Buildings of Merit on the George Washington Memorial Parkway since 1932

Old and Historic Alexandria District
BAR Hearing
June 3, 2015
Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway

Source: Library of Congress
“of such character and of such types of building as will be in keeping with the dignity, purpose and memorial character of said highway.”

Memorandum of Agreement between City Council of the City of Alexandria and the United States of America, represented by the Secretary of Agriculture, June 20, 1929, Council Chamber, City Hall.
1932: Bicentennial of Washington’s Birth

Source: Office of Historic Alexandria (L) and Library of Congress (R)
George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) is composed of three interconnected segments: including the Potomac River in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The original Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway section extends 118 miles from Arlington Memorial Bridge south to Mount Vernon. The northern portion stretches 9.7 miles along the Virginia side of the Potomac from Columbia Island to the Capital Beltway (Interstate 495), and the 36.7 miles along the Maryland shore from Chain Bridge to Mark-Aurthur Boulevard. The Maryland segment was designated Clara Barton Parkway in November 1990. As of 1996, the combined segments totaled 365 miles of roadway and encompassed 7,496 acres.

Key to Bridges

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The parkway is more than just a scenic transportation corridor. It contains numerous civil and military memorials, two wildlife refuges, three museums, several hiking and biking trails, and notable sites such as Jamaica Point Lighthouse, Fort Meade, and George Washington’s Potomac Crest. Adjacent places and the Memorial Avenue approach to Arlington National Cemetery are also within the parkway jurisdiction.
Old and Historic Alexandria District BAR (est. 1946)

“To safeguard the city’s portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and other significant routes of tourist access to the city’s historic resources by assuring that development in and along those transportation arteries be in keeping with their historical, cultural and traditional setting.”

Sec. 10-101(H) of Zoning Ordinance of City of Alexandria, Virginia
18th, 19th and early 20th-c. Buildings on Washington Street
Buildings on Washington Street by Year Built

- 18th c.
- 19th c.
- 20th & 21st c.
20th-c: Pre-1932
20th-c: Pre-1932
Early Parkway and OHAD Years
20th-c: Pre-1932

Source: Library of Congress
Historic Buildings 1950s and 1960s
Dining

900 blk of North Washington Street, built by 1940

Source: Office of Historic Alexandria
HOWARD JOHNSON’S
Top: 825 N Washington St, built 1939
Right: Standard VA model found in Fredericksburg
Little Tavern
Motels

OLDE COLONY MOTOR LODGE

On beautiful Mount Vernon Memorial Highway in Alexandria, is Virginia’s most modern and luxurious motor court. With architecture and grounds designed to simulate a colonial estate, its pink brick buildings reflect the charm of 18th century manor house life. In the rich atmosphere of the traditional old South, guests enjoy every comfort of modern living, including radio, telephone, air-conditioning and television in every room. Convenient to the nation’s capitol, Olde Colony is ideal for families, businessmen and convention groups. 102 Rooms — 3 minutes South of National Airport, cor. N. Washington and First Sts., Alexandria, Va.

Telephone King 8-6300
Commercial
More Commercial
20th and 21st Century Buildings

• 1900-1931: Early 20th-c.

• 1932-1945: Early Parkway Years

• 1946-1965: Early OHAD Years

• 1965-2015: Later 20th-c.
1932-1945 901-915 S. Washington St: Gunston Hall Apts
1932-1945  1600 W. Abingdon Drive: Potowmack Crossing
1932-1945 1300 & 1400 blocks N. Washington St
1932-1945 825 and 828 N. Washington St.

Howard Johnson’s, 1939

Little Tavern, 1940
1946-1965  118 N Washington St: Christ Church Parish Hall
1946-1965 112 N. Washington St: J.C. Penney
1946-1965 115 South Washington Street
1946-1965 Towne Motel
1946-1965 901 N. Washington St: Jefferson Building

OLD ALEXANDRIA GOES MODERN

The Alexandria Architectural Board of Review, which was set up to preserve the city’s historic atmosphere, didn’t find the Colonial touches on this proposed office building appealing and turned down the plans.

Architects Saunders & Pearson reworked their plans, and came back with this aluminum and glass design for the new structure at Washington and Montgomery streets which the architectural board approved.
1946-1965 300 and 330 N. Washington St
1946-1965 312 S. Washington St.: Alexandria Medical Bldg
1946-1965 1202-04 S. Washington St.: Hunting Towers
1966-2015 277 S. Washington St.: Time-Life Building
1966-2015 727 N. Washington St.: Red Peg
1966-2015 700 S. Washington St.: Balducci's
1966-2015 950 N. Washington St.: Physician’s Assistants Bldg
Identifying Buildings of Merit

- 18th-century
- 19th-century
- 1900-1931
- 1932-1945
- 1946-1965
- 1965-Today

“The First Hundred Years Are the Hardest, Son!”
Permit to Demolish

(1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?

(2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?

(3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?

(4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?

(5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?

(6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

(7) In the instance of a building or structure owned by the city or the redevelopment and housing authority, such building or structure having acquired pursuant to a duly approved urban renewal (redevelopment) plan, would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare in view of needs of the city for an urban renewal project?
Memorial Character
Promote tourism, study, history,
American Roadside Architecture
Adaptive Reuse of Mid-century Buildings
Redesign or Alter Later Buildings
Identifying Buildings of Merit

• Early Parkway Years: 1932-1945

• Early OHAD Years: 1946-1965
Next Steps

- Define “memorial character”

- Identify and develop working criteria for buildings of merit