

Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia

Recent News

Sep. 20, 2014: Second Annual **Boundary Stones Bike Ride**.

Aug. 29, 2014: **SE6 is back in action**.

Nov. 15, 2011: Stephen Powers was named NACABOSTCO co-chairman.

Early History

The Residence Act of July 16, 1790, as amended March 3, 1791, authorized President George Washington to select a 100-square-mile site for the national capital on the Potomac River between Alexandria, Virginia, and Williamsport, Maryland. President Washington selected the southernmost location within these limits, so that the capital would include all of present-day Old Town Alexandria, then one of the four busiest ports in the country. Acting on instructions from Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, Major Andrew Ellicott began surveying the ten-mile square on February 12, 1791.

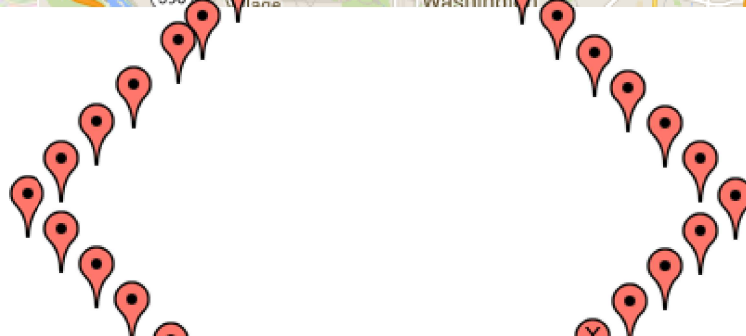
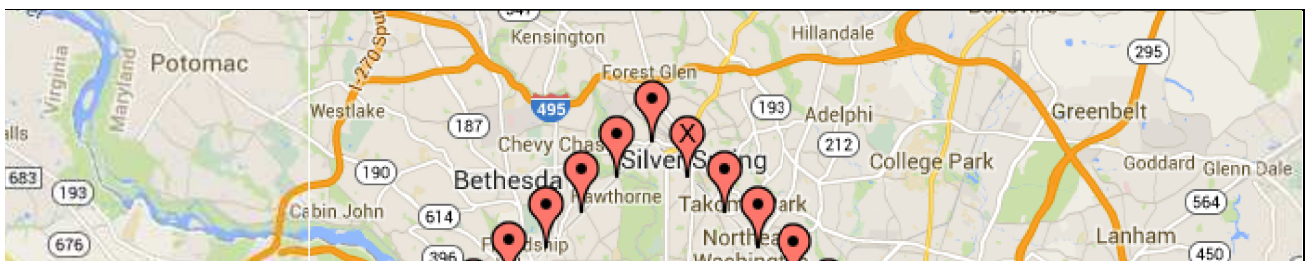
Ellicott, a prominent professional surveyor, hired Benjamin Banneker, an astronomer and mathematician from Maryland, to make the astronomical observations and calculations necessary to establish

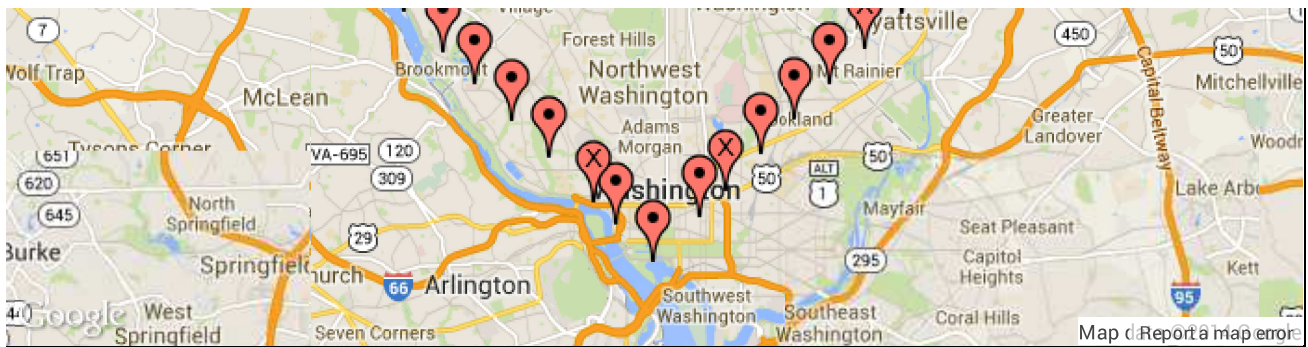
the south corner of the square at Jones Point in Alexandria. According to legend, "Banneker fixed the position of the first stone by lying on his back to find the exact starting point for the survey ... and plotting six stars as they crossed his spot at a particular time of night." From there, Ellicott's team embarked on a forty mile journey, surveying ten-mile lines first to the northwest, then the northeast, next southeast, and finally southwest back to the starting point, clearing twenty feet of land on each side of the boundary.

The Alexandria Masonic Lodge placed a stone at the south corner on April 15, 1791, in ceremonies attended by Ellicott, federal district commissioners Daniel Carroll and David Stuart, and other dignitaries. Other stones, made of Aquia Creek sandstone, were placed at one-mile intervals along the boundaries, resulting in forty stones total. On each stone, the side facing the District of Columbia displayed the inscription "Jurisdiction of the United States" and a mile number. The opposite side said either "Virginia" or "Maryland," as appropriate. The third and fourth sides displayed the year in which the stone was placed (1791 for the 14 Virginia stones and 1792 for the 26 Maryland stones) and the magnetic compass variance at that place. Stones along the northwest Maryland boundary also displayed the number of miles they fell from NW4, the first stone placed in Maryland. Stones placed at intervals of more than a mile included that extra distance measured in poles.

The boundary stones are the oldest federal monuments. Although several boundary stones have been moved or severely damaged, thirty-six stones from the 1790s and two substitute stones, **SW2** and **SE8**, are in or near their original locations, including all fourteen in the land that was returned to Virginia in the 1846-1847 retrocession. One (**SE4**) is in storage and another (**NE1**) is marked by a plaque. This site describes the locations of the stones as of 2014, updating the information provided by the Daughters of the American Revolution (1976) and the National Register of Historic Places (1996).

Click on any of the map markers below for photos and information about each stone. A [printable list](#) appears at the bottom of the page. Save the map below (minus photos and descriptions) in [Google Maps](#).





Growing Public Interest

After Ellicott's team, the next to survey the stones was Marcus Baker, who visited each stone's location during the summer of 1894. Baker reported his survey to the **Columbia Historical Society**. Following Baker, Fred E. Woodward photographed thirty-nine of the boundary stones--all but **SW2**, which had been lost even before Baker's survey--starting in 1906. In his reports to the Columbia Historical Society (in **1907**, **1908**, and **1915**) and in public presentations, Woodward described the extent to which the stones had deteriorated and proposed that they be protected for the enjoyment of future generations. Ernest A. Shuster, Jr. followed in Woodward's footsteps soon after with his own impressive **photo collection** and **article**.

In 1915, the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), citing Woodward's work, voluntarily assumed the responsibility of protecting the stones by erecting a tall iron fence around each one. For decades afterward, DAR members visited the stones periodically to perform routine maintenance. Despite DAR's care and attention, however, many of the stones fell on hard times during the mid-1900s. Several were repositioned, removed, lost, or buried during construction projects.

Subsequent Restoration Efforts

In 1978, Kevin Wood of Boy Scout Troop 98 led a **service project** that visited most of the stones to clean up the sites and repaint the fences. As Mr. Wood explained in 2012,

"It was a fun project which we did over three or four days, All the Virginia ones one day, All Anacostia another. And I am pretty sure we did the top half of the city over two days. The green paint came from the DC parks department; my dad called them and set it up. An older parks employee came by the house one day with the paint and he and I drove around the city, to show me where the stones were. He seemed to be pretty enthusiastic about it, he showed me Southeast 9 and the one in Kenilworth Gardens. I am pretty sure he even took me across the bridge to the one at the southern tip of DC, but not the VA ones. So we sort of had permission to do the ones in DC. In VA we hadn't contacted anybody. If the stone was in a public place or a park, VA fences got a coat of green DC paint too. In some cases the stones, in VA, DC and MD were on lawns and cared for and we didn't do anything. We always rang the doorbells and talked to the people and asked if they wanted us to paint the fences. I think they always or almost always said no. Usually they had them painted black. Sometimes we clipped the weeds and the hedges on private property, I think we did this for one on Eastern Avenue inside of a chain link fence surrounded by hedges. The only stone we didn't actually get to see was one in a backyard in VA, the first or second on the northern stretch. The woman of the house was very firm about not allowing us to see it."

In 1990 and 1991, a resurveying team led by David Doyle to celebrate the District's bicentennial located two of the then-missing stones, **SE8** (which already had been lost once before and replaced with a replica) and **SE4**. Next, in September 1995, the Northern Virginia Boundary Stones Committee (NOVABOSTCO), under the leadership of chairman Ric Terman, **issued a 77-page report** on the status of the fourteen stones in Virginia. NOVABOSTCO's successor, the Nation's Capital Boundary Stones Committee (NACABOSTCO), has worked since 2000 to ensure the preservation and appreciation of all of the stones, partnering with **DAR**, the **American Society of Civil Engineers - National Capital Section (ASCE-NCS)**, the **District of Columbia Association of Land Surveyers**, and other government agencies, historical societies, and professional associations. ASCE-NCS leads a **biannual restoration project** that picks up where Troop 98 left off in 1978.

Absolutely Required Reading

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- Records and History of the Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia** (no date) [unpublished manuscript in the Kiplinger Research Library of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.].
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 - ▶ National Park Service: **National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Jones Point Lighthouse and District of Columbia South Cornerstone** (Mar. 1980).
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 - ▶ Woodward, Fred E.: **"The Recovery of the Southern Corner Stone of the District,"** Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 18, pp. 16-24 (1915).
 - ▶ Woodward, Fred E.: **"Boundary Mile Stones"** (1916) in **Records and History of the Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia** (no date) [unpublished manuscript in the Kiplinger Research Library of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.].

Government and Legislative Materials

- ▶ American Society of Civil Engineers: **Letter to Senator Charles M. Mathias** supporting legislation to protect boundary stones (September 15, 1979).
- ▶ Caemmerer, H. Paul: **"Washington The National Capital,"** Senate Document No. 332 (1932).
- ▶ Congressional Record: **"A Bill to Preserve, Protect, and Maintain the Original Boundary Stones of the Nation's Capital,"** (November 26, 1979).
- ▶ Council of the District of Columbia: **"Federal Legislation on the Original Boundary Stones in the District of Columbia Support Resolution of 1984"** (June 26, 1984).
- ▶ Falls Church Historical Commission: **"Federal Territory Boundary Stone No. Southwest 9"** (July 1999).
- ▶ National Capital Planning Commission: **"Boundary Markers of the Nation's Capital,"** National Capital Planning Commission Quarterly, pp. 1-4 (Fall 1976).
- ▶ National Park Service: **Letter to Nation's Capital Boundary Stones Committee** declining to protect stones (June 13, 2003).
- ▶ U.S. Department of the Interior: **Letter to Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs** opposing legislation (H.R. 2638 / S. 569) to protect boundary stones (March 29, 1984).
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- ▶ Hansard, Sara E.: **"Old Stones Mark D.C. Boundaries,"** Washington Post, p. B1 (June 27, 1976).
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Boundary Stone Locations

SOUTH Jones Point Lighthouse: in an opening in the seawall of the lighthouse at Jones Point Park on the Potomac River in Alexandria, VA. The lighthouse was built in 1855 and a seawall was constructed in 1861. As documented by Woodward and others, the stone was hidden behind this seawall until June 1912. Because the stone remains in an enclosure in the wall, it still is not possible to view it in its entirety.

According to the Records of the Columbia Historical Society (Volume 2, pp. 60-61), on March 25, 1794, the district commissioners requested that the city surveyor "have a large stone lettered 'The beginning of the Territory of Columbia,' prepared and fixed at the beginning of the territory, in the presence of some of the gentlemen who were present at the fixing of the small stone now there." By June 21, 1794, this new corner stone had replaced the original ceremonial corner stone from 1791.

As Woodward noted in a reading before the Columbia Historical Society on March 18, 1913, "The stone is slightly varied in shape from the remaining ones, being about eleven inches by nearly fourteen inches, instead of the usual twelve by twelve." Additionally, as observed in a Washington Times article from June 23, 1912, "The inscriptions are almost illegible, only portions of the letters being visible, these being on the southwest side, the southeast side bears a part of the date, the figure '7' being discernible. ... The

two remaining sides are unmarked and bear no evidence of ever having been inscribed."

- SW1** 1220 Wilkes Street: SE corner of the intersection of Wilkes and S. Payne Streets in Alexandria, VA. Around 1904, the stone was moved 225 feet from its original position. When it was reset in the ground, it was rotated such that the sides of the stone marked "Virginia" and "Jurisdiction of the United States" no longer face their respective jurisdictions. The letters on the District face of the stone are smaller than those of the other stones and in a different script.
- SW2** 7 Russell Road: east side of Russell Road just north of King Street. This is neither the original stone nor the original location. Baker and Woodward reported the original stone to be missing as of the late 1800s, and DAR records show that the current stone was placed at this location in 1920. The original stone was located about 0.35 northwest of this replacement. According to Woodward, the original "stone was evidently placed on the east side, and very close to, [King Street], on the eastern side of Shuter's Hill, in a subdivision" now called Rosemont.
- SW3** 2932 King Street: north end of parking lot of the First Baptist Church, south of Scroggins Road in Alexandria, VA. This stone has been removed from the ground and reset in concrete. Note that the address is not 2952 King Street, as some sources state.
- SW4** Adjacent to Fairlington Village at the edge of east side of King Street between S. Wakefield Street and Route 395. According to Woodward, farm plows had destroyed the top of this stone by the early 1900s. After being repositioned when the highway was widened, the remaining portion of the stone has sunk very low into the ground.
- SW5** North side of Walter Reed Parkway 100+ feet east of intersection with King Street. Only the stump of this stone remains. Its current condition is consistent with Woodward's 1908 report that the "stone is broken, and the top seems to be lost. The entire base, with a few inches of the finished portion, was found lying on the ground in approximately the same spot where it had originally been placed." This stone is now nearly 45 feet from its original position.
- SW6** Median strip of Jefferson Street 0.1 miles south of Columbia Pike in Arlington, VA. This stone has been repositioned several times. It also has been hit by a car and cemented back together.
- SW7** 5995 5th Road, Arlington, VA: Carlin Springs Elementary School, parking lot C, near the fence. It is also possible to reach this stone from the opposite direction via the private park behind the tennis courts at 3101 S. Manchester Street, Falls Church, VA. Follow the southeast edge of the tennis courts to the (often locked) gate to the private park.
- SW8** A short distance from the intersection of John Marshall Drive and Wilson Boulevard: 100 feet southeast of water tower behind the Patrick Henry Apartments. The stone is at the edge of the parking lot across from units 6184 and 6172. As the informational sign near the stone states, this is not the original location.
- SW9** Benjamin Banneker Park on Van Buren Street south of 18th Street in Falls Church, VA.

- WEST** Andrew Ellicott Park: 2824 N. Arizona Street (sometimes listed as 2824 Meridian Street), south of West Street in Falls Church, VA.
- NW1** 3607 Powhatan Street, north of 36th Street in Arlington, VA: west side of back yard, 200 feet from the road.
- NW2** 5298 Old Dominion Drive or 5145 N. 38th Street, Arlington, VA: in the fence separating the back yards of two homes.
- NW3** 4013 N. Tazewell Street, Arlington, VA: back yard of home.
- NW4** Within the fenced Dalecarlia Water Treatment Plant grounds, 100+ feet east of the Capitol Crescent Trail (from the "Entering Montgomery County" sign) and several hundred feet north of the intersection of Norton Street and Potomac Avenue. The easiest way to see this stone is through the fence along the Crescent Trail because the treatment plant is closed to the public. It is also possible to schedule a visit to the stone during normal business hours by calling Patty Gamby of the Army Corps of Engineers at (202) 764-2693. If she is unavailable, call the Dalecarlia Water Treatment Plant's main number at (202) 764-2753. Older sources list the stone's location as 5906 Dalecarlia Place. The "government dwelling" once located at that address has been demolished and the street formerly known as Dalecarlia Place has been converted to an access road.

- NW5** 600 feet west of Dalecarlia Parkway and 300 southeast of concrete culvert, within the fenced Dalecarlia Reservoir property. From the intersection of Dalecarlia Parkway and Warren Place, walk into the forest on the west side of the Parkway. The fence around the reservoir property should be immediately visible. Follow the fence west along the northern border of the property. When the fence crosses over the creek, the concrete culvert is easily visible within the fenced area. Shortly before the crossover, there once was a person-sized hole in the fence. The stone is several hundred feet southwest of this hole and too deep into the forest to see from outside the fenced area. From the hole one could imagine reaching the stone by following an approximately straight line down the hill from the fence, across the creek (staying slightly east of the fork), and up the next hill, keeping the occasional utility markers within sight. Unfortunately, entering through the hole constitutes trespassing on federal property. Thankfully, it is possible to schedule a visit to the stone during normal business hours by calling Patty Gamby of the Army Corps of Engineers at (202) 764-2693. If she is unavailable, call the Dalecarlia Water Treatment Plant's main number at (202) 764-2753.
- NW6** 150 northeast of intersection of Park and Western Avenues in small park, across from intersection of Western Avenue and Fessenden Street.
- NW7** 5600 Western Avenue: front yard of home near intersection with Cedar Parkway, McKinley Street, and 41st Street. The owners of the home removed the protective fence in the 1940s. In the mid-1960s, the stone was repositioned and a plaque was affixed directly to it.
- NW8** 6422 Western Avenue, southwest of Pinehurst Circle: front yard of home, within circular driveway. This stone does not have a protective fence.
- NW9** 2701 Daniel Road, Chevy Chase, MD: 165 feet northwest of the center line of Daniel Road and 5 feet southeast from the edge of the driveway. Near the intersection of Western and Oregon Avenues next to Rock Creek Park.

- NORTH** Immediately south of East-West Highway in the edge of the forest just west of the townhouses at Chevy Chase Crest condominium community, near 1850 1806 East-West Highway. Please note that the marker in the traffic circle where 16th Street, Eastern Avenue, and Colesville Road intersect, more than a quarter of a mile to the east, is not a District of Columbia boundary stone.
- NE1** 7847 Eastern Avenue, northwest of intersection with Georgia Avenue: bronze plaque in place of stone in the sidewalk in front of a shop. The stone was accidentally bulldozed and removed during the construction of the storefront in September 1952.
- NE2** 6980 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, MD: front yard of home near intersection of Maple and Carroll Avenues.
- NE3** 144 feet northwest of intersection of Eastern Avenue and Chillum Road at the edge of a commercial parking on the Maryland side of Eastern Avenue, just south of New Hampshire Avenue.
- NE4** 5400 Sargent Road: side yard of home on Maryland side of Eastern Avenue just north of Sargent Road.
- NE5** 4609 Eastern Avenue, northwest of Varnum Street: front yard of home.
- NE6** 3601 Eastern Avenue, near intersection with 34th Street: front yard of home. This stone has been reset in concrete.
- NE7** Fort Lincoln Cemetery: along the fence in Block 18, 75 feet southwest of Garden Mausoleum near Garden of the Crucifixion.
- NE8** Along fence in forest 500 feet northwest of the intersection of Eastern and Kenilworth Avenues. There are three trails that lead to the stone. As of 2013, the last two routes below have become partially blocked by fallen and chopped trees.

1) From the intersection of Eastern and Kenilworth, follow the trail that begins at a separation in the fence along the north side of Kenilworth. The trail immediately winds to the right where it follows another fence northwest along the edge of a gravel distribution lot. The trail forks when the gravel lot fence begins to turn to the right; turn left here. The left fork roughly parallels another fence and leads to the charred rubble of a former dwelling. The stone is along the fence to the right, about 50 feet before you reach the remains of the dwelling. [View route.](#)

2) From the intersection of Eastern and Kenilworth, head southwest on Kenilworth and

turn right on Quarles Road. Turn right again, before reaching 45th Street, onto a road leading to a smokestack across the street from an apartment complex. As Kanon explained in *Stoned Out of My Mind: A Guide to and Personal Reflections of the Boundary Stones for the District of Columbia*, "Just E of parking lot, look for a hole in the black fence. Follow a trail for about 300 ft. to another fence. Near a pool of water."

3) From the intersection of Eastern and Kenilworth, head southwest on Kenilworth and turn right on Quarles Road. Turn right again when Quarles ends at Anacostia Avenue. Anacostia ends shortly thereafter at a forest, where a trail leads past the former dwelling to the stone.

NE9 919 Eastern Avenue, 0.1 miles south of Sheriff Road: front yard of home.

EAST 100 feet southeast of intersection of Eastern and Southern Avenues.

SE1 30 feet south of intersection of D Street and Southern Avenue, near corner of wall around National Capitol Hebrew Cemetery.

SE2 4345 Southern Avenue, near intersection with Rail Street: front yard of home. Note that this is not 4245 Southern Avenue, as some sources state.

SE3 Across the street from 3908 Southern Avenue, near Suitland Terrace. SE3 is unusually tall for an intermediate stone. Woodward, observing that the West corner stone is much shorter than the other corner stones, hypothesized that there was a mixup between the tall stone that became SE3 and the short stone that became the West stone.

SE4 Formerly located along Southern Avenue a few feet southeast of the intersection with Naylor Road (and not at the intersection of Naylor Road and Suitland Parkway, as some sources state). Nothing remains to mark this stone--not even a plaque. When a truck knocked the stone out of place during the mid-1980s, the manager of a nearby apartment building moved the stone into the boiler room of the building for safekeeping. In 1991, the building manager gave the stone to the bicentennial resurveying team, who, in 2012, transferred the stone to the D.C. Office of the Surveyor.

SE5 280 feet northeast of the northernmost intersection of Southern Avenue and Valley Terrace (the roads intersect twice within a quarter mile). This stone is next to the sidewalk along Southern Avenue in front of the Southern Avenue metro station.

SE6 901 Southern Avenue. Until early 2008, this was one of the best-looking stones. Then an out-of-control car broke the stone in half at ground level and destroyed the protective fence. During 2012 through 2014, the above-ground portion of the stone was stored in the D.C. Office of the Surveyor for safekeeping. The stone and a protective fence are again in place.

SE7 25 feet south of intersection of Southern Avenue and Indian Head Road on the east side of Indian Head Highway. This stone has been repositioned. Note that the National Register of Historic Places incorrectly states that the stone is northeast of the intersection.

SE8 Behind Blue Plains Impoundment Lot: southeast corner of the lot on the Maryland side of the fence. This stone, a replacement, is located nearly eight feet below ground level at the bottom of a narrow concrete pipe. Although the top of the stone was visible as late as 2006, dirt and debris inside the pipe have completely hidden the stone. The pipe is a short distance from the lightposts southeast of the rear of the parking lot. The pipe is capped with a traffic barrel.

The most direct way to reach this stone is to take Oxon Hill Farm Trail south from D.C. Village and then, after crossing the border into Maryland, follow the access road along the chain link fence west until you reach the back of the impoundment lot. **The direct walking route** will almost certainly take you through some very swampy territory, however. **A cleaner and easier route** is to take the Oxon Hill Farm Trail south from D.C. Village, and then, before crossing the bridge over Oxon Creek, follow the unpaved path to the right southwest along the creek to the large clearing with overhead power lines. Follow the clearing northwest to the fence along the Maryland border and then walk a short distance southwest along the fence to the corner of the impoundment lot. Bring a flashlight.

The original stone was removed in 1958 during construction and then either lost or stolen from a storage facility before it could be reset in the ground. On March 23, 1962, DAR placed a new inscription-less stone in the same location along with the original stone's iron fence. By 1972, this stone too was in trouble, as described by Edwin Darby

Nye in a paper read that year before the Columbia Historical Society: "SE8, at the far end of the D.C. Village Area, has become a victim of a large land-fill operation, involving the D.C. auto impounding area, the new sewage treatment plant, and an eighteen-hole golf course being constructed by the National Park Service. SE8 is covered with some eight feet of landfill. A sixty-inch concrete pipe has been placed over the stone, iron fencing and all, and a cover placed over it to protect it. The stone has been uncovered and after excavation has been completed it will be reset in a proper location." Unfortunately, nothing of the sort occurred, and the stone was completely covered by landfill until 1991 when the bicentennial resurveying team dug it back out of the ground, using old photos to approximate its location. The team then decided that the best way to preserve the stone was to put it back into the earth, this time protected by a taller pipe that was visible above ground.

SE9

0.225 miles southwest of the southern end of Oxon Cove Bridge and about 120 feet east of the Potomac River. Oxon Cove Bridge is the bridge that I-295 crosses just north of the intersection with I-495. You can reach this stone on foot by following the partially-paved path that leads to Oxon Hill Farm from either D.C. Village Lane in Washington or the intersection of Oxon Run Drive and Audrey Lane in Maryland. Leave the path when it turns away from Oxon Cove; then follow the Oxon Cove shoreline to the base of Oxon Cove Bridge, where you must cross underneath I-295 to get to the Potomac River. From the endpoint of the large rocks that surround the base of the bridge, follow the Potomac shoreline about 1,000 feet southwest until you are just past due west of the Masonic Memorial (across the river) and the bridge is no longer visible behind you. If you are on a small sandy beach with car tires and debris, you are in the right place. The stone is 120 feet to the east in the forest at the foot of a hill. From the shoreline, it is just possible to make out the fence protecting the stone, although less so in spring and summer. [View the walking route](#) from Audrey Lane.

The terrain along this route is marshy and occasionally rough, so it may be much simpler to access the stone by car. Park on the right shoulder of the southbound lanes of I-295 near the "Maryland Welcomes You" sign and walk west into the forest to a fence. Follow the fence several dozen feet north to reach a small hole. Enter the hole and walk west through the forest. Depending on your route, you may cross an empty field that once was a staging area for the construction of the highway. Continue west to a very steep hill (actually an earthen dam created to protect the highway from flooding), climb the hill, and walk north along the top of the hill. The stone will appear at the bottom of the hill on the west side after a short walk.

As documented by Woodward, this stone once was next to the Potomac River at Fox Ferry Point, the terminus of an 1800s ferry line from the foot of King Street in Alexandria to Maryland. During the early 1950s and again in 1969, the stone was moved some distance northeast of Fox Ferry Point to save it from being damaged by the tides of the river. The National Register of Historic Places incorrectly states that the stone is east of Shepherd Parkway, when, in fact, it is west and nearly a mile south of the end of Shepherd Parkway.