



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

D.C. Boundary Markers

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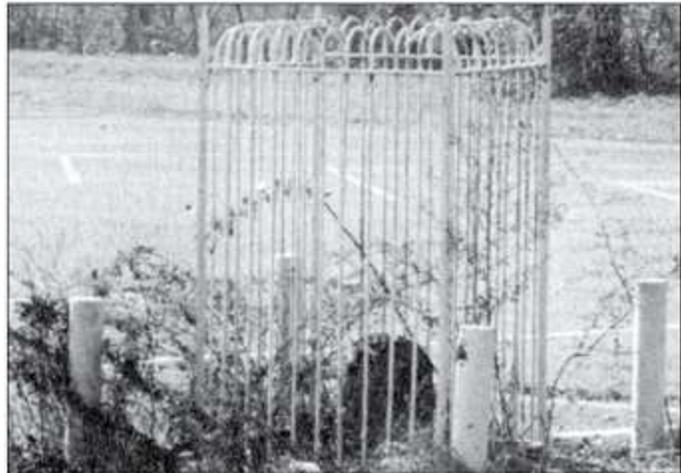
Image: Boundary Marker in the First Baptist Church parking lot at 2932 King Street. Photo, National Capital Planning Commission.

The new federal city, the District of Columbia, was laid out in a diamond shape and marked with boundary stones in 1791 and 1792. Surveyor Andrew Ellicott and his team, which included Benjamin Banneker, established a base camp at Jones Point and in early 1791, the survey began. The markers were to be set a mile apart, except where, according to Ellicott, “the miles terminated on declivities or in waters.”

Markers were engraved with “Jurisdiction of the United States” on the side facing the new capital and the name of the state on the opposite side, except for corner markers where a corner edge faced the capital. It was at Jones Point that the South cornerstone was laid on April 15, 1791. Health concerns caused Banneker to leave the team that same month.

In addition to the Jones Point marker, four stones comprising part of the southwest boundary are in Alexandria. The first is at the southeast corner of Wilkes and South Payne streets, the second is on the east side of the first block of Russell Road, the third, seen in this 1976 image, is in the First Baptist Church parking lot at 2932 King, and the fourth is in the 3800 block of King Street west of Wakefield Street along the Arlington border.

Over the years, the stones around the nation’s capital were worn, moved and damaged, and some were replaced. Beginning in 1915, local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution installed metal cages to help protect the markers, and in 1920, the DAR held a dedication ceremony for the Southwest 2 marker on Russell Road. In the 1990s, in honor of the bicentennial of the District of Columbia, the DAR added a plaque at the Southwest 3 stone, an original marker with some lettering still visible.



“Out of the Attic” is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as “Marking Time” and explored Alexandria’s history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into “Out of the Attic” and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.



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These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.