionary era. . . . Even though every nation needs a mythic explanation of its own creation, that process was paradoxically elaborated by the reluctance of Revolutionary statesmen to have their story told prematurely.”<sup>17</sup> This was particularly true of Washington, who hesitated even to write his memoirs.<sup>18</sup> Mills scholar J.M. Bryan suggests that Mills design for the Washington Monument in Baltimore was first rehearsed through the design for a lighthouse at Frank’s Island, Mississippi that he undertook while under the employ of Latrobe, in 1805. While the lighthouse does provide a basic plan and structure, more to the point, Bryan claims that Mills viewed his designs “as an inventory to be adapted and re-used” and thus tended to copy often from previous work.<sup>19</sup> A look at Mills description of his early design suggests Bryan was correct:

The interior of structure of this monument presents a double wall, between which ascend the steps that communicate with all the galleries and the top of the column; this mode of construction produces the effect in strength, of a thickness of wall equal to the section of both the walls and steps. The space . . .not being equal to the diameter of the great column leaves a circular space in the center . . . which opens a view from the base to the apex of the column. The aperture descends and intersects the vault of the great archway. Pierced through the fronts of the grand pedestal, by which you command an interior view from the pavement of the street to the Locke of the Quadriga (chariot) a height of at least 140 feet. The eye is directing its view along this diameter & elongated vault, is immediately arrested by a brilliant light that terminates its length. This effect is the result of opening the sides of the Locke of the Quadriga mentioned above and it will prove an object of novel as curious.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to description, Mills design submission to the Board of Managers included a number of measured drawings and sketches of the proposed monument. A drawing of the elevation of the principal front shows the base of the monument as having an open archway in the center flanked by pairs of Doric columns. To either side of the archway was a state seal, one the seal of Maryland, and the other of Virginia; above the archway were depicted Roman soldiers at arms. The side walls of the base were to be shorter, and flanked with light standards. The shaft of the grand column is seen rising in tiers with decorative iron galleries (in a trefoil cut-out pattern) at seven levels, including one around the top of the pedestal. Each successive or ascending section has dates with inscriptions beginning with 1781-1776. At the top of the column is shown a chariot with the figures of George Washington and the allegorical Victory. Finally, the landscape around the monument simply shows an encircling path around base with four broad approaches. In terms of internal structure, Mills’ sectional drawing through the center of the monument

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory; The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 27.

<sup>18</sup> Even more than myth making, Washington was insecure about his lack of formal education and fearing that by writing his memoirs he would expose himself as ignorant and uncultivated. While better educated than the average Americans, most of his peers in government had been to college. While the full extent of Washington’s education is not known, it seems that he received only a primary education, and perhaps some secondary instruction.

<sup>19</sup> John M. Bryan, 58.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Mills, “Designs for a Monument.”

shows a hollow column with a stair winding around in the cavity between the inner and outer walls.

Again, similar to Trojan's Column, Mills' design for the monument to Washington consisted of a huge marble column resting on a base and topped by a statue and viewing platform. And like Trojan's Column, Washington's was to be banded with inscriptions, along with scenes depicting such events as the surrender of Cornwallis to Washington at York, and Washington surrendering his commission in Annapolis. The inscriptions were to record the historical facts of the Revolutionary War, for as Mills' put it:

These [facts and/or events] are so closely interwoven with the Life of our national Father, that a brief statement of these, under the different years they occurred, would present the best view to posterity of the Greatness, Excellence & Wisdom of that Man whose memory with blessings shall live through every age, a& whose every word merits to be recorded in character of Light.<sup>21</sup>

Correcting what was later recognized as a flaw in the design of Trajan's column—that being the inability of effectively view the bands of carved relief—Mills planned for a series of iron galleries. The galleries were to surround the column at each band thus enabling a careful study of the inscriptions and scenes depicted.

Other noteworthy European monuments of similar form and stature exhibited at that time that could have served as a model to Robert Mills include as the Nelson Pillar in Dublin, Ireland, and the Vendome Column in Paris, France. Erect in 1801, the Nelson Pillar was a colossal 134' column elected in memory of Horatio Biccourt Nelson (destroyed in 1966). Like Mills' monument to Washington, Nelson Pillar was crowned by a statue and a spiral stairway within its core lead to a viewing gallery. Vendome Column was built between 1806 and 1810 as a monument to Louis XIV. It consists of a column banded with bas relief depictions of the military conquests of honored subject, another technique favored by Mills in his original proposal, and is topped with a viewing platform and statue. Interestingly enough, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who served as instructor and mentor to Robert Mills, saw the original design as a copy of the monument to Nelson, and one that he, in fact, viewed as lacking in overall merit. In a letter to Maximilian Godefroy in 1814, shortly after Mills' design for the Washington Monument was selected by the Board of Managers, Latrobe writes:

Mills is a wretched designer. He came to me too late to acquire principles of taste. He is a copyist, and is fit for nothing else. His Christian monument is an imitation of a design proposed for Lord Nelson. It is anything but a fit mausoleum for Washington. But he also has merit. His is an excellent man of detail, and a very smug Contriver of domestic conveniences and will make a good deal of money. He wants that professional self respect which is the ruin of you and me, and therefore we shall go to the wall, while he will strut in the middle of the street.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Robert Mills and the Washington Monument in Baltimore." *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (June 1939): 156.

<sup>22</sup> B.H. Latrobe to Maximilian Godefroy, 10 October 1814, Rare Books, Maryland Historical Society.

Clearly, Mills' design as submitted for the architectural competition consisted of a much more elaborate structure than what was eventually built. Although the final design took the same basic form as proposed, it was greatly pared down in structure and ornament. As planned, the bulk of the monument was represented by a gigantic column in Doric form. The original design, however, was far from simplistic. As Mills' drawings indicate, the monument was to be laden with historical, military, and memorial inscriptions, iconography, and other forms of ornamentation.<sup>23</sup> About 120' in height and 20' in diameter, the column as designed was segmented by six iron galleries to provide promenades from which bands of historical inscriptions could be read. The column was to consist of an inner and outer wall that would provide both structural support and functional purpose. The outer wall would contain the winding stairway to the top, while the inner wall would allow for a light well rising from the base to the apex of the monument. The column was to rest upon a pedestal of square proportions, each side of which was to be broken by an arched opening flanked by pilasters and then by projecting sections. Each was to be faced with an inscription, trophy, or other commemorative piece. It must be noted, however, that Mills left himself open on the subject of ornamentation, particularly within the context of cost. In his original proposal Mills closes with "On the subject of these decorations I would observe as they are secondary in their objects, time and consideration may enable me to improve their appropriate character should I be gratified with your confidence, with this I may be able hereafter to suggest many ideas which may be found interesting."<sup>24</sup>

By early 1818, as the column was approaching 43' in height, a number of changes were made to the original design. Because they were made prior to the completion of the monument, they are to be considered here as part of the original plans and construction. Primary among the changes that were made in the original design was the removal of the iron galleries. Interestingly enough, it was Mills himself who later lobbied against them, citing as central to his reasoning the criticism he anticipated over what he referred to as "the novelty of the design." In broaching the subject of whether or not to engrave the shaft as proposed, Mills refers to "embracing the original design of an historical pillar" which may actually be an acknowledgment of his reliance on earlier European precedents for his plan.<sup>25</sup> Mills was also mindful of the expense of these items, and this was but one of many changes that were made for the sake of economy. The base had already been greatly simplified from the original design proposal. In John M. Bryan's book on Mills he states that it has been suggested that Mills' proposal *disregarded* the budget. Bryan argues that by reiterating in his initial proposal the ability of simplifying the proposed plan, Mills felt he was in compliance. But perhaps Mills simply could not resist the opportunity to design the first significant monument this country had ever seen. As Bryan points out, Mills' design "raised the architectural expression of American pride and ambition to a new level."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Mills actually suggested that the Board attempt to acquire actual Revolutionary War artifacts for display at the monument, such as a cannon used during the Battle of York. As Mills points out, "An addition of this kind would speak more than volumes to the popular mind." Mill to Robert Gilmor, 6 April 1814.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Mills to the Board of Manager, 12 January 1814.

<sup>26</sup> John M. Bryan, 113.

The design of the details remained ongoing, due in part to the incomplete nature of the original drawings and of the need to reduce features in the interest of economy. Also as an indication of the classical basis for many elements of the design of the Washington Monument are Mills' comments made in a letter to Gilmore,

I have spent half the morning looking thru the Antigustue of Rome to see if I could find any representations of the Fasces with the battle axe attached, but was unsuccessful. The work which I have exhibits this only instance of this symbol of power upon a large scale and to which I had reference when I made the design for this axe termination of our fascial pillars. This work is entitled the "Costume des Anciens Peuples, a L'usage des Aristes" par M. Dande Bardon," a very rare and choice work— I have been examining it again and made from the most graceful of five examples, the design annexed and which comes nearest to that already executed.<sup>27</sup>

Sure enough, the financial difficulties that would plague the rest of the project were just beginning. By the fall of 1819, over \$96,000.00 had been spent before the monument was even half completed. This occurred despite Mills' earlier claims with regard to his initial design submission, that "as from its simplicity of character and with proper attention to the details of decoration its [the monument's] execution may be brought within the scope of the one hundred thousand dollars [allotted]."<sup>28</sup> Mills later defends the cost overruns that he suggests were made for the sake of constructing a stable and enduring monument, stating "I could embrace more economy in the construction of the building, but I hope you will justify me in the permanent manner in which the work has been carried on."<sup>29</sup> The \$523.11 remaining from the lottery funds was not enough to cover what was then owed to Towson & Steuart, who had magnanimously agreed to continue work despite the deficit. Furthermore, the public had grown weary— or perhaps wary— of lotteries has evidence by the three most recent failed attempts to raise the funds needed by that means.

Despite financial problems, by the end of 1820 the column was for all intents and purposes completed, and attention turned to the grand base. In addition to the completion of the cornice, Mills focused on plans for the interior area that included three full niches for statues and four half-niches for busts. Mills designed the base chamber to include a portrait gallery of the great men of the era, that is, Washington's "worthy compatriots in arms" and those in his presidential cabinet so that at once the "glory of our country" could be viewed. In suggesting the gallery, Mills argued that it would be in keeping with the spirit of Washington himself, stating that "a particular trait in the character of the great Washington, to honor when honor was due, and to praise . . . without any feeling of jealousy."<sup>30</sup> Mills continued to lobby strongly for the trophies and other forms of ornamentation that he planned for the base, and spent much time in researching historical prototypes in order to produce drawings of suggested designs. Mills saw these components as critical to the monument as seen from the perspective of the pedestrian. The decorations, he argued, "are essentially requisite to give interest to the near (underline

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Mills to Gilmore, 12 March 1838, folder 4.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Mills to Board of Managers, 12 January 1814.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Mills to the Board of Manager, 1818.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Mills to the Board of Manager, 31 October 1820, folder 4.

his) view of the design, as without them there would be too great a degree of plain surface for such colossal proportions of the column.”<sup>31</sup>

In 1827, a design competition was held for the statue, although clearly not for that of Washington ensconced in a chariot as appeared in Mills original proposal. Only three bids were received, none of which came from American born sculptors. Undoubtedly because the monument was being erected in Maryland and at the expense of its citizenry, the statue was to depict Washington in his most significant Maryland forum: resigning his commission in the capital city of Annapolis. As Gilmor had predicted, maintaining the notion that the creators be Americans would be difficult when it came to statuary, as no large work of this nature had ever been executed in the United States.<sup>32</sup> The winner was an Italian born sculptor Enrico Causici. Causici had already produced an equestrian statue of George Washington in New York the year before. He had also produced for the capitol building in Washington, D.C. a plaster statue of Liberty, as well as two panels, one of the Pilgrim’s Landing and another of Daniel Boone fighting the Indians. In a letter from Enrico Causici to the Managers he states, “I agree to undertake to execute a colossal statue fifteen feet high of Gen’l Washington intended to surmount the column monument in the city agreeable to the model of the same . . . in a style of finish to produce effect corresponding to the situation it will be placed in for the sum of seven thousand dollars (including marble, setting of statue, etc).”<sup>33</sup> Like the monument proper, the statue was faced with cost overruns, most of which were borne by Causici. In a letter to the board, Causici requests \$2,000 to cover cost overruns, most of which were due to the difficulties he faced in mounting the completed statue upon its base.<sup>34</sup> Mills formally announces to the Board that the statue is complete and has been successfully mounted, on December 4, 1829.<sup>35</sup>

On November 21, 1831, in a letter to Robert Gilmor, Mills forwards an estimate of the sum required to complete the Washington Monument. According to Mills, “I have reduced the value of the items to the most moderate scale to insure the good execution of the work— Iron railing (\$5,000), stone pediment and wall between railing and the monument (\$5,500), brick paving & stone curbing outside rail (\$1,000), granite/Italian marble pavement at the foot of the base (\$1,400), bronze inscriptions & 24 bronze wreaths and stars on frieze (\$1,000), four-panel folding doors with bronze face at front elevation (\$400), stucco plastering inside with hydraulic cement to imitate stone (\$1,000), 8 metal tripods at front steps (\$2,000), handrail to side steps (\$300), 4 colossal trophies at the 4 angles of the grand zoale (\$10,000), for a total of \$30,600.” In 1830, the Board of Managers determined that first on the agenda were the railings, likely due to safety precautions. Mills designs for the railings included Revolutionary cannons with upturned mouths holding glass lamps, and gates with the coat of arms for Maryland, and a contract was let to the Savage Iron Company. The grading of streets near the monument was also begun about 1830, as the city began to show increasing interest in the development of the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Enrico Causici to the Managers, May 1827, 1825-1830, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>34</sup> Causici to Board of Manager, 3 December 1829.

<sup>35</sup> Mills to Board of Managers, 4 December 1829.

square. In the following year, gas lines for the lights were run and a lightening rod installed.

In 1833, the Maryland General Assembly proposed raising the \$51,861.00 Mills estimated was needed to complete the work through, yet another, state lottery. Mills focused his attention on the design of the inscriptions, the trophies; the tripods there were intended to flank each of four sets of stairs, and on the bronze doors. Like the designs for the railings, he turned to classical Roman and French sources for inspiration (once again, so much for his American pretext!). The railing and gates were completed in December 1836, and the marble coping and installation occurred in June of 1837. The bronze-stained oak doors built by carpenter Jacob Wall were next to be completed. In 1838, the inscriptions were affixed to the base of the monument, and finally, in January of 1839, the tripods were installed. Only the trophies remained undone. In 1842, the Board of Managers (only five of the original twenty-three of which were remaining) gave up their attempts to seek funding for those final elements, disbanded, and officially turned the Washington Monument over to the city.

Sometime about 1838, a proclamation was printed in Baltimore by James Young of West Baltimore Street, and sold for five cents apiece. It is of value in rendering an accurate portrayal of the monument as it was substantially completed. Although it was open to the public, Mills and the Board of Managers still were awaiting the final details, some of which would never come to fruition. It reads as follows:

This monument was raised in honor of the memory of General GEORGE WASHINGTON. It is place at the intersection of two squares. One called the Washington Place, runs from North to South, being a continuation of Charles Street, and is limited by Centre Street on the South, and on the North by Madison street. It is one hundred and fifty feet wide, and seven hundred and forty-four feet long. The other Space in called Mount Vernon, and runs East and West. It is limited by St. Paul street on the East, and Cathedral street West, and is two hundred feet in breadth, and seven hundred and forty-four feet in length. When these spaces shall be adorned with appropriate rows of trees, as well as embellished with marble fountains or basins, and other ornaments of which this place is susceptible, it will become one of the most delightful promenades on this continent. The ground on which this superb Monument stands, as well as the Spaces above mentioned, were presented to this City for the noble purpose to which they were devoted, by the late Colonel J. E. Howard, formerly Governor of the State. The corner-stone was laid on the Fourth of July, 1815. The Monument is built on an eminence of one hundred feet above tide, and consists of a square base of fifty feet by twenty-four in height, surmounted by a column; the whole, including the Statue, one hundred and eighty feet. It is enclosed by an iron railing six feet in height, which rests on a white marble coping fifteen inches in height, and three hundred and twenty feet in circumference. There are four gates. The enclosure is flagged with white marble. The outer circle is of granite, and three hundred and eighty-two feet in circumference, ten feet in width, and flagged with silver gray stone. There are twelve steps to the main entrance. The inscription over each of the four doors is: "To George Washington by the State of Maryland." On each side of the base is an inscription as follows:

On the South: "Born 22d February, 1732. Died 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1799."

On the East: “Commander-in-Chief of the American Army, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1775; Commission resigned at Annapolis, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1783.”

On the North: “Trenton, 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1776. York Town, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1781.”

On the West: “President of the United States, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1789. Retired to Mount Vernon, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1797.”

The Interior of the base has in the centre a pedestal twenty-one feet square, width as the opening eleven feet, height at the centre of the arch fifteen feet, with a sky-light to each corner. It is handsomely plastered, and laid off in granite, with an impost or cornice. The entrance to the stairway is facing the north door; to correspond with this, are niches facing the south, east and west doors, intended for full length statues.— Opposite these are eight smaller niches for busts. The floor is of white marble. In one of these niches is a colossal bust of George Washington, taken while young. There is also a statue of Washington, seven feet in height, a model of the one on the top. Descending a flight of stairs to the basement of cellar is an opening or arch ten feet in height; there are eight small windows to admit light. This is neatly plastered and the floor paved with brick. Now ascending a circular flight of marble stairs in the interior of the Monument, twenty-eight in number, leads to the base, from thence to the summit, two hundred. There are three small windows and a door leading to the capital, where are four marble blocks or seats. To commemorate any great event a flag is raised from this point.

The statue on the summit, representing Washington in the act of Resigning his Commission, is sixteen feet in height, weights sixteen tons, and cost nine thousand dollars. It was place there on the 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1829. Signior Addre Causica (sic.) was the Sculptor. The whole Monument, including the Statue, cost two hundred thousand dollars, and was designed by Robert Mills, Architect.

*N.B.— This Monument is Open every day, (Sundays excepted) for the reception of visitors.*<sup>36</sup>

6. Alterations and additions: For the most part, the monument remains intact and as it was when completed. Changes have been made to the material contents of the monument, namely in the gallery space located in its base. Significant changes have been made to the park landscape that surrounds it, including a redesign of the park squares by the renowned Beaux Arts landscape architecture firm of Carrere & Hastings (see section on site).

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<sup>36</sup> Washington Monument [Baltimore] Printed by James Young, 114 West Baltimore Street [183-?], as cited in An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadides and Other Printed Ephemera, Library of Congress, American Memory, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field\(DOCID+@:it\(rbpe02904100\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field(DOCID+@:it(rbpe02904100))).

B. Historical Context:

The National Context: The First Significant U.S. Monument & the First of Many to George Washington

The George Washington Memorial in Baltimore's Mount Vernon Square is highly significant within the context of memorialization in America as the first significant architectural monument to be erected, and the first of countless such tributes to the memory of Revolutionary War hero and first American president George Washington. Generally speaking, monument building did not occur in this country much before the mid to late nineteenth century. In fact, the national monument to Washington on the Mall of the U.S. capitol, Washington, D.C., was not begun until 1848, and so Baltimore's monument, begun in 1815, was well ahead of its time. As a result, there were few, if any, examples of monuments or memorials in this country at that time to look to as a prototype. It is likely for this reason that when creating his design the architect of Baltimore's Washington monument, Robert Mills, found inspiration in European models. Once successfully ensconced in the Baltimore project, Mills went on to design other monuments, most significantly, the redesigned National Monument to George Washington, already mentioned. Baltimore's Washington monument foretold of the coming American impulse to share the lessons of history through commemoration.<sup>37</sup>

Congress advocated for a national monument to George Washington as early as 1783, before he had begun his first term as president (Washington was unanimously elected in late March of 1789). However, these and many other attempts to create a monument to Washington were thwarted by the difficulties faced in gaining the support that was needed to fund such a project. It was not until 1848 that the grand obelisk in Washington, D.C. was begun. Even then, the project was so beset by budgetary shortfalls that it took nearly forty years to complete. Our inability to provide a meaningful and lasting tribute to our founding father is far more complex than the financial problems that plagued our young nation. Certainly, it was not motivated by doubts about his importance then, or how he might be perceived in the years to come. Rather, it was indicative of our own uncertain quest for identity coupled with a rejection of previously held notions of traditionalism based upon a European world view.

In fact, for at least a century after America declared its sovereignty as an independence nation, our government bore little to no responsibility for chronicling its past. In his book *Mystic Chords of Memory; The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* Historian Michael Kammen explains the reason for this, "Adherence to republican values produced a palpable tension between democracy and tradition as customarily understood. John Quincy Adams caught the essence of it quite pithily: 'Democracy has no monuments. It strikes no medals. It bears the head of no man on a coin.' Consequently, memorials that elevated heroes above the folk seemed antithetical to popular sovereignty."<sup>38</sup> Tradition within the context of Colonial America meant those of their European forebears and the social and political constraints that they had fought to overcome. And, in fact, an anti-historical attitude can arguably be considered a hallmark of the rhetoric that surrounded the American Revolution. Kammen cites, Thomas Paine's

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<sup>37</sup>The same impulses also spawned monument building in the rural cemeteries on the outskirts of cities through the country, but particularly in older east coast cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Kammen, 19.

determination “to tear ‘the veil of sanctity from tradition’ and expose the absurdities of orthodox political thought,” as well as Thomas Jefferson, who once stated: “I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.”<sup>39</sup> Kammen comes to the conclusion that American’s indifference to the past is a result of its diverse society “that shared a future but not a common history.” As he goes on to state:

Challenges faced during the early phases of colonization, irrespective of region, tended to deflect settlers away from traditional ways of thinking and behaving. Even had they wanted to live customary lives, it simply was not possible. Often, however, a gradual recovery of tradition, or at least the appearance of it, occurred; but fresh waves of newcomers and unexpected crises or challenges shattered the illusion that custom or convention has been transplanted. From the very outset of American history, then, vacillation between experimentalism and traditionalism came to be established as an enduring pattern.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1790s, with some indifference, the Department of State was official designated as the repository of the nation’s most important documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and papers of the Continental Congress. However, it was not until 1922 that they were safely ensconced in the Library of Congress and available to the public. For the most part, the safekeeping of public documents— and hence of American memory— would remain largely a matter of private initiative and institutions. And even that did not occur much before the 1860s, when lasting national historical organizations were begun. (An American Historical Society existed 1830s and 1840s but then folded.)<sup>41</sup>

The trend towards the formation of museums began in the 1870s, largely through the support of wealthy individuals, and not by governmental entities. Among such individuals are Baltimore’s own Johns Hopkins, founder of Johns Hopkins Hospital (open 1889) and Johns Hopkins University (founded 1876); George Peabody of the Peabody Institute of Music (founded 1857), and William Walters, who established the Walters Gallery through the donation of his private collection (begun in his home and first open for public viewing in 1874; original gallery building, constructed in 1909). All of these, incidentally, were begun at Mount Vernon Square, and all but the Johns Hopkins’ institutions still remain there. Kammen identifies the period between 1870 and 1915 when things began to change, and “History in general became the core of civil religion . . . . And national history in particular became the means used to transform un-American identities into those of compliant citizens with shared values.”<sup>42</sup>

In terms of a monument to George Washington, Congress first expressed their desire to do so on the eve of its receipt of the September peace treaty that ended the Revolutionary War. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, 1783 Congress adopted a resolution to create a monument to George Washington. It was unanimously decided by the representatives from ten states then present “That an Equestrian Statue of Gen. Washington be erected in the place where the residence of Congress *shall be*

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<sup>39</sup> Michael Kammen, 42.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Kammen, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Kammen, 74, 77.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Kammen, 12. For this reason, Kammen also argues that, “The history of national memory is hard to separate from the history of patriotism,” 13.

*established.*” (italics mine).<sup>43</sup> However, L’Enfant’s plan for the city of Washington was not yet prepared, and so there was no capital city, and in fact, no president, certainly no unified United States, and therefore, no monument. A few months after the resolution was passed, on December 23, Washington resigned his military commission to those members of Congress assembled at the Maryland State House, officially ending the war and prematurely ending his civic duties. As Washington then stated,

Mr. President [of the Maryland Congress, General Mifflin], the great events on which my resignation depended, having at length taken place, I have now the honor of offering my sincere congratulation to Congress, and of presenting myself before them to surrender into their hands that trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country. Happy in the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable nation, I resign with satisfaction, the appointment I accepted with diffidence; a diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task; which, however, was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, the support of the supreme power of the Union, and the patronage of Heaven.<sup>44</sup>

While the war was over, the battle of national versus states rights was just beginning, and so the congress was preoccupied with concerns other than monument building. Hanging in the balance was all Washington had fought to protect. The world waited anxiously to see if the new nation would stand or fall. Many years passed before further consideration was given towards a memorial to George Washington, this time sparked by his death, in 1799.

According to congressional proceedings in the House of Representatives of the United States, December 23, 1799, “General Marshall made a report from the joint committee appointed to consider a suitable mode of commemorating the death of General Washington. He reported the following resolutions, which passed both houses unanimously; Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled that a marble monument be erected by the U.S. at the capitol of the city of Washington, and that the family of Gen’l Washington be requested to permit his body to be deposited under it and that the monument be so designed as to commemorate the great event of his military and political life.”<sup>45</sup> The family refused to have Washington interred at the capitol, opting instead to create a tomb at his home at Mt. Vernon. Thus, it was resolved on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1800 by a joint committee of Congress “That a marble monument be erected by the Unites States, in the Capitol at the City of Washington, in honor of Gen. Washington, to commemorate his service, and to express the regrets of the American people for their irreparable loss.” Still burden by the debts incurred during the Revolution, the Treasury was unable to bear the expense of a statue, and so the plan was “temporarily” abandoned during the next session of congress. Financial shortfalls persisted, however, and were only increased by the debt imposed by the War of 1812.

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<sup>43</sup> An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera, p. 1 of 4.

<sup>44</sup> “Washington Monument, Baltimore; Account of laying the Cornerstone, Raiding the statue, Description, etc.,” (1849), 34, Rare Books, MF 241.W1W2, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>45</sup> “The Washingtonian: Containing a Sketch of the Life and Death of the Late Gen’l Geo. Washington,” Lancaster: W. Hamilton, 1802 [printed and sold by Wm. Hamilton, Franklin Head in West King Street.]

No further move was made nationally to attempt to create a monument to Washington until September of 1833, when the Washington National Monument Society was organized. It was the intention of the society, first headed by Chief Justice Marshall, that the money for the monument be raised through the voluntary contributions of individual citizens, so as to be a grass-roots effort. And, in fact, a limit of \$1 was initially placed on all donations as a means of a guarantee. While donations totaling about \$28,000.00 were made during the first couple years, factors such as economic depression caused the society to suspend collections from 1836 until 1847. A site was selected in January 1848, and the cornerstone laid on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July of that year. Robert Mills won the design competition for the national monument to George Washington, proposing the construction of a 600' ornamented obelisk with a circular colonnaded structure surrounding the base, 100' in height and 250' across. Political wrangling, lack of funding, and finally the Civil War conspired to halt construction, and the monument stood for nearly twenty-five years at only 150'. It was not until 1876 that President Ulysses S. Grant decided that the federal government should bear the expense and assigned Montgomery C. Meigs and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to see to its completion. The much simplified monument was finished by the close of 1884, and dedicated in February of 1885— nearly seventy years after the cornerstone was laid for the Monument to Washington in Baltimore, Maryland.

In the meantime, a handful of other significant monuments were started in the years following the laying of the cornerstone for Baltimore's Washington Monument. The first, also in Baltimore, was the Battle Monument. It was built as a tribute to those who gave their lives defending Baltimore during the 1814 bombardment of Ft. McHenry by the British. Ironically enough, the Battle monument was located on the square near the courthouse that had been originally proposed as the site of the Washington Monument, and was designed by Maximilian Godefroy whose preliminary designs for the Washington monument had been rejected. Although plans for the Washington Monument were made years earlier, the actual construction of both monuments began the same year, in 1815. The Battle Monument, completed in 1825, is similar to the Washington Monument in its component parts, consisting of a column mounted on a base and topped by a statue. However, at 39' in height it is considerably smaller than the Washington Monument's towering 180', much varied in its proportions, and without an interior cavity. Nonetheless, it is an impressive structure, adorned in classical motifs.

Also of national significance is the Bunker Hill Monument built in Boston, Massachusetts to commemorate the Battle of Bunker Hill, fought on June 17, 1776, and considered to be the first major battle of the Revolutionary War. In 1823, a group of prominent citizens formed the Bunker Hill Monument Association in to construct a more permanent memorial to replace the 18' wooden pillar was erected on the site 1794. The 220' granite obelisk was completed in 1842, and dedicated the following year, on the sixty-seventh anniversary of the battle. Interestingly enough, Robert Mills submitted a design for this monument, and although it was not accepted, he claimed that the final product was clearly based upon his design. Unlike the Washington monument, the one at Bunker Hill was erected to commemorate a significant *event*, which was far more palatable to democratic sensibilities than a monument to an individual. Kammen points out that when asked if surplus 'state' money be applied to the proposed monument honoring George Washington, Americans could not reach consensus. In summation, it was written in a letter to the Philadelphia Public Ledger, in 1837:

We are opposed to the least expenditure of public money for the mere purpose of honoring individuals, however distinguished, and therefore say that all such things should be done by private munificence. We venerate as highly the character, and feel as grateful for the services of Washington, as any republican, or as is consistent with that self respect, without which no one can be a republican.” The author did favor using public money for the Bunker Hill Monument, which was then under construction.<sup>46</sup>

An obelisk was also chosen for the monument erected at Fort Griswold in Groton, Connecticut in 1826-1830 to commemorate the site of the 1781 British massacre of American troops, led by the infamous Benedict Arnold. As the Egyptian symbol of eternal life, obelisks became one of the most prolific forms for burial monuments, sprouting forth throughout the nations newly created rural cemeteries by the mid to late-nineteenth century. As Kammen points out, the change in attitude towards commemoration during the Reconstruction following the Civil War “brought obelisks to the village greens in memory of each community’s casualties.” War memorials have, in fact, converted once austere battlefields, such as Valley Forge and Gettysburg, into commemorative landscapes. Mills used the column, a classical European monument form (along with the triumphal arch), rather than the obelisk that later became a ubiquitous part of America commemorative landscape. It was also one Mills would use for his design of the National Monument to Washington in 1848. Mills first used a truncated version of the obelisk in the proposed design for North Point Monument in Baltimore, in 1817. Although the design was not accepted, Mills was able to put it to use in the design of the Maxcy Monument in South Carolina, in 1827.

### George Washington as an American Icon

George Washington was a natural candidate for commemoration. Probably the most revered and memorialized figure in our history, even in life George Washington was readily acknowledged as an icon of burgeoning American culture.<sup>47</sup> As the hero of the American Revolution and the first president of the United States, Washington was of singular importance in both the fight for freedom and in the formation of a unified nation. Even the other members of the Continental Congress recognized that without Washington’s support and leadership it was unlikely that a union could be formed at all. As the hero of the American Revolution, his presence lent credibility to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 that otherwise might not have been recognized as possessing a mandate from the people of Colonial America. In summarizing the significance of George Washington to American history, Historian Richard Brookhiser evokes the words of James Monroe who, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson wrote of Washington, “His influence carried this government . . . No one equaled Washington in popular esteem, and no politician, whatever his thought of the constitution, would oppose him personally.” Never has anyone been so unanimously admired and adored, and, in fact, Washington is the only man in history to win a unanimous vote for president in the electoral college, not once but twice. And as Historian Richard Smith argues, “Lacking a National church, royal family or aristocratic traditions to bond them, Americans had but one point of common reference. And that was

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<sup>46</sup> Kammen, 55. The correspondent thought that battle monuments at Brandywine and Trenton were also acceptable because ‘such things are intended to honor the country, and patriotism is a republican sentiment.’

<sup>47</sup> The first reference to Washington as “Father of His Country” appeared in an almanac in 1778, and was fixed ever since. Richard Brookhiser. *Founding Father; Rediscovering George Washington* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 159.

George Washington.”<sup>48</sup> Washington alone was able to unite the members of the Continental Congress who were well aware of the hold Washington had over the public. Washington felt very strongly that we needed to be united as one nation, an idea that was not universally accepted by the congress. Many for states’ rights were unwilling to accept the idea that they might share the burden and responsibility that came with union. Particularly in question was assuming the debt incurred by the individual states during the revolution, which naturally would be more abhorrent to those whose states with more resources. Washington was a particularly strong opponent of large-scale intra-state improvement projects that would enrich the nation as a whole, such as canal building.

Washington began his service to his country in 1753 at the age of twenty-one, as a soldier in the French and Indian wars, and would remain in public service for most of his life. He became involved in Virginia State politics in 1759, and for sixteen years served in the Virginia Legislature’s House of Burgesses. In 1774, he entered the national political arena as a Virginia delegate to both the First and Second sessions of the Continental Congress (1774 and 1775). In 1775, he became Commander and Chief of the Continental Army, and for the next six years led our forces in the Revolutionary War. He demonstrated amazing ability to earn the trust and loyalty of his men; the harsh winter that he and his men spent at Valley Forge is a testimony to his leadership capabilities.

When the conflict ended in 1781, Washington returned to farming at Mount Vernon. There he remained until 1787, when he was called to head the Virginia delegation to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. As the culminating event of those sessions, Washington was elected to his first term as president in 1789. After serving two consecutive terms, he left office in 1797. Washington returned to Mount Vernon at that time, enjoying only a few year’s retirement before his death on December 14, 1799. As Brookhiser put it, “The service rendered at each step of his career . . . would have been enough, but there was always another step and another service, as long as he lived.”<sup>49</sup> While Washington wanted nothing more for himself that to return to his farm at Mount Vernon, he was dedicated to the American cause and was therefore easily called away. Thomas Jefferson later said of Washington, “He has often declared to me that he considered our new Constitution as an experiment on the practicality of republican government, and with what dose of liberty man could be trusted for his own good; that he was determined the experiment should have a fair trial, and would lose his last drop of blood in support of it.”<sup>50</sup>

It is because of Washington’s dedication to the American cause, coupled with his humility, that he has so captured our imagination that we still pay homage to him over two hundred years after his death. To the general public, Washington personified the American democratic ideal and yet his humility made Washington a rather reluctant hero. He was endowed with an imposing

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<sup>48</sup> Richard Norton Smith, *Patriarch: George Washington and the New American Nation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), xvi.

<sup>49</sup> Brookhiser, 11.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, 360. Also, Richard Brookhiser states, “Washington was even more anxious for the reputation of the principle of self-government, which he believed was linked to the fate of the American government. He was not alone in thinking so . . . “It has always been my creed, he wrote to Lafayette, “that we should not be left as an awful monument to prove, that Mankind, under the most favourable circumstances for civil liberty and happiness, are unequal to the task of Governing themselves, and therefore made for a Master,” 72.

physical presence, exceptional endurance, and self discipline—qualities that helped him win the confidence and respect of soldiers, politicians, and the general public alike.<sup>51</sup> He was intelligent and well-informed, if not well educated. Unlike many of his fellow members of the Continental Congress, Washington did not possess a college degree, nor was he gifted at speech-making. Instead, he preferred to take a backseat to those more articulate statesmen. Washington was plagued by insecurities and was sensitive to criticism, which is likely the cause for his humble nature. He was driven by a sense of inferiority to work constantly towards self-improvement.<sup>52</sup> Washington also was highly moralistic. As a teenager, he obtained copies of *Seneca's Morals* (of Roman virtues), *The Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and in Conversation*, and other such volumes; he would adhere to their tenets throughout his entire life.<sup>53</sup> As Brookhiser suggests, such works taught him to accept honor only with reluctance and modesty.<sup>54</sup> As was said of Washington during the laying of the cornerstone for Baltimore's monument:

Washington, when living, attained a moral and intellectual exaltation that placed him beyond the more ignoble influences by which human nature is actuated, and aloof from motives that could sully the purity of his spirit, or cast a shade upon the brightest of his fame. Unambitious of controlling others, he achieved the more mighty work of governing himself, and gave a practical illustration of the passage in holy writ, which proclaims that he that humbleth (sic.) himself shall be exalted. To have been the first among the sister states to erect a monument to the savior of his country, is a proud distinction in behalf of Maryland.<sup>55</sup>

Time and time again, Washington turned over the mantle of power and gladly retreated to his farm at Mount Vernon.

### Baltimore as the Monumental City

It is unclear why Baltimore became the location for the nation's first significant monument of any type, much less the first to George Washington.<sup>56</sup> As a Scottish visitor to the city in 1818 said of the monument then under construction,

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<sup>51</sup> According to Richard Brookhiser, "He possessed incredible physical strength and endurance and is said to have been 'the best horseman of his age, and the most graceful figure that could be seen on horseback,'" 111. And he adds, "Women also took note of him. In her letter urging him to serve a second term, Mrs. Eliza Powell, citing his looks among his qualifications for office, argued that his physical stature enhanced his political stature, ". . . your very figure is calculated in inspire confidence with people whose simple good sense appreciates the noblest qualities of mind with the heroic form," 109.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Brookhiser claims that "Washington was a leader who sought explanations and explainers all his life, and who mastered both what he was told and those who told him. . . . and he "south political ideas, in the first place, by reading. Washington had, at his death, a library of nine hundred volumes." Brookhiser, *Founding Father*, 139.

<sup>53</sup> Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* was very popular with the eighteenth century Americans because it reinforced their ideals about a great democratic-lead American government. The idea of learning from role models likely also helped fuel idea for the monument.

<sup>54</sup> Brookhiser, 129.

<sup>55</sup> "Washington Monument, Baltimore; Account of laying the Cornerstone, Raiding the statue, Description, etc.," 9.

<sup>56</sup> Maryland did provide the backdrop for one of the most important symbolic events of Washington illustrious public career, the surrender of his military commission at the close of the Revolutionary War and of his power and influence as America's first son. Why not Annapolis then, where the event actually took place? Perhaps it was the citizens of Baltimore, so enamored of Washington that they insisted upon the monuments construction. Interestingly enough, according to historian Stanley Weintraub whose book *General Washington's Christmas Farewell; A Mount Vernon Homecoming, 1783*, chronicles Washington's ceremonial return home from New York City at the end of the

The name and deeds of Washington stand so conspicuously pre-eminent in the history of this nation, that to rear a suitable monument to his name must be a matter of no trifling difficulty. The structure must be magnificent and durable, about all ordinary edifices, which aspires to outshine or outlast the splendor of his name. Probably this is one reason why no National Monument has hitherto been erected to the father of American Liberty. The Baltimore one is the first of an architectural kind that has been attempted.<sup>57</sup>

It is true that at the time that the cornerstone for the monument was laid, Baltimore was among the nation's most important port cities, ranking third in size and commerce. At the same token, it was also a fairly new city, having been incorporated in 1797, not much more than a decade before plans for the monument were first set in motion. Speaking before the Maryland Historical Society in 1844, patron of the arts, Robert Gilmore made the claim that the Washington Monument was first proposed by the wealthy citizens who had built homes on the old courthouse square wishing to fend off the potential construction of "some disagreeable and offensive building" on that location.<sup>58</sup> Of course, Gilmore himself later said when that site was rejected that the board of managers who lived on the square where the monument was to be built, feared that the monument might, after suffering some shock, overturn and damage property.<sup>59</sup> While somewhat contradictory, it would seem that the idea for the monument came from an elite group of citizens, many of whom later found themselves on the board of managers for the project.

Of the managers, Baltimore merchant John Comegys; and printer, publisher, and map maker Fielding Lucas, Jr. are credited with conceiving of the idea for a monument.<sup>60</sup> Comegys and Fielding became board managers, along with James A. Buchanan, Robert Gilmore, Jr., Isaac McKim, and David Winchester. Their vision was undoubtedly shared by other leading citizens and patrons of the arts. The Board of Managers were selected from Baltimore's most prominent citizenry and included the following persons: James A. Buchanan of the prosperous shipping firm of Smith & Buchanan; David Winchester, insurance investor and one of the founders of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad; Fielding Lucas, Jr., printer, publisher, and map maker; Isaac McKim, wealthy merchant, director of the B& O, and a state legislator; William H. Winder, Baltimore attorney who had distinguished himself in the War of 1812; William Gwynn, prominent merchant and politician; and Robert Gilmore, Jr., merchant and patron of the arts, who became the primary influence upon the artistic formation of the monument of those on the board. Among the most avid proponents for the monument was James Calhoun, the city's first mayor (1797-1804) and a staunch admirer of Washington.<sup>61</sup> When Washington retired from the

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Revolutionary War, only at Baltimore was there no welcoming party to meet him. Although Washington was entertained at a dinner and dance given at an Inn on Light Street the following night by the city's more elite citizenry, the general population appeared to be nonplused by his visit. Stanley Weintraub, *General Washington's Christmas Farewell; A Mount Vernon Homecoming, 1783* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 139-40.

<sup>57</sup> J. Jefferson Miller, 8.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Gilmore, "Recollections of Baltimore (Read before the Society, May 9, 1844)," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. VII, No.3 (September 1912): 253.

<sup>59</sup> J. Jefferson Miller, 45. It is also worth noting that Gilmore headed up the negotiations with Col. Howard for a portion of his Belvedere estate as the eventual site for the Washington Monument.

<sup>60</sup> J. Jefferson Miller, 11-12.

<sup>61</sup> James Calhoun was said to be a friend of George Washington's, and was certainly a proponent of the Revolutionary War effort. Prior to being governor, Calhoun was on committees fighting the restrictions placed on colonial commerce by the British. He was among those authorized by congress to sign bills of credit during the war, was appointed deputy to the Commissary-General of Purchases for the Continental Army, and held a commission in the

presidency in 1797, the mayor sent a letter in which he conveys, on behalf of the citizens of Baltimore, their “Sincere expressions of regret for your retirement; their lively gratitude for your public services; their affectionate attachment to your private character; their heartfelt farewell to your person and family; and their increasing solicitude for your temporal and eternal happiness.”<sup>62</sup> After his term as mayor, Calhoun continued to serve the city as a council member, up until the time of his death in 1816.<sup>63</sup>

James A. Buchanan, who served as the first president of the Board of Managers for the construction of the Washington Monument (later replaced by Robert Gilmor), was, in fact, Calhoun’s son-in-law.<sup>64</sup> As the city’s first leaders, politicians and promoters, Calhoun and the board of manager may have seen the construction of the monument as an opportunity to elevate the city’s reputation. As was stated during the cornerstone laying ceremonies,

The city of Baltimore, by this devoted act of patriotism and that which succeeded it [the construction of the Washington Monument], has won for herself, by common consent, the proud distinction of “the monumental city” for her citizens have notably sustained her honor by erecting another monument structure commemorative of the glorious achievement of her sons who fell in her defiance during the last war.”<sup>65</sup>

Of course, this was to be the first of many monuments erected in Baltimore. Began after the Washington Monument, yet completed before it was the Battle Monument, built between 1815 and 1825 to commemorate those who fell during the 1814 British attack upon Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. Prior to the construction of these monuments, in 1792 Baltimore was the recipient of the world’s first monument to Christopher Columbus, a 44'-6-3/4 stuccoed brick obelisk donated by the French Consul. Original located on his estate at the corner of North Avenue and Harford Road, it was moved to Herring Run Park in 1964.<sup>66</sup> Just prior to beginning the Baltimore monument, Mills design a church and monument in Richmond, known as Monumental Church (1812-17). Also concurrent, were proposals for other minor Baltimore monuments including the Winchester Monument (1816), the Aquilla Randall, or North Point Monument (1817, but not accepted), and the Calhoun-Buchanan Monument (ca. 1819). John Bryan notes that Mills’ design for the North Point Monument, carried out in simpler form by another architect, is among the earliest use of the obelisk in American, and foreshadows his

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Baltimore militia. When Washington visited Baltimore years before, in September 1781, Calhoun was a member of the reception committee.

<sup>62</sup> Address of Mayor & Corporation of the City of Baltimore to his Excellency, George Washington, late President of the U.S., March 11, 1797. “Washington Monument, Baltimore; Account of laying the Cornerstone, Raising the statue, Description, etc.,” MHS Rare MF 241.W1W2, 1849, p.15 Note: The letter returned by Washington begins, “To meet the plaudits of my fellow citizens, for the part I have acted in public life, is the highest reward, next to the consciousness of having done by duty to the utmost of my abilities, of which my mind is susceptible. . .”

<sup>63</sup> Robert Barnes, “James Calhoun: Mayor of Baltimore, 1797– 1804,” *The Archivist’s Bulldog; Newsletter of the Maryland State Archives*, vol. 13, no. 6 (March 22, 1999): 1-3.

<sup>64</sup> Among Mills’ Baltimore commissions was the Calhoun-Buchanan monument. Byran, 121.

<sup>65</sup> “Washington Monument, Baltimore; Account of laying the Cornerstone, Raising the statue, Description, etc.,” 8.

<sup>66</sup> Another relatively early well known monument is the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston, MA., erected 1825-1842, to replace the original monument which was an 18' wood pillar with a gilt urn, built in 1794. Michael Kammen covers this topic extensively. He claims that the period between 1870 and 1910 comprised the most notable period in all of American history for erecting monuments , Michael Kammen, 113.

design for the National Monument to Washington.<sup>67</sup> The term “Monumental City” was coined in reference to Baltimore by then president John Quincy Adams who, upon visiting Baltimore in the fall of 1827, was struck by the three prominent monuments then in existence. The name took hold and has arguably provided inspiration to the city’s civic leaders, so much so that by the early twentieth century Baltimore could boast of nearly 200 monuments, memorials, and statues.<sup>68</sup>

### Mount Vernon Place

The monument sits upon the site of the eighteenth century country estate of Colonel John Egar Howard known as “Belvedere,” which encompassed much of the property north of the city. Col. Howard was among Baltimore’s most prominent early citizens. Recognized as a hero of the Revolutionary War, he also served as congressmen from Maryland, a U.S. senator, and finally as governor of the state from 1788 until 1791. The Belvedere site was negotiated by Board of Managers president, Robert Gilmore, Jr. It eventually to become the site of the Battle Monument as an alternative to the earlier planned site on the square near the Old Baltimore Court House located along Calvert Street, between Fayette and Lexington. The legislation establishing the Board of Managers and giving them the authority to fund raise and to erect the monument also stipulated the site of the monument. The new monument, like the old Court House, would become the central, as well as symbolic, focus of the city. The court house site was suggested by those prominent citizens living in the vicinity and interested in elevating property values.<sup>69</sup>

Financial interests were later replaced by fears that the towering monument planned might actually collapse on top of them, rendering their investments worthless. The Board of Managers agreed that a site “on the summit of Belvedere, the hillside estate of col. John Eager Howard” would be far more dramatic than that originally proposed.<sup>70</sup> It also optimistically projected the expansion of the city northward. Located well outside the current bounds of the city, the construction of the statue required the extension of Charles Street, the main north-south axis, forming a natural corridor for development. The agreement with Col. Howard came at a time when he was considering the division of his Belvedere estate amongst his children. Thus it is likely that Howard viewed his involvement with the monument and the establishment of public squares and private lots in terms of its value as speculative development as well as civic responsibility.

Mills original 1814 plan for the monument made little provision for the surrounding landscape, as it was outside the scope of the design competition. Once the monument was well on its way towards completion (including changes to the original design), however, Mills turned his attention to enhancing the site so as to make it a desirable public and residential location. In the

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<sup>67</sup> John M. Bryan, 140. In addition, Mills submitted two designs for the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston, one obelisk and the other, a column. Although he did not receive the commission, he claims that the monument as built was based heavily upon his submission. Mills also presented a proposal for a monument to those South Carolinians who participated in the Revolutionary War, that was never realized, but did design and oversee construction of two smaller monuments in that state, Maxcy & Dekalb monuments (both in 1824-27).

<sup>68</sup> William Sener Rusk. *Art in Baltimore*, Bi-Centennial revised edition, Baltimore: The Norman Remington Company, 1929, XV.

<sup>69</sup> J. Jefferson Miller, 11.

<sup>70</sup> John M. Bryan, 116.

original 1814 plan the monument is simply shown with an encircling path around the base and four broad approaches.<sup>71</sup> The proposal enabled “the opening of an avenue in the direction of Charles Street from Center to Madison Streets of 105' wide and a cross street of 66' intersecting the monument east and west, the whole of which location was designated on a drawing laid before the board previous to the commencement of the work, and sanctioned by Col. Howard.” However, Mills suggested that the board procure from Col. Howard “the establishment of a 200 feet width east and west of the monument all the way thru from Center to Madison Street; or if he will not give it to the public, that he would make it binding upon those who should build on this Avenue to set their homes on this line of the 200 feet Avenue.” Mills suggests that by doing so, Howard would be furthering his own interests by making his salable lots more desirable. As Mills puts it, “his lots would be sufficient depth to answer all the conveniences of private dwellings.”

Mills was interested in public benefit as well as commercial ventures when he stated, “It is very desirable in this situation that some place for a promenade for the public should be provided, and here is an opportunity to obtain a handsome one at very little sacrifice to individual interest.” Acting the politician, Mills suggested such a gift from Col. Howard would make him worthy of one of the niches in the base of the monument, intended for busts of important persons.<sup>72</sup> In a follow-up letter to board president Robert Gilmore, Mills sends an improved plan of the site, which includes: It includes 1.) newly proposed wall more in proportion of the ground than that currently being considered, 2.) less sacrifice of public ground ( for streets, etc), 3.) gain in frontage of each lot facing the monument, and 4.) gain of 200' at monument facade.<sup>73</sup> They essentially view the plan as consisting of two intersecting parks, Mount Vernon Place running east-to-west, and Washington Place, running north-to-south. The two parks in reality form four rectangular squares, each intended initially as open green-space.

A decade later, Mills argues once again for improvements to the landscape plan. Mills was interested in further enhancing the area surrounding the monument by creating a rotary. He also calls for an adjustment in the proportions of the lots (without altering the total square footage) in order to create a greater setback that would be more conducive to the viewing of the monument. In a letter to city managers, Mills compares the present plan with his proposed plan. While, the present plan “provides for opening monument Street 200 feet wide from Cathedral to St. Pauls or Lombardy (sic.) Street, and Charles Street 150 ft. wide from Madison to Center Street,” Mills’ proposed plan provided for “an open circular area around the monument 450 ft. in diameter in the four outlet Streets.” The new proposal also called for an adjustment in the size of the lots along the square from 30' x 140' to 38' x 130'. Perhaps in a somewhat mocking tone, Mills even plays upon earlier held fears that the monument could topple onto the surrounding houses in presenting his case.

Besides the advantages above stated there are others of them most prominent of which relates to the grading of the square, which admits of placing all the fronts of the house upon almost the

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<sup>71</sup> “Designs for a Monument Proposed to be erected in the City of Baltimore To the memory of General George Washington submitted to the honorable the Board of Managers by Robert Mills of South Carolina, Architect, Philadelphia, 1814.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Mills to the Board of Managers, 31 October 1820, file 4.

<sup>73</sup> Mills to Robert Gilmore, “A plan of improvement of the square upon which the Washington Monument stands” MS 876, file 4, Maryland Historical Society.

same level— another advantage relates to the safety which the timid would feel in inhabiting the houses around the monument, as they would be far from the base of the monument as the column is high— this is worthy of consideration for the interest of the proprietors of the lots— again the distance which the houses would be placed from the monument would enable the column and statue to be viewed to greater advantage. And the public would divide equal advantage in this respect, and the column could be viewed from every point of the compass without pain to the eye— Again what a splendid parade place and how appropriate for the review of the troops— The parapet of the base of the monument for the general officers— the crescent avenue for the troops, and the circular area within for the spectators— The value which would be given to these lots around the monument no one can properly estimate— that this would be considerable may be reasonably inferred, from the vastly superior advantages which these lots would have over any others in the city— Mr. Gilmor, William Winchester, and William Oliver to who I have shown the plan submitted are highly pleased with it.<sup>74</sup>

Evidently, Mills argument was convincing. The 1831 “Report of the Treasurer of the Western Shore Concerning the Washington Monument” Mills states: “I have the satisfaction also to state, that the proprietors of the lots on the four streets leading from it [the monument] have agreed to enlarge these streets to the width of 200 feet, which will contribute much to the appearance of the monument from a distance.”<sup>75</sup> Over the course of the monuments construction, Mills lobbies the board of managers (when the site was private property), city managers (as the property was incorporated within the city limits), and the state legislature for funding to attained the desired effect of the monument and squares for its future residents and the viewing public. When changes in grade are suggested in 1833, Mills argues to maintain the original grade, “as important & essential to the beauty and dignity of the monument,” arguing that a change would require “some redesign of enclosures and approaches.”<sup>76</sup>

In 1836, work is finally underway to grade, pave, and set the curb stone in the area around the monument. Again, Mills is keeping a watchful eye. Learning that the shape of the area surrounding the monument that is to be set off by paving is to assume an “irregular form,” Mills cautions against it. Mills objection to this plan stems from the tendency of “irregularity” restrict drainage and to crowd the area around the monument. As Mills states: “It would be a pity to have the space about the Mont [monument] cramped, after making the sacrifices that have been made— ample room here will be found not only ornamental but useful for many purposes, for the parade of troops, for great public meetings, etc. but I need not enlarge on this part.”<sup>77</sup> In the end, Mills prevails. A description of the completed monument and its surrounding landscape published ca. 1843 appeared as follows:

This monument was raised in honor of the memory of General George Washington. It is placed at the intersection of two squares. One, called Washington Place, runs from north to south, being

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<sup>74</sup> Washington Monument— Baltimore; correspondence 1819– 1835, “Statement exhibiting the comparative value of the present with a proposed Plan of Improvement of the Washington Monument Square,” Robt. Mills to the Honorable Benj Howard, January 12, 1830, MS 876, Maryland Historical Society. Mills’ sketch indicates that the plan dips to form a concave curve.

<sup>75</sup> “Report of the Treasurer of the Western Shore Concerning the Washington Monument, 1831,” Annapolis: Printed by Jonas Green , 1831, MHS: PAM 1150, p. 14 (postscript).

<sup>76</sup> Mills to Senate & House of Representatives for the State of Maryland, Jan 1833, MS 876. Mills notes that when the monument was begun the ground was not within the “bounds of the corporation” of the city.

<sup>77</sup> Mills to Gilmor, 13 May 1836.

a continuation of Charles St., and is limited by Centre St. on the south, and on the north by Madison Street. It is 150' wide and 744' long. The other space is called Mount Vernon, and runs east to west. It is limited by St. Paul's St. on the east, and Cathedral St. on the west, and is 200' in breadth and 744' in length. When these spaces shall be adorned with the appropriate rows of trees, as well as embellished with marble fountains or basins, and other ornaments of which this place is susceptible, it will become one of the most delightful promenades on this continent."<sup>78</sup>

The published description includes a map which shows the city grid beginning below Monument Street, the east-west axis of the monument square. The only other east-west street is Madison, just beyond the monument. North-south streets above monument square include (moving from west to east) Charles, Calvert, and North; and then to east radiating out from Monument Street northward are York Avenue, Harford Avenue, and Gay Street (or "road to Belair, 21 miles"). By 1849, the monument was described as standing "on an elevated hill 100' above the tide at the intersection of four principle avenues in the center of a square 200' each way; Avenues to the south and north are 110' wide, 30' of which have been laid out as a promenade, enclosed and planted in shrubs, to the monument, 80' for a carriageway."<sup>79</sup>

The public squares remained largely undeveloped following the completion of the monument, leading one *Baltimore Sun* reporter to lament, "It has always been the pride of every citizen to take a stranger in our city to see the noble monument erected to the memory of the Father of his county, and it has always been a source of mortification to him, to see around it the unmistakable evidences of a want of public spirit by the corporation, in the shabby squares laid out for embellishment, but never improved." Finally, in April 1850, a city ordinance was passed for the long-sought improvement of the squares surrounding the Washington Monument. The improvements consisted largely of the installation of an ornamental iron fencing mounted on granite curbing, including the necessary gates, around each park, in keeping with that earlier placed around the monument proper. The bill also stipulated that "the grounds (be) suitably laid off, and planted with the requisite number of shade trees and such ornamental shrubbery as they may deem proper for embellishment."

By December 1851, a *Baltimore Sun* article reported: "The enclosed ground of the squares has been neatly dressed for further improvement, by Capt. Brown, whilst the granite work was executed by Mr. Cyrus Gault. The paving of the sidewalks of the northern plat is now progressing under the superintendence of Mr. James Allen, and the planting of the best quality trees, all of which are being enclosed with strong boxes, is also being done by Mr. Charles U. Strobie, a florist of considerable eminence. These very desirable and valued improvements have all been conducted by Major Spedden, the City Commissioner, the result of whose industry and efficiency in the important post which he holds may also be seen in the well graded streets, substantial curbs, and well laid sidewalks leading to the above squares."<sup>80</sup>

By the time that the improvements to Mount Vernon Place were completed, the city had expanded to meet it. In the decades to follow, Mount Vernon became a center for fashionable

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<sup>78</sup> "Description of Washington Monument & of the Public Buildings in Baltimore," Baltimore: John Murphy, 1848 (MHS, Rare book collection, MF 241.WID4, 1848).

<sup>79</sup> *Washington Monument, Baltimore; Account of laying the Cornerstone, Raising the statue, Description, etc.*, 37.

<sup>80</sup> "Improving Mt. Vernon Place," *Baltimore Sun*, 17 April 1850. "Improvement of Washington Place, Baltimore *Sun*, 13 April 1850; "Washington Monument Squares, *Baltimore Sun*, 6 December 1851.

residential architecture, as well as arts and culture. Starting slowly at first, a number of Baltimore's wealthiest residents built their homes along its squares. The first was William Tiffany, who erected a sizable Greek Revival style house in 1842 (now the Mount Vernon Club, #8 West Mount Vernon Place). It was not until 1849 that the next residence was begun by John H. Thomas, from an Italian Renaissance design by J. Rudolph Niernsee of the well-known Baltimore firm of Niernsee & Neilson (now used by the Walters Art Gallery). The same firm also designed the Asbury House, ca. 1855 (#10 East Mount Vernon Place), and the Decatur Miller House, which features brownstone construction and iron balconies (700 Cathedral Street).

In 1860, construction began on the only speculative housing along Mount Vernon Place, "Brownstone Row," which consists of six elegant matching townhouses (#22-32 East Mount Vernon Place). Other significant residences include the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion (#7-11 West Mount Vernon Place), the home of the son of the president of the B&O Railroad that was expanded in 1884 by Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White, and again by John Russell Pope in 1902 (now the Engineering Society of Baltimore); the home of A.S. Abell, a founder of the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper; and Theodore Marburg, a U.S. ambassador to Belgium. After World War I, a number of fashionable apartment buildings and hotels were constructed on or around the squares, adding to the imposing single-family residences that had earlier characterized the district. As was still fashionable at the time, most were executed in the Beaux Arts style, including The Latrobe, Washington Apartments, and the Belvedere and Stafford Hotels (now also apartments).

The first cultural structure on the square, the original section of the Peabody Institute (#1 East Mount Vernon Place) was erected 1858-62 in the Renaissance Revival style design of English architect Edmund Lind (the Peabody Library was added to the Music hall and Conservatory in 1875-78). Enoch Pratt opened the first branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library along Mount Vernon Square in 1886, replaced by the current structure in 1933. Pratt's home, at the corner of Park and Monument streets, is now part of the Maryland Historical Society complex. The other significant cultural institution was erected in 1909, the original section of the Walters Art Gallery. The gallery began in the Mount Vernon home of its benefactor, William Walters, and later that of his son, Henry Walters, which was opened for public viewing in the 1870s. The imposing Gothic Revival style Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church was built of green serpentine stone in 1870-72.

Beginning in the 1880s, the iron fencing installed during the 1851 improvements was removed and the grassy lawns were made over into sculpture gardens. The City placed statues of George Peabody, and Severn Teackle Wallis, a prominent Baltimore attorney and political reformer of the late 19th century in the east and north squares; in the north square are statues of Roger Brooke Taney, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1835 to 1864, and John Eager Howard, and in the west square are several bronze animal sculptures produced by French sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye. Walters was responsible for the Barye lion and for a number of statues and bronzes including the four depictions of War, Peace, Order and Force, and the statue of Military Courage by Paul Dubois in the west square. The last statue to be added (to the south square) was the equestrian statue of Lafayette dedicated in 1924 to the memory of the fallen American and French comrades of World War I. Fountains are also located in the east, west, and south squares. The last major and enduring change to Mount Vernon came in 1916 when a new

landscape plan was developed for the squares by one of America's preeminent landscape architecture firms, Carrere and Hastings. According to the National Historic Landmark nomination prepared by W. Brown Morton for the National Park Service in 1971, Mount Vernon Place is one of "the best conceived and executed city planning projects ever carried out in 19<sup>th</sup> century America."<sup>81</sup>

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Washington Monument in Baltimore is a colossal, Classical Greek Doric column mounted on a large, square base, and crowned by a statue of George Washington to obtain a height of 178'. As the first significant monument created in the United States, Baltimore's Washington Monument is without precedent in this country. However, the design was arguably influenced by European precedents, most notably Trajan's Column, built in honor of the great Roman Emperor, Marcus Ulpius Traianus who ruled from 98 AD to 117 AD. Mills biographer John Bryan attests that while "Mills concept (for the Washington Monument) was derivative, . . . the assemblage was his own, and it raised the architectural expression of American pride and ambition to a new level. . . . This is his most polished surviving presentation."<sup>82</sup> Where Trajan's column included a tomb, the one for Washington include a display chamber in the base, where information and memorabilia is still exhibited today. Within the shaft of (both monuments) is a spiral staircase that leads to a viewing platform at its top. Forsaking earlier plans to ornament and inscribe the shaft, it remains fairly plain, punctuated only by three small windows that light the stair, and a doorway out to the viewing platform. All of the ornamental details and decorative features such as emblems, trophies, and other iron work were painstakingly researched and designed to be true to classical forms. Memorialization appears in the form of inscriptions over each of the four doorways that give dates of key events in Washington's life.

The column was used for other memorials, most notably Baltimore's second most famous Battle Memorial. The broken column was a popular form of funerary art for military heroes, symbolizing a life cut short. The column was soon supplanted as a popular monumental form by the obelisk, the Egyptian symbol for eternal life, and the form assumed by the monument to Washington built on the National Mall.

2. Condition of fabric: The monument is in good condition and is still opened to the public.

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<sup>81</sup> W. Brown Morton, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Mount Vernon Place Historic District, prepared 28 July 1971, 8. Significance, 1.

<sup>82</sup> John M. Bryan, 113-15.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The monument consists of a square stone base measuring 50' x 50' and 24' in height, surmounted by a grand Doric column atop of which rests a 16'-6" high statue of Washington mounted on a circular pedestal, bringing the whole to a height of 178'. The interior of the monument's base houses a small museum gallery, and the entry to the spiral stairway to the viewing platform or pedestal. The monument is enclosed by an iron railing 6' in height, mounted on a marble coping 1'-3" in height and 320' in circumference, and including four gates.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of brick and descend to a depth of 16' below ground. A heavy iron grating riveted together was laid over a bed of solid masonry that lies under the column. That portion of the foundation that is above ground is covered by marble.
3. Walls: The exterior walls of the base and column are of marble.
4. Structural systems, framing: The monument is of load-bearing stone with a hollow interior brick column that contains a spiral staircase.
5. Porches, stoops: The area around the base of the monument is flagged in stone and twelve stone steps lead to the principle entryway.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are four doorways into the base of the monument, one at each elevation. The doors are of bronze-stained oak and were designed by Baltimore carpenter, Jacob Wall.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The shaft of the column is punctuated by three small windows that light the stairway.
7. Cornice, frieze: A broad frieze runs around the base of the monument, immediately under the main cornice, intended to be ornamented by a series of metal wreaths encircling the names of each state.
8. Statuary: The statute of Washington is intended to depict him resigning his military commission in Annapolis, the capitol city of Maryland, and hence, the states greatest claim to its role in historical events surrounding Washington. For this reason, Washington is seen standing, his outstretched him presenting a scroll, presumably turning over his actual written paper of commission. A local publication of 1849 describes the "tout ensemble" of the figure of George Washington atop the column as possessing a "fine expression and benignity for the face of the figure . . . a dignified gravity over spreads the whole face, expressive of deep thought, and perfect self-command." "Washington Monument, Baltimore; Account of laying the Cornerstone, Raiding the statue, Description, etc.," MHS Rare MF 241.W1W2, 1849, p.33

9. Trophies, emblems, architectural ornamentation:

A. Inscriptions over doors: On each side of the base is a doorway over which is affixed a plaque with the following inscriptions: On the south elevation, the plaque reads: "Born 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1732. Died 14<sup>th</sup> December 1799." On the east elevation: "Commander in Chief of the American Army, 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1775. Commission resigned at Annapolis, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1783." To the north: "Trenton, 25<sup>th</sup> December 1776. York Town, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1781." And on the west is inscribed: "President of the United States, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1789. Retired to Mount Vernon, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1797." They were cast and affixed to the base of the monument in 1838.

B. Tripods: The last of the important decorative features planned by Mills to be installed, the tripods, finally were installed in January of 1839. Mills based the designs, once again, upon French sources, after having consulted with a number of scholars concerning proper classical form. The tripods were made by the Savage Manufacturing Company.

C. Iron railing: The designs for the decorative railing that surrounds the base of the monument were designed by Mills and were based upon the "Costumes des Anciens Peuples, a L'usage des Astriles, designed originally by M. Dandre Bardon. Mills designs were completed by May 1838 (miller, 155).

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior of the base has an open space currently used as a museum gallery that is roughly 21' square. The entrance to the base of the stair faces the north doorway. To the corresponding south, east, and west walls are large niches intended to contain full-sized statues. Opposite these are eight smaller niches intended to contain busts.

2. Stairways: A spiral stairway runs through the center of the monument's shaft, contained in the inner walls constructed of brick. It is twenty-eight steps to the top of the base, and another 200 steps to the top of the column and the lookout.

3. Flooring: The floor is of white marble.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: It is finished in granite and the walls are cover with plaster.

5. Openings: Three small rectangular windows light the stairway, each with a plain marble seat or resting place.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Architectural drawings:

“Statement Exhibiting the Comparative Values of the Present with a Proposed Plan of Improvement of the Washington Monument Square.” Robert Mills to the Honorable Benjamin Howard, Washington Monument–Baltimore; correspondence 1819-1835, Maryland Historical Society, Special Collections.

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*Washington Monument* [Baltimore] Printed by James Young, 114 West Baltimore Street [183-?], as cited in *An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera*, Library of Congress, American Memory, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field\(DOCID+@;it\(rbpe02904100\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field(DOCID+@;it(rbpe02904100))).

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#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of Mount Vernon Place was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), E. Blaine Cliver, Chief of HABS/HAER, under the direction of Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief of HABS, and Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS Senior Historian. The Mount Vernon Place documentation project was initiated in 2003 by the Washington, D.C., office of HABS/HAER. The project historians were Lisa P. Davidson, James A. Jacobs, Catherine C. Lavoie, Martin J. Perschler, and Virginia B. Price. The photographs were taken by James Rosenthal, HABS Photographer, and by Walter Smalling, independent contractor. The report on the Washington Monument was written by Catherine C. Lavoie in 2004-05.

Appendix:

Petition "To the honorable the General Assembly of Maryland"

"Ten Years are past since the Father of his Country died— America Wept!— the councils of the nation were suspended— a pompous funeral was solemnized— animated orations were delivered— all was mourning— all was grief! Columbia lost a parent— humanity a friend— the work a benefactor!

The representatives of the American people re-assembled; they solicited the body of Washington, to be deposited in the metropolis of the Unites States; the honorable request was granted.

While these sympathies existed, the intire (sic) wealth of the nation was to be expended on a Mausoleum— a treasury of twenty million seemed insufficient for the object. But disdainng moderation the Congress rose, and decreed no monument to the memory of Washington! . . . .

"He obtained for his country the acknowledgment of her independence; and founded a republic in the will and on the equal rights of the people. All nations acknowledged her sovereignty; all nations courted her friendship.

By example did Washington excite his fellow citizens to the improvement of agriculture, to the encouragement of domestic manufactures. He promoted wise regulations for the extension of commerce, who now spreads her sails over every sea and from the uttermost parts of the earth pours her liberal cointres? Bounties? Into the bosom of America.

And these are portions only of the legacies which he bequeathed to his country. Did ancient, do modern times present his parallel?

American study Washington; his glory is true glory; and even in this world he lives immortal; of which 'all times shall be the grateful recorder; posterity the careful nurse; and eternity the faithful guardian.'" . . . .

Trophies to the memory of great and good men, are an encouragement to virtuous and heroic deeds. They stimulate the young to emulation, to noble and honorable actions. One beholding the statue of Washington is their one citizen of America is there on honest man on earth whose besom would not glow."

--MHS, MS 876 Box 3, Vol. Washington Monument, Proceedings of the Managers.