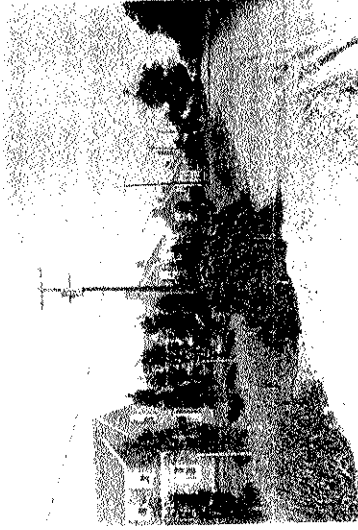
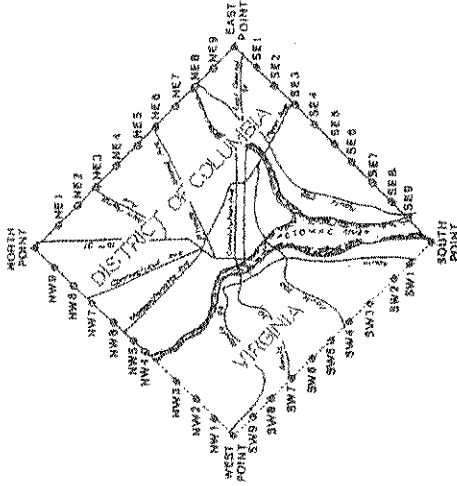


1908

**The Fairlington Boundary  
Stone  
Southwest # 4**



1970



**CREDITS**

**Front:**  
1908: By E. A. Schuster for publication in National Geographic  
1970: By Kenneth Lawrence; donated to and in the possession of the District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution

**Second page:**  
Andrew Ellicott: Library of Congress  
Benjamin Bancker: Library of Congress, from Maryland Historical Society

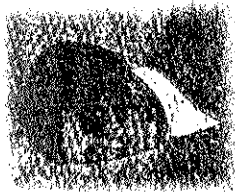
**This page:**  
District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution

Prepared for the Fairlington VA Historical Society, 22 May 2002  
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For further information see: [www.DCDAR.org](http://www.DCDAR.org)



Andrew Ellicott



Benjamin Banneker

### The Boundary Stones of the Nation's Capital

As early in the nation's history as 1779, the need for a permanent capital was recognized by Congress. The debate and contention over precisely where it would be located absorbed the better part of the next 11 years. Finally, in 1790, a general site straddling the Potomac River was approved by Congress, with the final decision to be left to the President. On January 14, 1791, President Washington appointed three commissioners — Thomas Johnson and Daniel Carroll of Maryland, and David Stuart of Virginia — to act as the Government's official representatives, and simultaneously issued a proclamation which directed these commissioners "to survey and limit a part of the territory of the ten mile square on both sides of the Potomac . . ."

In February of 1791, Major Andrew Ellicott was commissioned to undertake the survey which would mark the outlines of the new Federal City. At the time, Ellicott's two brothers and a cousin who might have assisted him were all doing surveying elsewhere and were unable to join him. The cousin, George Ellicott, however, suggested a neighbor, Benjamin Banneker, whose background in astronomy would, he believed, be useful to the Major in doing the calculations for placement of the stones.

The base camp, at Jones' Point, where Hunting Creek empties into the Potomac, was set up and the survey began on February 12, 1791. Preliminary surveys proceeded accordingly, and, on April 15, 1791, the first — or South — Cornerstone was dedicated by President Washington with Masonic ritual.

Throughout the course of 1791 and 1792, the survey continued around the perimeter of the 10-mile square — from the South stone to the northwest, turning north-east at the Falls Church stone, crossing the Potomac in to Maryland, and so on to surround the area. Each mile along the way, an interim stone would be set . . . Making 40 stones in all when Ellicott finally finished.

As the District of Columbia began to take form and shape within the 40-mile square, the stones simply sat there, mostly ignored throughout most of the 19th century. The only event worth noting was the 1846 retrocession by the Federal Government to Virginia of the segment of land which the Commonwealth had originally surrendered.

In 1897, one Marcus Baker became concerned with the stones and delivered a paper to the Columbia Historical Society reporting on their generally sad condition. In the audience that evening was Fred Woodward, the brother of the founder of Woodward & Lothrop Department Store. Mr. Woodward took it upon himself to attempt to secure funding for their preservation. For the next 20 years, he persevered, to no avail. No avail that is, until he was invited to speak on December 4, 1915 to the District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution Committee on Preservation of Historic Spots and Places. The ladies accepted Woodward's challenge, assigned to each "chapter" a stone to care for. Care and maintenance of the stone involved erecting an iron fence around each and affixing a special plaque. Moreover, the stones are to be inspected frequently, brush cleared away, and routine maintenance performed. Major damage is reported to the National Park Service which may occasionally take steps to rectify it. Thus, for the past 87 years, only the Daughters of the American Revolution have, and strictly voluntarily, looked to the preservation of these original monuments of the Nation's Capital.

### Fairlington's Stone

In 1897, Marcus Baker inspected this stone and reported that it was "broken off at the ground. . . The stump, plow-scratched is in place, standing in the field north of the road and about four feet from the fence."

A photograph of the area was taken by National Geographic photographer E. A. Shuster, Jr. on July 12, 1908. A DAR lady from Continental Chapter later made a notation on this photograph which reads. "The stump only of this stone remains, doubtless where it was first placed and is near the fence."

In 1949, the DAR Historian reported that "This stone is located on the shoulder of the Alexandria-Leesburg turnpike on the north side of the road, a short distance north of Wakefield Street. It is in extremely poor condition, being broken off almost even with the ground. It should be replaced with a duplicate of the original. The fence is completely overgrown with vines which should be cut away to expose the stone. . ."

In 1963, writing in the Sunday Magazine of *The Washington Star*, Edwin Darby Nye reported that, due to widening of Route 7, the stone was very nearly covered and he recommended that it be raised.

Another DAR lady tells us that, in 1970, the stone was buried under Route 7 but "Was rescued and reset 13 feet north of the original location."

Edwin Darby Nye was back again 19 years later, in 1972, and reported to the Columbia Historical Society that, "in regarding the dual highway, this stone was nearly covered and appears to be completely neglected. It should of course be raised and reset in concrete."

The year is now 2002 . . .