

# **THE BOUNDARY STONES**

Being an Account of the  
Thirteen Original Boundary Stones  
of the District of Columbia Lying  
on the Edge of Arlington County,  
Virginia

by  
Richard Smith Wheeler  
1965

edited by  
Richard Merrill Wheeler  
2006



Map of Arlington, Virginia, circa 1964, before the Capital Beltway and Route 66 were constructed.

## The Jones Point Lighthouse

Built in 1855, the Mount Vernon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) was successful in 1926 in having this first inland waterway installation deeded to it by Act of Congress. It restored the sturdy, four-room, two story house with the large dome-shaped gasoline light set in the ridge-pole center, and installed a caretaker and his family. Meetings of the Chapter were held here, and it was open to the public. When World War II started, however, the land surrounding the lighthouse, being Government property and soon placed under security guard, the caretaker was dispossessed and no one was allowed to enter, except vandals who somehow removed the furnishings and gradually tore the building to pieces. Today, as the photograph shows, the building is in ruins.



**Lt. Col. Robert P. Waters at Zero Stone Lighthouse**

In the photograph, Robert P. Waters is standing on the East side of the lighthouse. "Zero Stone" is just out of the photograph on the South side of the building.

Articles concerning the acquisition and restoration of the lighthouse appeared in the January 2, 1950 (Monday) issue of the Evening Star; the March 4 issue of the Washington Post, page 4; the November 16, 1952 issue (Sunday) of the Times Herald, page 9; and in the April 1, 1954 issue (Thursday) of the Washington Post-times Herald, page 1B.

"Zero Stone", from which the original boundaries of the District of Columbia were laid out, is located at the water's edge on the Virginia shore of the Potomac River in front of the Jones Point Lighthouse (Alexandria). It is on grounds now controlled by the U.S. Naval Reserve Training Center. The stone is protected by a cement canopy, with a wire facing. The is further protected by a circular iron grille. The door to the grille is no longer locked and all but one top bolt on the right hand side of the gate are missing, having rusted away. At high tide the base of the stone is covered with water. On the southwest side of the stone is still legible what appears to be the letters, to the left of center "LO" The stone originally may have been marked "ZERO STONE"



**View looking SSE from the Zero Stone down the Potomac River**



**Closeup of Zero Stone showing deterioration**

The 10 mile square District of Columbia was laid out at an angle from zero stone of  $300^{\circ}$  as its western border and  $45^{\circ}$  as its southern border. 16th Street runs due north.

Originally protected by the District of Columbia D.A.R., care of State Historic Society, protective custody was transferred to the Mt. Vernon Chapter, D.A.R., April 20, 1926.

The photograph, taken in 1962, is of President Ann Ruth Hall, Washington-Lee Society, Children of the American Revolution in front of the Zero Stone at Jones Point, Alexandria, Virginia.



**Ann Ruth Hall, Washington-Lee Society, Children of the American Revolution, at Zero Stone Site, in Alexandria, Virginia**

The Number 1 stone on the southwest Leg of the ten-mile boundary is located one mile northwest of the Zero Stone in Alexandria, Virginia, at the corner off Wilkes and South Payne Streets. It is directly across from the old cemetery. This stone was moved about 200 feet southwest of its original site, which became a truck parking lot, in order to assure its preservation. This is the best preserved stone on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. It clearly indicates the four-sided truncated pyramidal top each stone originally had.

When transplanted, the stone was turned 90° to the west so that the “Jurisdiction” side is now improperly facing northwest, rather than northeast. The stone is marked as follows: On the northwest side - “Jurisdiction off the United States 1 Mile”; on the northeast side in large figures is the date - “1791”; on the southeast side the word “Virginia”; and on the southwest side “Var 0° 30” West”, indicating the magnetic variation from true north at this site,



**Number 1 stone in Alexandria, Virginia**

The plaque attached to the black-painted fence reads:

“Original Federal Boundary Stone District off Columbia  
Placed 1791-1792 Protected by Mt. Vernon Chapter  
Daughters of the American Revolution 1916”.

The Number 2 stone on the southwest leg is located between the curb and the sidewalk in front of the residence at No. 8 Russell Road, Alexandria. It is within sight of the Masonic Temple, and just off of King Street Virginia, Route 7, also known as the Leesburg Pike. Note the flat top, which may be the result of destruction, but appears to have been cut thus originally. There are no visible markings on this stone. It is also protected by the Mt. Vernon Chapter of the D.A.R., dated 1916.

RSW comments that this stone, from its size, should have been the West Cornerstone.



**Number 2 stone in Alexandria, Virginia**

The Number 3 stone on the southwest leg is located in the parking lot of the Baptist Church in the 3000 block, west side, of King Street (Route 7), Alexandria, Virginia. Visible today on the northeast side of the stone are the letters:

RISDI  
TION  
of the  
I           TE  
            AT

No other marks are visible on the other sides. The stone is protected by the American Liberty Chapter, D.A.R., 1916. This is the fourth and last stone located in the City of Alexandria. (When first relocated by Mrs. E. L Allen, it was in a pig pen on a farm, the Cunningham Farm.)



**Number 3 stone in Alexandria, Virginia**

The Number 4 stone on the southwest leg is located on the northeast shoulder of King Street (Virginia Route 7 - the Leesburg Pike), approximately 10 feet north of South Wakefield Street and 3/10 of a mile south of Shirley Highway. This was originally buried under Route 7 but was subsequently dug up and placed in its present position. Only two small pieces of the original stone remain. It is now placed 13.30 feet north of its original position. This is the first stone located in what is now Arlington County. Formerly it was known as the Courtland Smith farm. The plaque reads: “The Original Boundary Stone District of Columbia. Protected by Continental Chapter, Daughters of American Revolution”.



**Number 4 stone in Arlington, Virginia**



The Number 5 stone on the southwest leg is located on South Walter Reed Drive, about 500 feet off of King Street. (Although King Street now ends in Alexandria and this section is now Route 7). It is located on the high bank of a tributary to Four Mile Run, across the street from the 2700 block of Walter Reed Drive. Only a small portion of the stone remains above the ground, and there are no visible markings. It is 44.9 feet south of its original position. The plaque reads: "The Original Federal Boundary Stone 1921-1922 District of Columbia , 1791-1792 Placed, Protected by Key Stone Chapter, D.A.R. 1919". It is on the former James Payne Farm.



**Number 5 stone in Arlington, Virginia**

The Number 6 stone on the southwest leg, located between Columbia Pike and South George Mason Drive, about 200 feet beyond the foot of 11<sup>th</sup> Street South, was temporarily removed (1962) by Arlington County due to construction work in the area. It was stored in the County Property Yard by the Equipment Division. It was protected by the Fairfax County Chapter, D.A.R. The stone was subsequently relocated and rededicated on June 5, 1965 by the Fairfax County Chapter of the D.A.R.



FAIRFAX COUNTY CHAPTER  
DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN  
REVOLUTION  
REQUESTS  
THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE  
AT THE REDEDICATION OF  
ORIGINAL DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOUNDARY STONE 6 SW  
ON SATURDAY, THE FIFTH OF JUNE  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE  
AT 11 O'CLOCK

**Figure 12: Invitation to the rededication  
of Number 6 stone on 6/5/65**



**Lt. Col. Robert P. Waters at Number 6  
stone**



**Number 6 stone in Arlington, Virginia**



**Lt. Col. Robert P. Waters and Lt. Col. Irving B. Morgan, Past President and President (1963) of the George Mason Chapter, S.A.R. on 220<sup>th</sup> anniversary birth of Thomas Jefferson.**

The Number 7 stone on the southwest leg is located in an open field about 200 feet off the road to the north of the intersection of Glencarlyn Road and Olds Drive. Glencarlyn Road is also known in this area as South Fifth Road. The stone abuts a small playground, and is at the rear of the Kenmore Junior High School football field. Visible on the District side of the stone are the letters:

TED  
ST ES  
7



**Number 7 stone in Arlington, Virginia**

The Number 8 stone on the southwest leg is located on McKinley Road near Wilson Boulevard (in the Willston Apartments area), about 100 feet from the water tower, and 200 feet from Wilson Boulevard. It may be approached from Wilson Boulevard by turning on to McKinley Road. It is across Wilson Boulevard from the Woodruff Estate. No markings are visible on the stone. It was on the Greer Farm. The plaque reads: "Original Federal Boundary Stone District of Columbia Erected 1791-1792 Protected by Dr. Elisha Dick Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution 1950". It was originally protected by the Dolly Madison Chapter, D.A.R.



**Number 8 stone in Arlington**



The Number 9 stone on the southwest leg is located approximately 20 feet east of North Van Buren Street and 75 feet south of 18<sup>th</sup> Street North, in Falls Church Park (Arlington County property). It is marked: "Jurisdiction of the United States" on the northeast side; the stone having sunk so low that the word "States" is underground; "Virginia" on the southwest side, and "VAR 1°0'E" on the southeast side. The plaque reads "Original Federal Boundary stone District of Columbia Placed 1791-1792 Protected by Falls Church Virginia Chapter Daughters of American Revolution".



**Lt. Col. Richard S. Wheeler**

The West Cornerstone of the old District of Columbia is located on public land purchase by Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the City of Falls church in 1956. It is located behind a house on the West side of Meridian Street just south of 29<sup>th</sup> Street North. (29<sup>th</sup> Street North continues on as “West Street” in Falls Church). Still visible are portions of the words “Jurisdiction of the United State”. Since it is a corner stone, the words are carved around the southeast and northeast sides of the stone. The stone is 20" square, as opposed to the 12" square “in-between” mile stones. The stone was located on the DePutron Farm.

The bronze plaque reads: “The Original West Cornerstone of the District of Columbia by the Falls Church Chapter D.A.R.” A smaller plaque placed beneath this plaque reads: “Permission to mark granted by V.S.S. D.A.R. Virginia State Society 1952.

It is interesting to note that the upper plaque originally read “Northwest Cornerstone”, but someone brazed off the “North” (and left a blotch) as according to a 1905 report, that stone originally had carved on it the words “West Corner”, and is the only cornerstone marked in this manner.

The tree was cut to about 4 feet height in 1968.



**Northwestern Cornerstone in Virginia**

The Number 1 stone on the northwest leg of the former District of Columbia in Virginia is located across North Powhatan Street from the reservoir. It is situated on Minor Hill in the middle of the block and to the head of 3607 North Powhatan Street. It is marked: "Jurisdiction of the United States 1 Mile", meaning one mile from the West Cornerstone. This is on the southeast side. On the southwest side is cared "VAR 1° 0"; on the northeast side are the letters "IA". The plaque reads: "Original Federal Boundary Stone District of Columbia Placed 1791-1792 Protected by Richard Arnold Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution 1916". There is no carving on the northeast side of the stone.

The tree was cut to about 4 feet height in 1968.



**Number 1 stone in Arlington, northwest leg**

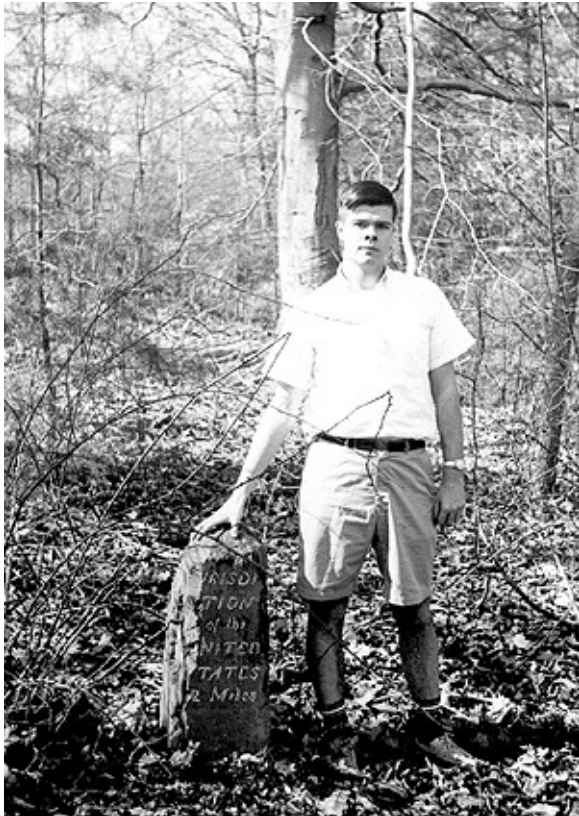


The Number 2 stone on the northeast leg is located on the lot line of the residence of Mr. Charles B. Warden at 5145 38<sup>th</sup> Street North. It is more easily approached, however, from 5298 Old Dominion Drive. It is the only stone not protected by a fence or grille. A four foot section of the original grille rests nearby against the fence bordering Old Dominion Drive. The present occupant of 5298 is raking the area and will keep an eye out for more fence and the attached plaque. (Mr. John F. Adams)

On this stone the following is legible: “Jurisdiction of the United States 2 Miles”. No other marks are visible except “pot shots” taken by gunners. The stone is under the protective custody of the Old Dominion Chapter, D.A.R., Richmond, Virginia.



**Number 2 stone in N.W. Arlington**



**Richard M. Wheeler**

Stone Number 3 on the northwest leg is the last stone in Virginia. It is located in the back yard of the residence at 4013 North Tazewell Street, approximately 12 feet from the rear porch. North Tazewell, in this area, is a court, or cul de sac, which, while all the residences are in Fairfax County, they bear an Arlington County address. Visible on this stone are the words "Jurisdiction of the United States 3 Miles & 14 p". "p" stands for "poles"; a pole is 5½ yards. A bronze plaque on a concrete foundation at the base of the southwest side reads: "Original Federal Boundary Stone District of Columbia Placed in 1791-1792 Protected by Arlington House Chapter Daughters of American Revolution 1957".



**Number 3 stone in N.W. Arlington**

Originally this stone was protected by the Sarah St. Clair Chapter (D.C.): transferred to the "Descendants of '76" chapter (D.C.) October 16, 1933, and rededicated by the Arlington House Chapter, Virginia, November 1, 1957 (not, however, without protest from the Descendants of '76 Chapter). Two rods on the southwest side of the fence have been broken off and removed.

The National Capital Parks on December 6, 1957 wrote Mrs. H. Richard Allen, 2129 20<sup>th</sup> Street North, Arlington 12, Virginia, to the effect while it was not the legal custodian of the boundary stones in Virginia, it maintained keen interest in their preservation. Since the method of marking the

stone was a departure from accepted practice, it was suggested that the Arlington House Chapter might wish to change it so that there be no disfigurement of the stone. (Apparently the Chapter has ignored the suggestion.)