

***BIOGRAPHIES  
OF THE  
BOUNDARY STONES***

FROM

RECORDS OF THE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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**NATION'S CAPITAL BOUNDARY STONES COMMITTEE**

**TO:**  
**FROM:** Gayle T. Harris  
District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution  
**SUBJECT:** BIOGRAPHIES OF THE BOUNDARY STONES

Following discussion at the Committee's meeting on December 7, 2000, there here follows, in summary form, an inventory of the holdings of the District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution relating to their care and preservation of the Boundary Stones. While the collection remains in the custody of the DC DAR at its Chapter House for the time being, it may be accessed upon request.

An explanation of the several designations of files used may first be helpful:

-- There is a "folder" for each individual stone, containing anything loose which relates specifically to that stone.

-- There is a "General" folder which holds materials relating to the history of the stones or general matters affecting all of them.

-- There are two "Scrapbooks," compiled by the DC DAR over the course of time which are basically photograph albums but also contain (usually pasted in) newspaper clippings, short reports, and the like.

-- There is one "Slide Book," containing several hundred slides taken during DAR visitations over 20 years between 1973 and 1991.

This inventory mainly focuses on materials which are unique to DC DAR involvement with the stones. Outside sources such as newspaper and journal articles have been incorporated to some extent but only to provide some additional historic commentary on the gradual degradation of the stones. We are well aware that many more outside sources exist; but we have chosen to cite only those which were already part of the collection.

The involvement of the DC Daughters of the American Revolution appears to date from December 3, 1914, when a "Committee for the Preservation of Historic Spots and Records of the District of Columbia" held a meeting in the Auditorium of Woodward's Store. Mrs. George P. Conway, the Committee chair, was in charge of the meeting and introduced Mr. Fred C. Woodward who reported on the results of his extensive studies of

the stones and urged the ladies to become interested in their preservation. (Several copies of that speech are in the "General" file.)

The next important event occurred on April 7, 1915, when, at an "Annual State Conference" held at "Continental Hall" (now the DAR Library at 1776 D Street, NW), Mrs. Conway, the Chairman of a newly-created State "Committee on Preservation of Records" noted:

*Forty stones once marked the boundry [sic.] line of ten miles square, some have been destroyed, some are as when first set, some have been displaced, some have effaced inscriptions, or to be more explicit, 31 are well preserved[,] 4 are broken, 1 worn smooth, 1 buried in earth, 1 in water of Potomac, 1 missing.*

She continued:

*It is proposed to replace those that are destroyed, recarve the inscriptions that have been effaced, reset those that have toppled, and to surround each one with iron fencing for permanent and dignified preservation.*

*The Committee recommends that the District Chapters individually or collectively arrange for the preservation of these stones, considering it one of the greatest historical gifts that could be handed to posterity.*

The resolution was of course passed, and, as the dates in the report will show, the ladies responded with alacrity in collecting monies, securing fences, and, as they love most to do, dedicating their efforts with patriotic fervor.

In most cases, one District of Columbia chapter was assigned one particular stone. The East Stone was always the responsibility of the Historian's Committee of DC DAR, rather than of a chapter. Some evidence exists that there was great competition among several chapters for that particular stone, and, in order to neutralize it, the Historian's Committee assumed protective responsibility.

The Maryland state DAR took responsibility at an early date for the North Stone, and several Virginia chapters protected stones in Virginia. It is not known when or by what means these organizations were brought into the picture or whether there was much or any cooperation -- apart from the mere ceremonial -- amongst them and the DC group.

Although no specific evidence of it exists, there seems to have been a standard operating procedure for the chapters to follow as they erected their fences, e.g., the process of securing the necessary permissions, who cleared the sites, who supplied the fences, who installed them, and the like. The most interesting of these questions -- having to do with the knotty problem of "ownership" -- is equally vague. However, there was apparently a form for granting for granting the use of land. These grants, to be signed by the owner of the land, were to be of standard language:

*At the request of your representatives, Mrs. George P. Conway, Chairman, and Mrs. Velma Sylvester Barber, Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer, of your said Committee, I, The Undersigned, for and in consideration of One Dollar in hand paid, Do Hereby give and grant to your said Committee, permission to erect on my land surrounding the Boundary Mile-Stone Marked "Jurisdiction of the United States," which is located on \_\_\_\_\_ Avenue, a suitable iron fence for the preservation of said monument, the area of said grant not to exceed one yard square of ground of which the said mile-stone is the center, the same to be placed under the special care of Chapter, D. A. R. \_\_\_\_\_ is now the Regent.*

*Witness my Hand and Seal the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D.*

A photocopy of only one of these signed grants survives in the files -- that for NE 3, signed by Henry Voigt as Executor of the Deitrich Heider Estate to the Our Flag Chapter. It would be reasonable to assume that, for stones then on private property, these agreements were drawn up in every case, but the proposition cannot be proven from the DC DAR collections.

A typewritten introduction to Scrapbook #2, prepared in 1949, may shed some light on where these grants may be found. It reads in part:

*The deeds to the four square feet on which each milestone stands are now held by the District Government. After erecting fences around the milestones the Department of the Interior agreed to care for them.*

We have not, at this date, done any research nor made inquiry of the District Government to determine whether these deeds still exist and what their legal significance, if any, might be.

To keep the historical record straight, DAR involvement with care and maintenance of the stones ceased -- at least temporarily -- in 1996 when we were told by our member who was then the chairperson for this effort that the National Park Service had taken over our responsibilities. At the time, no one seriously questioned any whys or wherefores of this arrangement, and our active efforts ceased. We have since learned that this was perhaps the result of one or more misunderstandings on the part of both "sides."

At this point, the DC Daughters of the American Revolution take no position on any "ownership" issues relating to the stones, the land or the fences, nor do we have a firm position on what should be done to preserve the stones for future generations. We are, however, most happy and willing to cooperate in any efforts toward public education and preservation efforts. If our "archives" may be helpful in those efforts, we will be pleased and offer whatever constructive assistance we can.

BOUNDARY STONES OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:  
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