DRAFT

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name George Washington Equestrian Statue
other names/site number VDHR # 127-6084

2. Location

street & number Capitol Square
city or town Richmond (Independent City)
state Virginia code VA county ________________ code 760 vicinity
not for publication

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this (X) nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (X) meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (X) nationally ___ statewide __ locally. ( ___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official __________________________ Date __________

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property (X) meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official __________________________ Date __________

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register
____ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register

Signature of Keeper
Date of Action
5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

___ private
___ public-local
(X) public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

___ building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
(X) object

Number of Resources within Property

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _ 0_

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

_N/A_

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: Culture and Recreation Sub: Work of Art (Statue)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: Culture and Recreation Sub: Work of Art (Statue)

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
Mid-19th Century
Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
Base: Granite with bronze details
Statuary: Bronze
other ___________________________________

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for
National Register listing)

___ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
(X) B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
(X) C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

___ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

___ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
___ B removed from its original location.
___ C a birthplace or a grave.
___ D a cemetery.
___ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
___ F a commemorative property.
___ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance Architecture; Art; Politics / Government

Period of Significance 1850-1953

Significant Dates 1849-50 (competition); 1850-69 (construction)

Significant Person George Washington

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Thomas Crawford
Randolph Rogers

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # __________
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # __________

Primary Location of Additional Data
Name of repository: ___________________________________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _less than an acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Bryan Clark Green, Architectural Historian. With assistance from Charles Brownell, Professor of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University.

Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date: 11/15/2002

street & number: 2801 Kensington Avenue telephone(804)367-2323 x117

city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code 23221

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner
name: Department of General Services, Commonwealth of Virginia

street & number: 805 East Broad Street, Room 102 telephone
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23219-1989

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
7. Summary Description:
The George Washington Equestrian Statue was the first equestrian statue of George Washington to be erected in the United States and helped to generate a national wave of representational memorial sculptures. The design consists of three tiers of pedestals: Washington on top, Virginia patriots in the middle tier; and trophies representing Revolutionary battlefields on the lower tier. The six Virginia patriots are Jefferson, Henry, Marshall, Nelson, Mason, and Lewis. The six trophies represented are Revolution, Bill of Rights, Independence, Finance, Justice, and Colonial Times. Thomas Crawford executed the figures of Washington, Jefferson, and Henry; Randolph Rodgers executed the figures of Marshall, Nelson, Mason, and Lewis.

Detailed Description:
An iron fence, each post of which is topped by a ball-shaped finial from which flames emerge upward, surrounds the George Washington equestrian statue. From its circular granite base, the monument rises into a six-sided granite base, from which emerge six facets, each of which supports a statue of a Virginia hero, below which are six circular bases, on which rest the six virtues. The base of the monument rises high into a full entablature – a frieze, architrave (ornamented with 13 laurel wreaths), and cornice. Above this entablature rises a high attic, also with a full entablature, the frieze of which is ornamented by 13 stars. It is from this attic that rises the mounted figure of Washington. Washington depicted as a young man, faces south upon his rearing horse, with its left foreleg raised. The horse is draped with an elaborately feathered mantel. Washington is depicted in full military dress, including epaulets and a tri-corner hat. With his right hand, he points south.

The iconographic program of Crawford’s design is carried forth be a series of six Virginia heroes (Jefferson, Henry, Marshall, Nelson, Mason, and Lewis), executed as standing figures, which are grouped with six allegorical figures bearing shields and inscribed with a series of virtues (Revolution, Bill of Rights, Independence, Finance, Justice, and Colonial Times), and the names of places that are associated with those virtues. Each Virginia hero is fronted by an allegorical figure bearing an inscription related to that figure. The allegorical figures – identical, differentiated by their inscriptions – are seated female figures, draped in Greek dress. Each figure rests on an arrangement of four cannon and a pyramidal arrangement of cannon balls. The composition is dominated by four pairs of crossed flags flanking four shields frames by four pairs of crossed battle axes; the whole composition is topped by three crossed spears. Behind each allegorical figure is a Roman helmet and breastplate, which rest on a drum. The figures are differentiated by the inscriptions on the shield borne by each figure (the virtue) and the plaques that flank the figure (the embodiment or location associated with that virtue). While the locations inscribed may not correspond quite so clearly to the modern observer with either the
The figure located directly in front of and below the mounted Washington is Patrick Henry. Henry, brandishing a raised sword in his right hand, holds a small banner aloft in his left bearing the inscription “Liberty 1765,” an allusion to his “Give me Liberty” speech unleashed in that year in the nearby St. John’s Episcopal Church. Before Henry is the allegorical figure bearing the shield inscribed “Revolution,” with the flanking plaques inscribed “Eutaw Springs” and “Trenton.” To Patrick Henry’s right is the figure of ___ Lewis, now largely forgotten, but then ___. Lewis, holding a long rifle, is fronted by the figure bearing the shield inscribed “Colonial Times,” itself flanked by the plaques “Mt. Pleasant” and “Valley Forge.” To Lewis’s right is the looming figure of John Marshall, holding aloft a volume entitled simply “Justice.” Before Marshall is the figure bearing the shield of “Justice.” On either side of “Justice” are plaques inscribed “Great Britain” and “Stony Point.” To Marshall’s right is the figure of __ Nelson, who holds a scroll labeled “Bond.” In front of Marshall is the figure holding the shield of “Finance,” which is flanked by the plaques for “Yorktown” and “Saratoga.” To Nelson’s right is the contemplative figure of Thomas Jefferson, bearing pen and scrolled inscribed “1776,” a reference to his primary authorship of the Declaration of Independence. Before Jefferson is the shield for “Independence,” which is flanked by plaques for “Princeton” and “King’s Mountain.” Finally, to Jefferson’s left (and Patrick Henry’s left) is the figure of George Mason, holding aloft pen and paper. Before Mason is the shield inscribed “Bill of Rights,” of which Mason was of the utmost importance, which is in turn flanked by plaques inscribed “Bunker Hill” and “Guilford Courthouse.”
8. **Statement of Significance:**

The George Washington Equestrian Statue is nationally significant under Criteria B and C. It is eligible under Criterion B for its significance in commemorating the life of George Washington. It is eligible under Criterion C for its significance as a work of art. In a city known nationally for its outdoor monuments, the George Washington Equestrian Statue was the first. The George Washington Equestrian Statue was also the first equestrian statue of George Washington to be erected in the United States and helped to generate a national wave of representational memorial sculptures. Sculptor Thomas Crawford won a major competition for the monument and undertook the work in 1849. Crawford’s design, including the figure of Washington and those of Jefferson, and Henry, was partially erected in 1858. Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as president of the Confederate States of America before the unfinished monument on 22 February 1862; the Confederate government later adopted Crawford’s mounted Washington as its Great Seal. The Civil War disrupted completion, and Crawford died. Randolph Rogers, a northerner, undertook the remaining work in 1869. The completed work occupies the important terminus of Grace Street at Capitol Square.¹

**Historic Analysis:**

**Summary**

The chronicle of attempts to honor George Washington’s memory is one of the crucial stories of the arts in the United States from 1783 until the Civil War. The history of ideas for monuments for Washington from the 1780s to the Civil War is incredibly rich, but almost as hopelessly complicated. This period was the height of the so-called “cult of Washington,” when many Americans saw him as the greatest mortal in history. In cold contrast with the nearest model of an internationally-significant military and political leader, Napoleon, Washington chose – twice – to lay aside great power. First, he resigned his commission as commander-in-chief of the army, and second, he laid aside civil power when he stepped down after his second term as president.

In the field of countless ideas for a national monument to Washington, three ideas stand out. They are, in chronological order, the idea of erecting an equestrian statue of Washington at the nation’s capital city; the idea of creating a rotunda in the national Capitol building to hold Washington’s tomb and a white marble monument to him; and the idea of constructing a free-standing building to Washington’s memory. This is one of the most important stories in the history of American art in the period. It is partly the story of a vigorous growth in American artistic capacity, as professional architects took over from amateurs and craftsmen, and as sculpture and painting in the grand manner began to take root here.
Background
In 1783, the Continental Congress voted to commission from the best sculptor in Europe a bronze equestrian statue of Washington, and to erect this statue at the permanent seat of government. To create a mighty equestrian statue was one of the supreme dreams of any ambitious European sculptor. Indeed. The year before, in 1782, the French sculptor Etienne-Maurice Falconet had completed just such a commission, his colossal Peter the Great monument in St. Petersburg. Proponents of the equestrian Washington statue were likely influenced in their thinking by reading accounts of Falconet’s celebrated achievement in the popular press.\textsuperscript{2}

Behind Falconet’s statue lies one of the great traditions in sculpture, a tradition rooted in antiquity. The statue of emperor Marcus Aurelius (ca. AD 165), the only monumental Roman bronze statue to survive above ground in Rome to the present day without interruption. Falconet’s more recent models include Bernini’s statue of Louis XIV, finished in 1677. Like Bernini, Falconet tackled the difficult problem of balancing a massive statue of a horse on its hind legs. Bernini reputedly originated the idea of incorporating a carved imitation of a rocky mountaintop into a statue – the rock representing the summit of manly achievement. Falconet followed this idea.

Congress, however, went no further than expressing a pious intention, presumably because it lacked both the money and the permanent capital city. It would take 70 years to redeem Congress’s pledge.\textsuperscript{3}

An Equestrian Statue of George Washington at the Capitol
Jean-Antoine Houdon -- the greatest eighteenth-century French sculptor -- did not come all the way to Virginia in 1785 simply to prepare his statue of Washington for the rotunda of the Virginia Capitol, even though it is one of his supreme achievements. Houdon saw the Richmond Washington as the first step in securing the prized Washington equestrian commission: he craved for a commission on par with Falconet’s Peter the Great. As late as 1804 he hadn’t given up his hopes, but nothing came of them.

Just a few years later the federal government finally got its permanent capital city and commissioned a hugely important work in the art of urban design. That is Pierre-Charles L’Enfant’s plan for Washington, D.C., the city whose very name is one kind of memorial. L’Enfant’s conception put the equestrian statue of Washington linking the Capitol, on an east-west axis, to the presidential mansion, on a north-south axis. The disastrous attempt to finance the creation of the city ruled out any chance of commissioning the statue immediately.
A rotunda in the national Capitol building to hold Washington’s tomb
In 1794, the second key Washington monument idea -- the Capitol rotunda -- surfaced. It did so in a short-lived alliance with the equestrian statue idea. In 1793, the government accepted a design for the national Capitol building by the self-taught amateur Dr. William Thornton. Thornton’s original description of his 1793 design survives but the drawings do not. In two later Thornton drawings for the building, a central unit is nothing other than a moderately free variation on the Pantheon in Rome. It is a Roman temple slid into the center of a larger building. Thornton’s description proves that he intended some form of this Roman temple center as of 1793, and the description puts an equestrian statue of Washington in the center of the rotunda. Very likely Thornton meant the statue resolved upon in 1783, though he proposed to have it made of white marble rather than bronze. The description also mentions a “great repository” under the rotunda. It is not clear whether already this “great repository” was to be Washington’s tomb or whether that idea rose a little later. This is the answer to a question that has perhaps bothered more Europeans than Americans: why did anyone ever build that huge, expensive round room in the middle of the Capitol, that has never, to the present minute, served any coherent and convincing purpose. The answer is that the rotunda was conceived as Washington’s monument, in the form of a temple dedicated to civic rather than sacred values, and from a very early point the scheme called for burying Washington below that room. Construction of the Capitol began in 1793 but the next ten years produced little more than one wing – the rotunda essentially remained just an idea.

In 1799, on 14 December, Washington died. Congress had to decide on some kind of national means of honoring his memory – or at least had to make encouraging noises along those lines. The debate on what to so lasted from late 1799 into early 1801. The equestrian statue was a contender, but the more interesting contender was the yet unbuilt rotunda.

By this point, Thornton had changed his ideas about the marble sculpture for the center of the rotunda. Thornton now proposed importing a sculptor or sculptors from Europe to execute an elaborate group in white marble. He envisioned this monument as a great rock – in the Bernini-Falconet tradition – with the tomb inside it and many symbolic, or allegorical, figures on it. A female figure symbolizing Eternity would lead the figure of Washington to the peak of the rock, to take flight into the heavens.
A freestanding building to Washington’s memory
In the spring of 1800, B.H. Latrobe – the English professional who was just becoming prominent in Philadelphia – entered the scene with the third key possibility, the freestanding building. In April 1800, Latrobe proposed a design to Congress, which was finishing a decade of meeting in Philadelphia while waiting for the Washington Capitol to become usable. Latrobe proposed a 100-foot granite and marble pyramid, principally because a pyramid is the most stable of all forms, and he argued that Washington’s tomb should be as durable as the nation that Washington had founded. The angle of Latrobe’s pyramid is quite steep – more so than an Egyptian pyramid. Latrobe, likely like most other designers of new pyramids in the 18th and 19th centuries, imitated a Roman pyramid – that is, a Roman imitation of an Egyptian pyramid.

By the fall of 1800, four ideas competed with each other: 1) Latrobe’s pyramid, 2) the equestrian statue, 3) the tomb and monument in the Capitol rotunda, and 4) the budget. After some interesting further episodes, the whole project to honor Washington just died in the Senate in March 1801 – rather quietly, and, of course, inexpensively.

The Virginia Competition
The Virginia legislature resolved to build a monument to George Washington on the grounds of the Capitol in Richmond. In October 1849, they announced a competition, with a prize of $500 to be awarded to the winner. Forty-one designs from architects in twelve states were submitted, including designs from such significant figures in American architecture as A.J. Davis, Robert Mills, James Renwick, and Edward B. White.

The story of Richmond’s Washington monument is almost incalculably rich. The Richmond story is perhaps a dozen important stories. These intricate stories go far back – all the way to the 1783 resolution. In the 1840s, the sculptor Thomas Crawford strove to get the equestrian commission, and assuredly, his Richmond Washington Monument is to no small extent an outgrowth of his thinking for a District of Columbia Washington Monument. In 1850, he won the Richmond commission, an opportunity to design on a national stage. The Washington figure was unveiled in 1858, just after Crawford’s premature death. Four of the six standing figures are also his. Another eminent American sculptor, Randolph Rogers, finished the monument after Crawford’s death in 1857. The monument was completed in 1869. It is the only American equestrian monument commissioned in the 1850s for which the bronze figures were cast abroad: the mid-century in fact marked the emergence of American bronze casting in sculpture.

In 1858, James Monroe’s remains were brought from New York City and re-interred on the spot once considered for a Washington monument. Richmond architect Alfred Lybrock designed the
monument, which the Philadelphia form of Wood and Perot cast in iron. It was erected late 1859. The year of Monroe’s re-interment was a big year for honoring George Washington. The same year Crawford’s equestrian George Washington was unveiled in Capitol Square and the Ladies’ Association of Mount Vernon was formed, which ultimately saved Mount Vernon and created a pivotal house museum.

Someone attempted to sabotage Crawford’s design and instate another. The normal interpretation of this was Robert Mills, who wanted to arrange Crawford’s figures around a column. It may well be that Mills chafed at the “broken” effect of this new kind of pedestal and sincerely wished to avoid an artistic disaster by building a simple column, as he did in the George Washington monument in Washington, D.C.

The image of Crawford’s Washington did not remain confined to status as a symbol for the United States: it soon migrated to the Great Seal of the Confederacy. In 1864, the prominent London sculptor J.H. Foley modeled the seal, and the eminent London medallist J.S. Wyon engraved it. At the same moment, the Federal government claiming Washington’s paternity via a national symbol, the frescoed dome over Washington’s empty tomb in the Capitol rotunda, we find the CSA claiming Washington’s paternity via a national symbol, a seal showing a figure that has the genuine line of descent from the resolution of 1783.

This marks the end of the balmy days of the cult of Washington. The Civil War produced a new cycle of heroes. Planning for both Northern and Southern monuments began even while the war raged, and commissions went to such sculptors as J.H. Foley and Randolph Rogers. Rogers, one of the most productive of these sculptors, designed most of his Civil War monuments as simple variations on the Richmond Washington equestrian statue. For example, Rodgers’s Civil War monument in Detroit (1867) represents several such monuments executed by Rodgers.

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Conclusion
The story of the George Washington Equestrian Statue is one of the most important stories in the history of American art in the period. It is partly the story of a vigorous growth in American artistic capacity, as professional architects took over from amateurs and craftsmen, and as sculpture and painting in the grand manner began to take root here.

There were three competing ideas for Washington’s monument. They were, in chronological order, the idea of erecting an equestrian statue of Washington at the nation’s capital city; the idea of creating a rotunda in the national Capitol building to hold Washington’s tomb and a white marble monument to him; and the idea of constructing a free-standing building to Washington’s memory.

The first and oldest has the happiest story, especially in connection with the rise of the arts in the U.S. It begins in 1783 with a resolution to import an equestrian statue; it closes with a whole
cycle of such monuments by American sculptors. Overall, these statues may represent a decline in the use of difficult symbolism. Certainly, with them, the predominately sculptural monument successfully challenges the essentially architectural monument, notable that in the form of a monumental classical shaft.

The second, the story of the rotunda, begins in the 1790s with a design by a self-taught amateur Thornton, and concludes in the 1860s with a dome by an immensely distinguished professional, Walter. The story runs through the arrival of a small army of European sculptors who practiced the grand manner here, but it concludes with the emergence of internationally significant American sculptors such as Greenough, or Crawford, whose figure of armed Freedom, cast in D.C. by Clark Mills, caps Walter’s dome. The rotunda story begins with the tyranny of the portrait scarcely challenged. If, sadly enough, the rotunda became an incoherent gallery of American paintings of various quality, filling those walls played a decisive role as Americans struck off the shackles of face painting.

The third and chronologically last is the story of the freestanding monument. As with the other two kinds of monument idea, the historic connections between Latrobe’s pyramid and executed buildings (the Philadelphia Waterworks, the Capitol, Monumental Church, and the Baltimore monuments) typifies a small world where a real network of relations connected most major commissions for architecture and monuments. It is in this story that the narrative of Richmond’s George Washington Equestrian Statue finds its place.

In a city known nationally for its outdoor monuments, the George Washington Equestrian Statue was the first. The George Washington Equestrian Statue was also the first equestrian statue of George Washington to be erected in the United States and helped to generate a national wave of representational memorial sculptures.

**Bibliography**


Endnotes


2 *Gentleman’s Magazine* (Oct. 1775) rev’w N. Wraxall, w. descry., and cit. *Lloyd’s Chron; Gentleman’s Magazine* (July 1777), rev’w of Falconet on sculpture w. engraving of Peter the Great.


4 Many of these competition drawings are preserved at the Library of Virginia. Several of them are discussed in William B. O’Neal, *Architectural Drawing in Virginia, 1819-1969*. (Charlottesville: School of Architecture, University of Virginia, 1969) pp. 40-59.