

Preservation of the Mary Washington Monument, Lodge Building, and Surrounding Cultural Landscape

Introduction

The City of Fredericksburg is the owner of the Mary Washington Monument and corresponding Caretaker's Lodge located at 1500 Washington Avenue, Fredericksburg, Virginia. While the City has maintained or leased portions of the property since 1966, it has recently expressed a desire to reduce its oversight. Beginning in 2015 the City, in conjunction with the Memorials Advisory Commission, looked at a variety of ways in which the property could effectively be maintained and interpreted. Recently, an anonymous donor has stepped forward to assist in preservation efforts which include the development of a preservation easement as well as maintenance and interpretation agreements with local preservation organizations such as the Washington Heritage Museums (WHM). The Mary Washington Monument, Caretaker's Lodge, and surrounding grounds are historically significant as part of the Washington Avenue Historic District but are also individually eligible at the state level under Criteria A of the National Register of Historic Places for their association with early women's memorial societies as well as Criteria C, due to their design and early use of native Virginia plantings. The structures and landscape maintain high degrees of integrity associated with the site's 1894-1939 period of significance.

Monument and Caretaker's Lodge History

The Mary Washington monument, Lodge building, and grounds are situated adjacent to Memorial Recreation Park (Kenmore Park) and are comprised of approximately 3.65-acres. However, the area of historic significance associated with the two structures noted can be more specifically defined as approximately 0.75 acres located at the top of a ridge that rises roughly 20 feet from Kenmore Avenue to the west and Mary Ball Street to the north.

Historically this area would have been part of the Fielding Lewis estate. Much of the site's significance is derived from its association with Mary Washington. She was buried by her daughter, Betty Lewis, and her grandchildren near a rock outcropping on the property known as "Meditation" or "Oratory Rock", on August 28, 1789.¹ The grave was marked by a memorial stone ordered by George Washington.²

The Gordon family purchased the Lewis Estate in 1819, including Mary Washington's grave site, and gave it the current name of Kenmore.³ Shortly after purchase a family cemetery was designated adjacent to Mary Washington's grave. Today the Gordon cemetery is enclosed by a brick wall with access provided by a wrought iron gate. The cemetery is currently maintained by the City of Fredericksburg.

Around 1826, George Washington Parke Custis appealed to his countrymen to build a more significant monument to honor Mary Washington and replace the original stone, which by this time had been damaged by visitors. Four years later in 1830 the people of Fredericksburg began raising the necessary funds. This effort culminated on May 7, 1833 when President Andrew Jackson officially dedicated the first monument and a cornerstone was laid. Over the next four years work progressed on the monument but by 1837 work had ceased, possibly due to the death of the contractor and stone mason Rufus Hill.⁴ During the Civil War the monument was heavily damaged by bullets and cannonballs as well as vandalism.

While there were stirrings of finishing the monument during the 1870s it was not until an advertisement appeared in 1889 announcing that the grave and unfinished monument of Mary Washington would be sold at auction that serious efforts commenced.⁵ Ultimately this effort resulted in the formation of two organizations, the National Mary Washington Memorial Association (NMWMA) and the Fredericksburg Mary Washington Monument Association (FMWMA).⁶ Shortly after forming, the FMWMA purchased the monument and the surrounding property from Mr. Shepperd on January 24, 1890.⁷ A year later the property was conveyed to the NMWMA with the requirement that a monument be erected on the site within three years.⁸

While initial plans called for the repair and completion of the 1833 monument, its condition necessitated something completely new. During the summer of 1892 three proposals were evaluated

¹ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 5.

² Virginia Museum of History and Culture, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/garden-club-virginia/public-buildings-and-sites/mary-washington-monument> (accessed January 7, 2021)

³ The George Washington Foundation, http://www.kenmore.org/genealogy/gordon/gene_gordon.html (accessed March 21, 2012).

⁴ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 6-20.

⁵ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 26.

⁶ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 36-37.

⁷ Fredericksburg Clerk's Office, Deed book CC page 235

⁸ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 73.

with the winning design submitted by Crawford & Son of Buffalo, NY.⁹ The new design consisted of a simple granite obelisk set atop a plinth and measuring 50 feet high. The cornerstone was laid on October 21, 1893.¹⁰ A few months later the monument was complete and the “grounds” graded and enclosed by a 20-foot square, 6-foot-high, wrought-iron fence with stone posts. Efforts to fully enclose the 5 acres of land as well as erect a custodian’s house were also discussed shortly after completion of the monument but were placed on hold until more funds could be raised.¹¹ Elements of the deconstructed monument were removed and placed in the garden of the Mary Washington House as well as in the collection of Masonic Lodge No. 4.

Plans for the lodge building were developed in 1894-95 initially by Marion Dimmock, a Richmond architect, but later altered to a more scaled-down version by a Washington architect, known as Mr. Clark.¹² Local contractor George Wroten oversaw construction on the lodge and subcontracted the masonry work to J. W. Musselman.¹³ Musselman obtained granite for the lodge building from the local quarry of “Messrs. York and Swift”.¹⁴ Work on the lodge was completed in 1895 with other improvements such as granite coping laid to enclose the grounds as well as the grading of the nearby street completed by 1899.¹⁵ The 2002 National Register nomination described the Caretaker’s Lodge as follows:

“Completed in 1896, the Mary Washington Monument Caretaker’s Lodge is an eclectic Victorian-era building that exhibits features of the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Richardsonian Romanesque movements. The 1.5 story house is constructed on randomly coursed cut granite with red-tinted mortar joints and covered by a side facing gambrel roof. A front gable section protruding off the front façade contains fish-scale shingles and a Palladian-style window. The house is located amidst a landscaped garden adjacent to the Mary Washington Monument on the north. A low brick wall surrounds the property.”¹⁶

Landscaping around the lodge building and monument began shortly after construction finished. Initial plantings appear to have been rather haphazard with willows, taken from George Washington’s grave, planted by a Mrs. Howard around the monument in 1898.¹⁷ In May 1899 a “fine hydrangea” was planted by a Mrs. Schultz of New Jersey near the lodge. However, with significant property improvements concluding, a more measured approach to the property’s development began to take shape beginning with the appointment of Mrs. Frances Goolrick as site custodian. Frances held officer positions in both the NMWMA as well as the FMWMA and resided at the lodge with her husband, Judge John Goolrick, and their three sons until her death in 1929.¹⁸

Upon Mrs. Goolrick’s death, her third son, Chester and wife Virginia became custodians of the property. During their custodianship, in 1937, the FMWMA approached The Garden Club of Virginia with a request

⁹ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 106.

¹⁰ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 126.

¹¹ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 133.

¹² M.J. Dimmock, *Lodge Drawings*, Richmond, Virginia, Central Rappahannock Heritage Center.

¹³ October 26, 1895 *Fredericksburg Daily Star*

¹⁴ “Keeper’s Lodge,” *Daily Star*.

¹⁵ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 205-208.

¹⁶ National Register, Washington Avenue Historic District Nomination, 2002

¹⁷ Susan Riviere Hetzel, *The Building of a Monument* (Lancaster, PA: Press of Wickersham Company, 1903), 205.

¹⁸ Goolrick, *Free Lance Star*.

to assist in the design and landscaping of the grounds around the lodge and the monument. The club agreed and sought out the services of Alden Hopkins.¹⁹ Hopkins worked closely with the City of Fredericksburg to re-grade the site, construct brick steps and walks, and build brick walls. Undertaking much of this brickwork was Herbert A. Claiborne, a building contractor for Claiborne & Taylor, Inc. out of Richmond, VA. The garden design and its plantings were selected to be “a dignified setting for the Monument, attractive in any season” and to convey “a feeling that it [the monument] is surrounded by plants that belong because they are native [to Virginia] and of Mary Washington’s time.”²⁰ The planting beds were designed to include Laurel, Mountain Andromeda, Azalea, and Virginia Rose. Care and maintenance of the plantings was also considered with emphasis on ease. Boxwood was planted to accent the approach to the monument with trees such as Dogwood, Honey Locust, American Holly, Resinous Pine and Red Oak envisioned for the surrounding grounds. Work was completed in 1939.²¹

Chester died in 1946 and Virginia in 1964, the same year that arguments between the FMWMA and the NMWMA reached a crescendo. Ultimately, lawyers encouraged the two sides to deed to the property to the City of Fredericksburg. This was agreed to on June 25, 1966 with the stipulation that “an advisory board “shall be appointed to advise the City on matters pertaining to the maintenance and preservation of the property and improvements”.²² As of 2011 this role has been undertaken by the Memorials Advisory Commission.

Unfortunately, by the end of the 1970s the City decided they could no longer adequately maintain the property and proposed demolition of the lodge building. The Executive Director of Kenmore, now the George Washington Foundation, W. Vernon Edenfield, stepped in and arranged for an annual lease of \$1.00 if the building could be used as his residence. During Edenfield’s tenure significant alterations were made to the lodge building and surrounding grounds including the installation of a cottage garden designed by friend and landscape architect Philip Watson. During Edenfield’s period of occupation, upkeep and maintenance of the lodge was provided by the George Washington Foundation. In January 2012, the George Washington Foundation canceled its lease of the lodge.

After the property was returned to city care a new roof and additional updates have occurred to the building. The Memorials Advisory Commission has also worked with the Garden Club of Virginia to create a new informative sign and brochure, the latter of which is distributed at the site.

¹⁹ Virginia Museum of History and Culture, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/garden-club-virginia/public-buildings-and-sites/mary-washington-monument> (accessed January 7, 2021)

²⁰ Virginia Museum of History and Culture, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/garden-club-virginia/public-buildings-and-sites/mary-washington-monument> (accessed January 7, 2021)

²¹ Virginia Museum of History and Culture, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/garden-club-virginia/public-buildings-and-sites/mary-washington-monument> (accessed January 7, 2021)

²² Fredericksburg Circuit Court Clerk, Deed Book 94 page 182.

Governmental Approvals Associated with the Site

The conveyance of public property by sale or lease is governed by the Virginia Constitution and Code. The purchase/sale agreement or lease would provide a study period for the conclusion of required governmental approvals.

The City Council is required to hold a public hearing on the conveyance, and to adopt an ordinance to either sell or lease public property. An ordinance approving a sale must be approved by a $\frac{3}{4}$ supermajority of all members; an ordinance approving a lease requires a simple majority vote. The maximum lease term is established by Virginia law at 40 years. The City Council will seek advisory review of any proposed sale or lease by the Memorials Advisory Commission, Architectural Review Board, and Recreation Commission.

The Lodge is located in the City's R-2 zoning district, which permits single-family residential uses by right, with minimum 15,000-square-foot lots that are at least 125-feet wide. The remainder of the Washington Avenue Historic District is located in the City's R-4 zoning district, which permits single-family residential uses with minimum 7,500-square-foot lots that are at least 75-feet wide.

In addition, the Lodge is considered contributing to both the City's Historic District (H-1 overlay) as well as the Washington Avenue Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.²³ Any proposed addition or expansion of the Lodge, new construction, exterior changes, or installation of a new fence or wall would require a certificate of appropriateness from the Architectural Review Board (ARB).²⁴ The ARB's review criteria for exterior alterations may be found in [City Code §72-23.1\(D\)\(2\)](#).

The Boundary Line Adjustment plat dated February 16, 2018, prepared by Webb & Associates, shows the area to be discussed under the proposed preservation agreement (Exhibit A). The area is 3.65 acres and includes the area around the Mary Washington Monument, the Gordon Cemetery, and the Caretakers Lodge.

²³ City Code §72-34.1(E)(4).

²⁴ City Code §72-34.1(C); 72-24.1

Preservation Agreement:

Written by Jim Pates with edits by Michael Spencer, Chair Washington Heritage Museums Board of Directors

Between an Anonymous Donor (Donor), the Washington Heritage Museums (WHM), and the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Over the past year, an anonymous donor, through her attorney Bob Ackerman, put forward two proposals to the City for the preservation and improvement of the Mary Washington Monument property, consisting of approx. 3.65-acres of land, as originally noted in the deed to the city, including the Monument, the Lodge, the Gordon Family Cemetery and all other improvements located on the property at 1500 Washington Avenue and owned by the City (Property). The heart of the two proposals has been that the Donor would agree to donate \$1 million toward the preservation of the Property in exchange for the City placing a preservation easement on the entire 3.65 acres in perpetuity, as first specified in the 1966 deed by which the Property was given to the City. Recently the Washington Heritage Museums (WHM) has expressed interest in maintaining and interpreting the immediate, 0.75-acre area around the monument and lodge structures.

The proposed agreement developed by WHM considers WHM's interests as well as that of the donor and seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- Preservation and improvement of the 3.65 acres associated with the Mary Washington Monument and Lodge building.
- Provide funding in the form of an endowment to assist WHM's to interpret and preserve the Mary Washington Monument site and surrounding landscape consisting of 0.5 acres.

The proposed agreement developed by WHM maintains responsibility of the Mary Washington Lodge building with the City of Fredericksburg.

Specifically the agreement includes the following elements:

1. **Preservation of the Property:** The City would grant a permanent preservation easement to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) or the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. (HFFI) or both to preserve the Property as a whole in perpetuity as a park and monument to Mary Washington and to carry out the intent of the 1966 Deed of conveyance. The main provisions of the Easement would be:
 - The Easement would remain in force in perpetuity.
 - It would cover the entire 3.65 acres, including the Monument, the Gordon Family Cemetery, and the Lodge.
 - The Property could never be subdivided and must be kept intact as a memorial to Mary Washington.
 - The only physical improvements that could be made to the Property "by right" would be those outlined in the most recent iteration of a "Master Plan", to be developed by a citizens committee (see below for committee composition) and included as part of the Easement. This would not commit the City to making such improvements but would eliminate the need for further approval or input

from the Easement holder(s). Any changes or alterations would still be required to follow the City of Fredericksburg Historic District Design Guidelines.

- The City would retain the ability to sell or convey the Property to any other entity, provided that the property remained intact. The City would retain the ability to use the Property for any purposes consistent with the Easement and the 1966 Deed of conveyance.

2. Funding of the Proposal: The Donor would create a special trust fund (Trust Fund) with the WHM with a donation of \$1,000,000 to be used exclusively to carry out development of the Master Plan and to assist the WHM in interpretation and development of the immediate 0.5-acre site encompassing the and Monument landscape. The City would still be required to carry out and finance certain duties as prescribed by the Master Plan including maintenance and upkeep associated with lodge building and park acreage not associated with the Lodge or Monument.

3. Development of a Master Plan for the Property:

- a. Upon execution of this Agreement, the WHM would hire a landscape architect or other design professional of its own choosing to work with a citizens committee to develop a Master Plan for the long-term use and enjoyment of the entire Property as a public park and memorial to Mary Washington under the 1966 Deed and that will ensure the maximum benefit and enjoyment of all citizens of Fredericksburg and the nation. The citizens committee shall include seven representatives including one representative named by the Donor or in event of donor's death by next of kin, one representative from WHM, one representative from the easement holder(s), and one representative from the Garden Club of Virginia. Two positions on the committee shall be reserved for citizens appointed by the Memorials Advisory Commission and may include members of said commission. Creation of the citizens committee will suffice to fill the advisory role held by the Memorials Advisory Commission since 2011 and stipulated in the 1966 Deed of conveyance.
- b. The citizens committee will consider the following issues in developing the Master Plan: (i) the purpose and intent of the 1966 Deed; (ii) the use and function of the Property in relation to the adjoining public park and recreational area; (iii) optimization of the Property as a tourist site; (iv) historic interpretation, handicapped access, signage, and pedestrian access around the Property; (v) regular or periodic access to the Lodge for visitors and the public; (vi) preservation of the site following Secretary of Interior Standards with particular attention paid to scale and massing as well as retention of design and material integrity; (vii) security of the site; (viii) physical delineation of the Property and demarcation of the Property as an historic site; (ix) assignment of tasks associated with recommendations and; (ix) timeline for implementation. The Master Plan may consider all potential public uses of the Property under the Master Plan.
- c. Ratification of the Master Plan would require approval of the easement holder(s) as well as the WHM Board of Directors and Fredericksburg City Council. Changes to the Master Plan would require similar approval. Furthermore, notice would be given to the easement holder(s), WHM, as well as the City of Fredericksburg or their chosen representatives prior to any work commencing other than work falling under regular

site maintenance as defined in the Master Plan. Work conducted at the site would still be governed by the Historic District overlay (H-1 designation) and would require approval by the City of Fredericksburg's Architectural Review Board (ARB).

4. Use and Maintenance of the Lodge and the Monument Grounds:

- a. Upon execution of the Agreement, the City will lease the grounds, consisting of 0.5 acres around the Monument, as defined by adjustments to The Boundary Line Adjustment plat dated February 16, 2018, to the WHM for a period of ____ years, at a rent of \$1.00 per year. In exchange, the WHM will execute portions of the Master Plan assigned via that document, and that are associated with the grounds, including enhanced interpretation, plantings, upkeep of flowerbeds, and structure maintenance excluding the Lodge building and Monument.
- b. The City shall inspect the Lodge and Grounds at least annually to ensure that WHM and the Lodge lessees are carrying out their responsibilities under the leases and this Agreement.
- c. The City will continue to manage and keep up the remainder of the Property outside the immediate grounds of the Lodge and Monument as it currently does. This will include cutting the grass, maintaining the landscaping, planning and managing public events, maintaining insurance liability (for the entire site, including the immediate grounds), keeping the grounds neat and clean, and providing security. Other duties may be specified in the Master Plan.
- d. Prior to the signing of all leases associated with the site the City will be expected to have completed specific tasks outlined in the Master Plan and may include such items as tree removal and slope stabilization.

5. Use and Management of the Trust Fund:

- a. The WHM will manage, invest, and spend the \$1 million Trust Fund exclusively for the purpose of carrying out this Agreement. Such funds will be managed separately from all other funds associated with the organization. The main purpose of the Trust Fund will be to pay for any improvements of the 0.5 acres called for under the Master Plan. Other long-term improvements or maintenance that the WHM and the City wish to carry out at the Property, and that are approved by the citizens committee, may utilize funds from the endowment but will require WHM Board of Directors approval. The City and WHM are encouraged to raise additional funding from time to time as they see fit. The WHM will also expend no more than 15% of the Trust to pay for the Master Plan.
- b. Withdrawals from the Trust will not exceed 4% annually of a five-year rolling average, with an additional 1% withdrawal allowed under emergency measures as approved by the WHM Board of Directors in consultation with the Citizens Committee.

- i. A one-time expense related to the creation of a Master Plan for the site will be allowed but may not exceed \$150,000.
- c. WHM administration and staff time dedicated to the management of the site shall be reimbursed from the Trust and considered part of the annual 4% withdrawal.
- d. Additional insurance costs associated with management of the site shall be reimbursed from the Trust and considered part of the annual 4% withdrawal.
- e. The WHM will provide the City and the Donor an annual accounting of the funds expended for the previous calendar year under this Agreement.
- f. WHM is not obligated to use any of its financial resources beyond the Trust referred to in this Preservation Agreement. Should WHM no longer be able to maintain the property the Trust as well as maintenance would revert to the City until another lessee could be found.

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