Treasures Unearthed From Baltimore's Washington Monument

Contents from 1815 and 1915 Time Capsules On Display
Beginning July 4, 2015

1815 Cornerstone Jars as found, courtesy
Mount Vernon Place Conservancy

BALTIMORE, June 12, 2015 – Beginning July 4, 2015, The Maryland Historical Society will proudly display items recovered from not one but two time capsules in Baltimore's Washington Monument, as well as other important documents surrounding the Monument's creation. The exhibit, entitled *'Treasures Unearthed From Baltimore's Washington Monument,'* will open in coordination with the **Monumental Bicentennial**, an all-day neighborhood-wide celebration presented by the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy and Bank of America. Visit www.MonumentalBicentennial.org. Admission to the Maryland Historical Society will be free all day on July 4th. The exhibition will be on public view through December 31, 2015.

"The Maryland Historical Society is extremely excited to temporarily join the time capsules and their contents with so much allied material in our museum and library collections," says Maryland Historical Society President-Elect Mark B. Letzer. "It is especially significant that these items will be on display during the monument's bicentennial."

About the Time Capsules

During the $5.5 million restoration of the Washington Monument, begun in January 2014 by the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy, not one, but two time capsules were discovered. Both were located during construction investigations by project superintendent George E. Wilk II of Lewis Contractors.

The 1815 Time Capsule was hidden away in the Monument's cornerstone. On February 18, 2015, the cornerstone's outer lid was removed, revealing an inner lid carved with the names of the Monument's original stonecutters and masons. Beneath this were three glass jars stuffed with newspapers and wrapped bundles. Barely visible below the jars was a metal plate said in the original accounts to commemorate the day. The items were removed from the well by conservators from the Walters Art Museum and taken to the Maryland State Archives for further treatment. Despite their age and original damp condition, the items are in remarkably good condition.

Contents of the 1815 Time Capsule on display include:

- ✓ U.S. coins, in copper, silver and gold

- ✓ *The Holy Bible* published in Baltimore by John Hagerty in 1812. This item is significant because it was printed in 'Diamond Type,' a typeface developed in Baltimore at the Baltimore Type Foundry

- ✓ A copy of the Declaration of Independence, reprinted in the *Federal Gazette* on July 3, 1815, the day before the cornerstone was laid

The 1915 Time Capsule, discovered in October 2014 behind a bronze plaque commemorating the Monument's Centennial, contains:

- ✓ Newspapers of the day

- ✓ Historical memorabilia relating to the centennial of the Monument and the Star-Spangled Banner

- ✓ Coins, one of which was a medal struck to celebrate the centennial of the Star-Spangled Banner

- ✓ One of the earliest known photographic copies of the original Declaration of Independence, by L. C. Handy nephew of famed Civil War photograph Matthew Brady.

"Visitors to the Society will be able to view those items that Baltimoreans 100 and 200 years ago believed were symbolic of their commitment to the patriotic ideals that Washington represented to them," says Lance Humphries, PhD, Mount Vernon Place Conservancy.

Also On Display

Rounding out the exhibit will be a selection of drawings originally submitted in the design competition for the Washington Monument. "The Maryland Historical Society's rich manuscript collections include the original papers of the Washington Monument's Board of Managers," Humphries continues, "Largely led by Society founder, Robert Gilmor, Jr., over the three decades this private board shepherded the fundraising for and construction of the Monument. Mills's competition winning drawings are among these papers, as are dozens of letters from the architect, and original contracts and bills with all of the craftsmen."

"The papers also document the financial effort it took to build the Monument," Humphries continues. A public lottery held to offset construction costs raised $100,000, but when all was said and done, "when Gilmor entered his last ledger entry regarding the Monument's costs in 1843, the total was $203,764.08." he adds.

Visitors to The Maryland Historical Society on July 4th are encouraged to experience the Society's enormous collection of priceless historical items, including **portraits of all four Maryland signers of the Declaration of Independence: Charles Carroll, Samuel Chase, Thomas Stone and William Paca**. Also on view is the Stone Declaration, created in 1823 by Thomas Stone. These items can be viewed in the "Inventing a Nation: Maryland In the Revolutionary Era" gallery.

On July 4, the Maryland Historical Society will be open from 10 am-5pm. Admission will be free.

About the Monumental Bicentennial Celebration

Presented by the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy and Bank of America, the Monumental Bicentennial Celebration will include a Naturalization Ceremony at 8:30am, a formal ribbon cutting at 10:45 am, and an old-fashioned, family-friendly country fair from 11:30 am-5 pm. The country fair will include live music, hands-on activities, children's crafts and colonial games, a petting zoo, and picnic fare including a whole pig roast! Admission is free. For more information, visit: http://monumentalbicentennial.org/

About The Maryland Historical Society

Founded in 1844, The Maryland Historical Society Museum and Library occupies an entire city block in the Mount Vernon district of Baltimore. The society's mission is to "collect, preserve, and interpret the objects and materials that reflect Maryland's diverse cultural heritage." The Society is home to the original manuscript of the Star-Spangled Banner and publishes a quarterly titled "Maryland Historical Magazine." Visit www.mdhs.org.

For more details, contact Marketing Director Laura Rodini at lrodini@mdhs.org or by phone: 410-685-3750 ext. 322.