

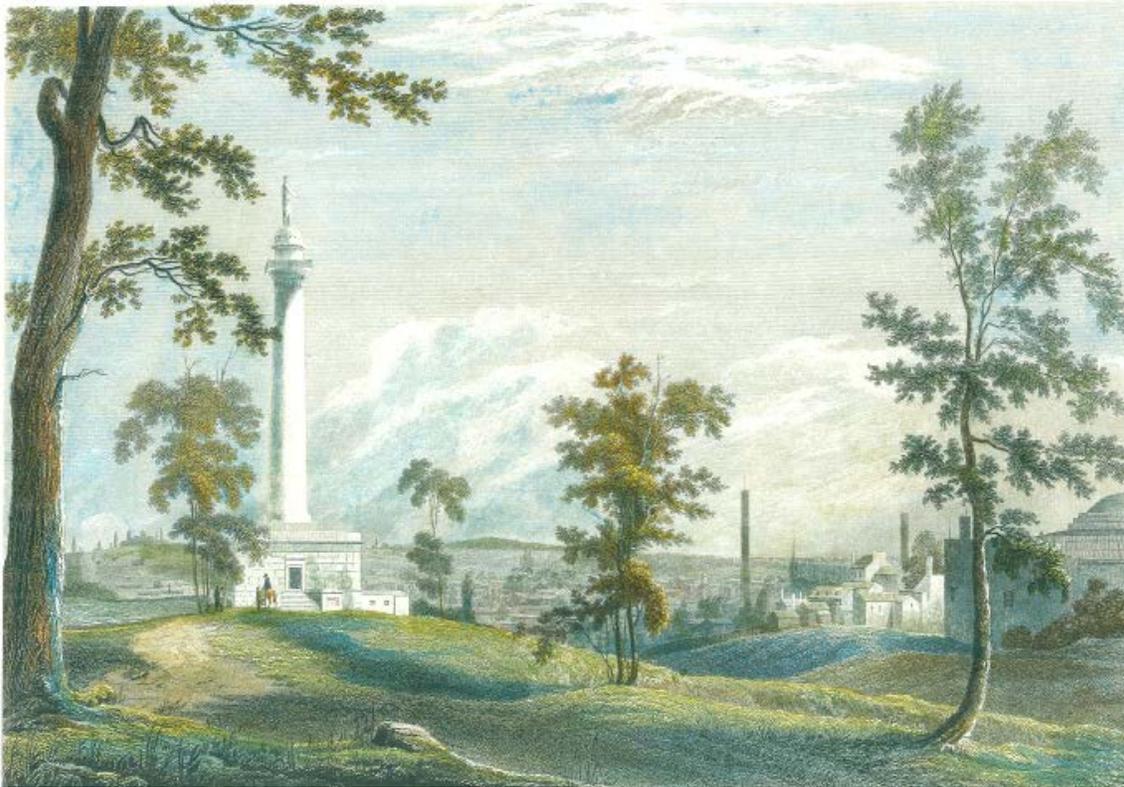
Staff Report – June 11, 2013
Washington Monument
Mount Vernon Historic District

Plan: Restore Monument – Concept Review

Staff: Eric Holcomb

Applicant: Mount Vernon Conservancy

Owner: Baltimore City



This is a hand colored print that appeared in the New York Mirror in 1835. Image is Cator Print 027 from the Enoch Pratt Free Library

soon selected and on July 4, 1815, twenty thousand Baltimoreans walked to Howard's Hill to participate in the laying of the cornerstone. In 1829, the statue of Washington was set into place. The monument was completed in 1842 when the fencing was completed around its base. Since its inception, the Washington Monument has been a focal point in Baltimore culture and heritage.

Current Restoration Effort:

The last major restoration of the monument occurred in 1980. The current restoration effort is managed by the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy (the Conservancy), which in 2012 signed an agreement with Baltimore City, allowing the Conservancy "to collaborate with public and private stakeholders to raise funds and restore the Washington Monument, the four surrounding park squares, and take responsibility for the continued maintenance and programming for the park area, known as Mount Vernon Place."

The Commission has reviewed the Draft "Mount Vernon Place Restoration Master Plan, July 16, 2010." This review occurred over many months and the following meetings:

- June 23, 2010, CHAP convened a public hearing at the Garret Jacobs Mansion and site visit, where they were introduced to the Draft Master Plan;
- September 13, 2010 CHAP held a public hearing and took testimony from the applicant and interested parties;
- October 12, 2010, CHAP reviewed the Master Plan and requested additional information;
- December 14, 2010, CHAP reviewed Master Plan. CHAP approved the following motion "moved to approve the restoration of the Washington Monument and masonry repairs, in accordance with the plans submitted." The conclusions regarding the Washington Monument were "In general the master plan principles for the restoration of the stone masonry meets CHAP guideline 8.1 Identifying and Preserving Historic Building Fabric (all bullets), and 8.2 Masonry/Stone Masonry;" and
- February 8, 2011, CHAP again reviewed the master plan.

The following proposal presents further details regarding the restoration of the Washington Monument ONLY. The Commission suggested that the Conservancy restore the Washington Monument first.



Plans: Restore Washington Monument

The Conservancy has requested approval for the following Restoration work:

1. General cleaning: remove biological and atmospheric soiling by using a low-pressure water spray.
2. Prevent further copper staining of marble from the bronze (alloy of copper and tin) lettering by using a poultice (drawing 6, fig. 3).
3. Patch and, if necessary, provide new matching stone Dutchmen to cracked and broken marble. Remove existing corroding façade cramp anchors.
4. Apply sacrificial lime wash to infill eroded crevices of marble units and exposed highly crystalline surfaces to slow rate of erosion.
5. Repoint and regrout 100% of monument, except statue.
6. Remove paving, gutter, and fence curb and reinstall in full bed of mortar. Any replacement materials will match existing materials.
7. For staircases, remove all caps, cladding and stair treads in order to restore “masonry back up” on side walls and tread piers (replace components in kind, if necessary). Reinstall caps, cladding and stair treads.
8. For upper terrace the general approach is to remove all masonry slabs, mortar and cramps. Reinstall marble slabs and new mortar and type 304 stainless steel cramps. Cap steel cramps with lead sheets (drawing 4).
9. For lower terrace roofing, remove insulation walking surface, roofing system (single-ply PVC membrane), residual bitumen (from ca. 1912), concrete and cinder fill (installed 1900s++). Option 1 is to apply fluid apply roofing and walking system or option 2 construct a new elevated decking system. (drawings 15-17 and 23-24)
10. Remove fence, gates and support brackets. Remove all lead packings (which anchors fence to granite curbing). Paint on fence will be removed and repainted (except a six-foot portion which will be preserved for future paint reference) (drawings 8 and 9).

The Conservancy has also asked for approval for the following alterations:

1. Enlarge doorway to lower terrace by removing threshold and riser, and small portion of original decking (drawings 18-19 and 22-24);
2. Install a glass safety rail setback four feet from parapet (drawings 20, 23-25);
3. On upper deck viewing portals remove existing grates and plexi-glass enclosures. Install new projecting glass bays with single hand rail at mid-height (26-28); and
4. Upgrade plumbing, electrical and mechanical services.

At this time cursory surveys suggest that the sculpture of George Washington is in relatively good repair. After closer examination, the Conservancy will present conservation details to CHAP.

Analysis:

The restoration treatments to the monument meet the following CHAP guidelines 8.1 and 8.2 . The alterations to the monument meet the following CHAP guidelines 8.14 Alterations and Additions.

The alterations that enlarge the doorway and provide for a guardrail are necessary to preserve and improve visitor experience, the historic use of the monument. This approach directly conforms to the Secretary of the Interior’s standard one, “a property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.” Reestablishing the visitor experience to enjoy the view of Mount Vernon Place from the upper and lower terraces far outweighs the minimal visual obtrusion of installing the glass railing. Moreover, the glass railing, although visible, does not detract from the historic character of the monument nor is it mistaken as an original component of the historic design. The minimal removal of the threshold and stair riser does not impact the visual character of the monument; in other words, it cannot be seen from the park. In addition, the proposed threshold to be removed is not a significant feature to the design of the monument. In other words, it does not change the visual character of the monument in any way. Lastly, the removal of the 1920s grates and later installation of plexi-glass on the upper deck, and the installation of convex glass enclosures will enhance the visual character of the monument by removing inappropriate early installations. In addition, the change in visual character of the monument is miniscule. Moreover, the installation will greatly enhance the visitor experience. The restoration components of the plan are done according to best practices in building conservation. However, the overall quality of the restoration depends on matching old and new materials as closely as possible.

Recommendation: Approval contingent on the following:

No power tools (grinders) will be used in repointing of the Washington Monument.

CHAP staff will review and approve mock-ups of all conservation treatments such as the following:

1. Sample stone dutchmen,
2. Any and all new stone,
3. Mortar and grout color, composition and joint profiles,
4. Sample cleaning area,
5. Lime-wash sample,
6. Mechanical electrical plumbing schemes, and
7. Stair repairs.

Furthermore, the Conservancy will present to the full commission for review and approval the details of the glass railing and new floor system for the lower terrace, lower terrace door details, upper terrace new projecting glass enclosures and lighting plan.

In addition, conservation treatments for the sculpture, ADA requirements. Should any ground disturbance unearth archaeological resources work must be stopped and CHAP staff must be contacted.

Lastly, staff suggests that the Conservancy plan for providing progress reports to the Commission at significant stages in the restoration process.