



*The cover of a small brochure published in the mid-nineteenth century touting Baltimore's monument to George Washington. (Maryland Historical Society.)*

# Research Notes & Maryland Miscellany

## What's in a Name? Baltimore—"The Monumental City"

LANCE HUMPHRIES

When George W. Howard published *The Monumental City, Its Past History and Present Resources* in 1873, Baltimore had been known by that moniker for half a century. Howard, in his heroic account of the city, did not provide an origin for the name, but he did discuss what civic actions had led to the title being awarded. His observations were cloaked in an important American dialogue regarding who would memorialize American heroes, and, equally important, where these celebratory and inspirational symbols would be located. He observed that, as of 1873, in nearby Washington, D.C., “the Capital of the Country . . . [a] huge mass of marble rises out of the mud-flats on the Potomac river. Misshapen, unfinished and gradually settling in the ooze upon which its foundation are laid,” it was an ungrateful nation’s thoughtless tribute to the memory of George Washington “whom *the world* calls great.”<sup>1</sup> The monument designed by architect Robert Mills (1781–1855) had been commissioned by a private board of managers, the Washington National Monument Society, formed in 1833. Although construction began in 1848, the society’s fundraising efforts had foundered, despite the “most strenuous efforts”—and before the Civil War work had come to a halt. In a word, it was an American cultural disgrace, one that would not be rectified until the federal government stepped in with funding and the monument was completed in 1884 and dedicated the following year.<sup>2</sup> “The vividness of the contrast presented by the action of our own people fairly entitles Baltimore to be styled ‘The Monumental City,’” Howard continued, “a name by which she is known both at home and abroad, and of which she is justly proud.” Howard then briefly recounted the history of Baltimore’s Washington Monument, begun “while the City was yet in swaddling clothes.”<sup>3</sup>

Like its counterpart, Baltimore’s monument to George Washington was also officially conceived by a private board of managers, in this case a decade after the

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great man's death. This group of citizens, and not the municipal government, solidified plans to erect a monument in their city when in 1809 they petitioned the Maryland state legislature to support the work through a lottery. Their efforts had begun several years earlier, in 1807, when it was announced that plans were underway to erect a new Baltimore city and county courthouse because the old one on what was then Courthouse Square (Calvert Street between Fayette and Lexington Streets, later called Monument Square) was in hazardous condition. Residents who had built handsome houses around the square feared some disagreeable structure might be erected in its place. Initially a marble statue of Washington, funded by subscription, was planned to replace the aging structure, but by 1809 that plan either had not materialized or was abandoned in favor of a more substantial monument. They hoped it would be funded through lottery proceeds as were many public and civic works at the time.<sup>4</sup>

The petitioners to the Maryland legislature noted of such public monuments: "Trophies to the memories of great and good men are an encouragement to victorious and heroic deeds. They stimulate the young to emulation, to noble and honorable actions." In January 1810, with the new courthouse still under construction, the legislature approved the plan, noting that the square could be utilized for a Washington monument as soon as the new building was sufficiently far advanced "as to afford suitable accommodation for the courts and public offices." Lotteries were commenced and a design competition held. Robert Mills was awarded the project in May 1814, beating out several gifted French-born architects, Maximilian Godefroy (1765–ca. 1840), and Joseph-Jacques Ramée (1764–1842), both of whom had presented handsome designs for triumphal arches. Mills had taken great pains to present himself as the first American-born artist with architectural training, and that fact was not lost on the board of managers. The board, in advertising the design competition, while noting that it was open to both Europeans and Americans, put forward their hope that an American would win so that "there will be no occas[s]ion to resort to any other country for a monument to the memory of their illustrious fellow citizen." Although the art of painting had had some support in this country prior to the Revolution, with American artists traveling to Europe for training, early in the nineteenth century there were as yet few native-born sculptors or architects with sufficient training and experience to take on the important cultural work of building the new republic's monuments and public buildings and sculpting its heroes in stone. The remnants of the ancient world established that those forms would survive the ages. If the United States was going to be respected as a nation and fulfill the promise of its revolution, it would be these and other cultural symbols by which the European world judged its maturity.<sup>5</sup>

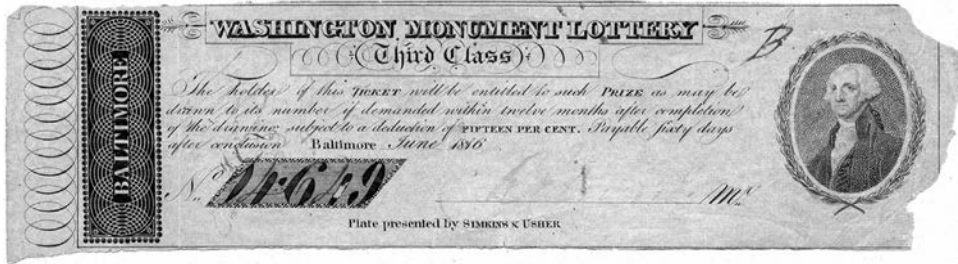
After the commission had been awarded to Mills, several additional design and construction hurdles had to be overcome by the time the cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1815, not to mention the interlude in September 1814, when local defenders

repulsed a British sea and land invasion of the city. Mills’s original design was a towering, heavily ornamented column, 140 feet high. On the same day he was notified that he had won the competition, he was also informed by influential board member Robert Gilmore Jr. (1774–1848) that some residents of Courthouse Square feared his column might topple on their houses in the event of a natural disaster, and that there was concern his design would far exceed the \$100,000 appropriated by the legislature. Over the next several months Gilmore persuaded Revolutionary War hero Col. John Eager Howard (1752–1827) to donate a plot of land, two hundred feet square, from his vast Belvidere estate north of the city. On this square, on an axis with Charles Street but still at the time in Howard’s Woods, the cornerstone was laid. By that time, a significantly altered and simplified plan had been put forward, appearing very much like the Monument that was eventually built.<sup>6</sup>

At the laying of the cornerstone, then board of managers president James A. Buchanan observed that the city had not only “the glory of being the first to erect a monument of gratitude to the father and benefactor of our country” but a “peculiar propriety” in erecting “this first expression of national gratitude” as well. During the recent war, he observed with obvious pride, “the city destined to bear the proud name of WASHINGTON to future ages, fell an easy conquest to the ruthless invader.” The “shock . . . was felt from the one end of these United States to the other.”

The minds of our countrymen appeared to be transfixed with horror and dismay; a night of awful darkness seemed to overshadow our land; the gloomiest apprehensions were entertained for the republic; the timid and the desponding, not recollecting that freedom rises with an elasticity proportionate to the pressure made upon it, were approaching a state of political despair. At this most awful moment for our country, Baltimore, the city of our affection, in which was contained our altars, our families, our all, became the next object of attack to a vindictive, and *at that time*, a vainglorious foe. The eyes of all America were fixed upon us! On the destiny of Baltimore seemed to be suspended the fate of the republic! She breasted the storm; and, thanks to her gallant defenders, exists now, in prosperity and glory, to perform the most grateful of duties.<sup>7</sup>

The speeches uttered at the dedication of the Washington Monument’s cornerstone ceremony have been available to specialists since they were published in 1815, but what had not been known until the Monument was restored in 2014–15 by the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy were the actual contents of the cornerstone. During the restoration process the cornerstone was discovered on the Monument’s northeast corner. Though some of the cornerstone’s contents were listed in contemporary accounts, perhaps the most meaningful item is one not mentioned. Laid on top of the glass jars in the cornerstone’s well was a copy of the Declaration of Independence printed in the *Federal Gazette* on July 3, 1815, the day before the



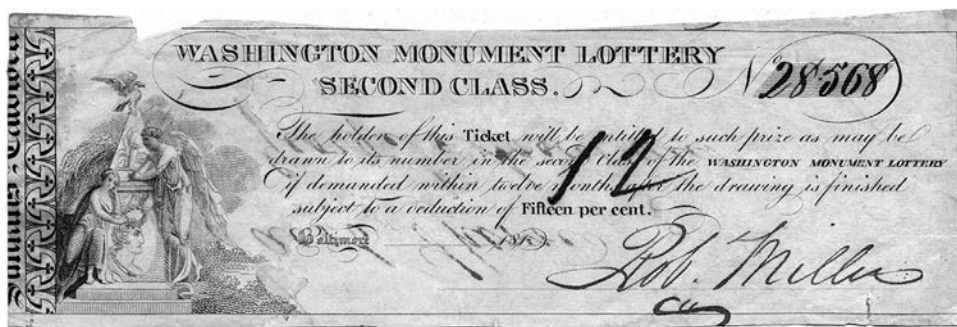
*Scheme of the Washington Monument Lottery and lottery tickets, by which means money was raised for its construction. (Maryland Historical Society.)*

cornerstone was laid. Several days later, an account of the ceremony noted that the column was being “erected in honor of the illustrious Defender of American Independence.” What Buchanan’s speech and this cornerstone offering make clear is that the monument was not only a memorial to Washington, but one of the earliest major American monuments celebrating American nationhood—a point punctuated by its commencement on Independence Day.<sup>8</sup>

Work on the monument began in earnest the following year and advanced rapidly until about 1820, and shortly thereafter the column proper had been largely completed up as far as the pedestal that would eventually hold a statue at its pinnacle. In 1824 the scaffolding, no longer needed and in poor condition, was taken down, and additional masonry work continued on the roof of the gallery base and four staircases. The masonry was essentially complete in 1829 when Enrico Causici’s colossal statue depicting Washington resigning his commission as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army was raised to the top. Other details like the monument’s iron railing, braziers, and interior finishes were completed in the late 1830s.<sup>9</sup>

In the early twenty-first century, it is difficult to recapture the contemporary importance of Baltimore’s Washington Monument. Buchanan’s dedicatory observations were not idle boasts. That the first monument to George Washington was not erected in the nation’s capital speaks volumes about American cultural development. As the new nation got underway and established a permanent seat in Washington, D.C., it remained unclear who was going to support the arts, culture, and the sciences in this new nation. Newly minted Americans only had history upon which to base their assumptions. Most European capitals were also cultural capitals—was Washington going to become one? Many hoped and envisioned it would. It was also logical for these new Americans to assume that the federal government would take the lead in honoring and memorializing American heroes, most notably Washington, just as governmental patronage had erected most ancient and modern European monuments.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, by the first years of the nineteenth century, while functional structures such as the Capitol and President’s House (White House) were materializing in the national capital, a non-functional and solely commemorative tribute to Washington was not, despite several decades of interest in such a memorial. A bronze equestrian statue of



Washington had been proposed by the Continental Congress in 1783. The statue was intended to be displayed in the eventual residence of the national legislature, but by the time of Washington’s death on December 14, 1799 the plan had not materialized. With his death, however, the country went into mourning, and the loss revitalized interest in commemorating Washington in the federal city. Congress, in a series of three proposals, revived the plan to erect an equestrian statue to Washington and directed that a marble monument, serving as a mausoleum, be erected under the dome of the Capitol “on a scale commensurate with the virtue and ability of the character thus held up as a model to all future generations.”<sup>11</sup> Congress, though, was unable to agree on what form the monument should take. Federalists favored increasing the size of the monument from an indoor tomb to an outdoor mausoleum, but the Democratic-Republicans thought that too ostentatious. The discussion ended there, and nothing came of the proposal.<sup>12</sup> As was true in Baltimore, a memorial to Washington in the national capital would eventually arise from a private initiative, but unlike the Baltimore project the private enterprise in Washington failed and it would not have come to completion decades later without federal government intervention.

Howard’s 1873 book did not theorize how Baltimore came to be called “The Monumental City,” but most modern sources credit that to President John Quincy Adams (1767–1848) when he visited in 1827. In October of that year, as he noted in his extensive diary, Adams fulfilled a two-year-old promise to stop in Baltimore. Upon his arrival on the fourteenth, Adams’s plans were changed by the death two days earlier of John Eager Howard. On the fifteenth, his first full day in Baltimore, Adams participated in the funeral cortege that began at Howard’s estate Belvidere, north of the monument, and he likely saw it, largely completed except for the statue at its top, as he traveled to Belvidere for the start of the ceremonies.<sup>13</sup>

The next day, Adams was taken by various civic leaders to see the Aquila Randall monument, a small obelisk erected on the site of the Battle of North Point, east of the city. It had been erected in 1817 in memory of Randall who died during the battle, by stonecutter Thomas Towson with the design assistance of Jacob Small Jr., a carpenter-builder. Both men had participated in the Battle of Baltimore. Early that

John Quincy Adams  
late President of the United States.

Robert Gilmore Esq. Baltimore

Quincy 6. July 1837.

Dear Sir

Flattered as I am by your obliging Letter of the 30<sup>th</sup> ult. and especially by the honour of being consulted with regard to the inscriptions proposed for the Washington Monument, I can offer no other return for your kindness than the unreserved freedom of my remarks and a request that you would deal as freely with them, as they will with the inscriptions—and discard my proposed alterations without hesitation except so much of them as may have your entire approbation and concurrence.

The most important if not the first rule for the composition of monumental inscriptions is brevity—compression—the maximum of sentiment in the minimum of words. The great advantage of the Latin over modern languages for the lapidary style is that it needs not the use of mere expletive particles—When a modern language is used care should be taken to exclude every such particle not absolutely necessary—and to make every admitted <sup>word</sup> tell.

Conforming to this rule I should reduce your inscriptions on the average to about one third of the words contained in them—The dedicating inscription for example I would express thus

MARYLAND  
To  
WASHINGTON

A decade after John Quincy Adams's visit to Baltimore, Robert Gilmore Jr., president of the Board of Managers, solicited the former president's advice regarding the monument's inscription. In this letter, dated July 6, 1837, Adams suggested: "The most important if not the first rule for the composition of monumental inscriptions is brevity—compression—the maximum of sentiment in the minimum of words." (Maryland Historical Society.)

evening, Adams attended a banquet at Barnum's Hotel, and toward the end of the dinner he proposed a final toast: "Baltimore—the monumental City—May the days of her safety be as prosperous and happy, as the days of her danger have been trying

and triumphant.” Adams recorded this version of the toast in his diary, and the toasts given that evening were published in Baltimore papers such as the *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, and quickly appeared in other American newspapers.<sup>14</sup>

However, in toasting Baltimore as the Monumental City, Adams was not coining a new phrase but using one already in the lexicon. Apparently, the first source to give Baltimore the nickname was the *Daily National Intelligencer*, the principal newspaper in Washington, edited by Joseph Gales Jr. (1786–1860) and William Winston Seaton (1785–1866). On February 8, 1823, in the middle of a debate over the creation of the Potomac Canal (later called the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal), the *Intelligencer* reported that support for the canal was under discussion in the Maryland legislature but that it might fail because Baltimore was not supporting it. “What delusion is this! What evil genius, more potent than any that fables describe to us has breathed his pestiferous influence over that patriotic and public-spirited city?” According to the paper, Baltimore was not in support because the District of Columbia might benefit from the canal. “If the Canal should benefit the District, it will, at the same time, doubly benefit Baltimore; and we cannot conceive of a more suicidal act, than for Baltimore, *the monumental city*, to interpose her influence in opposition to her own aggrandizement.”<sup>15</sup> Within days the article was picked up by newspapers in Alexandria and Richmond and likely elsewhere, spreading not only contempt for Baltimore’s current stance, but an informal new name for the city itself.<sup>16</sup>

Later evidence suggests that the original article came from Joseph Gales, who had arrived in the United States in 1795 with his father, also a printer. After moving to Washington from North Carolina, he in 1810 became the sole proprietor of the *Intelligencer* until he brought his brother-in-law Seaton into the business several years later. By the early 1820s Gales had emerged as a well-respected publisher and Washington booster, so much so that in 1827 he was elected mayor of the city. In 1828, as mayor, he would participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the long-awaited C&O Canal that had been so hotly contested in early 1823.

The editors’ jab at Baltimore’s “monumental” character surely provoked disbelief that the city that had accomplished one of the most culturally important statements of the early Republic—the erection of the first public monument dedicated to the father of the American nation—was not supportive of other major civic works that would benefit itself and the region. Perhaps Baltimoreans’ priorities were misplaced. Throughout the debate there are hints at financial regional rivalries and national patriotism. By the early 1820s, Baltimore was thriving and had quickly emerged from its rather recent 1797 incorporation into one of the most populous cities in the country. The seat of the federal government had been moved to Washington in 1800, and construction had begun on notable structures such as the Capitol and the White House, but Washington would remain a small town for years to come. It is important to remember that although Pierre Charles L’Enfant (1754–1825) had in 1791 laid out an impressive and heroically- scaled plan for the city of Washington, by



the early 1820s little had materialized. Even several decades later, in 1849, the Scottish Robert Baird traveling through the United States, noted that while the capital city took up a large area, it was disappointing for the “village-like appearance of the whole place.” The monumental Mall as we know it today is largely a twentieth-century production.<sup>17</sup>

Without question, Baltimore’s primary claim to the title of the Monumental City followed from the distinction of erecting the first major memorial to Washington, as a number of nineteenth-century sources suggest. Baird who traveled through Baltimore before going to Washington, observed in discussing the sobriquet that “in so far as America at least is concerned, it would be entitled to the distinction were it only because it contains this noble structure to the greatest of America’s sons and statesmen.”<sup>18</sup> In 1823 when the C&O Canal was under discussion, there were no concrete plans for a Washington memorial in the national capital, but the monument in Baltimore had advanced significantly toward completion. The column proper was built as far the pedestal for the statue, and while other elements would be completed over the next decade, it was a majestic structure, more than 150 feet tall, roughly equivalent to a fifteen-story building. As of that moment it was the most impressive monumental column in the country, rivaling current European and ancient examples, and it was the only one honoring the father of American democracy.<sup>19</sup>

By 1823, Baltimore was also putting the finishing touches on its Battle Monument. In the same year the Washington Monument was begun, the cornerstone was laid (September 12, 1815) for this second monument, designed by Maximilian Godefroy and located in the square (later Monument Square) originally intended for the Washington Monument, which became available after the Washington Monument was moved to Howard’s Woods. Commissioned by the city’s Committee of Vigilance and Safety, which enlisted donations for its erection, the monument commemorated those who had fallen in the battles of North Point and Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore. While not nearly as ambitious as the Washington Monument, the Battle Monument was handsomely designed and iconographically rich in decorative symbolism. In early 1822 the city government, which financed some of its construction, acknowledged that although the monument had traditionally been called the Battle Monument, the city was renaming it the Baltimore Monument (a name that apparently did not last). On September 12, 1822, Antonio Capellano’s statue symbolic of the City of Baltimore was raised to the top, essentially completing the monument with the exception of its platform and fencing, which were completed several years later. News of the Battle Monument’s completion was of national interest, and was picked up by numerous papers up and down the East Coast. Over their subsequent long histories, both monuments would be the site of important historical and cultural events in the life of the city.<sup>20</sup>

Baltimore’s Washington Monument and Battle Monument were both begun in 1815, only months after Baltimore emerged largely unscathed in the fall of 1814. But

while Baltimoreans celebrated, nearby Washington, D.C. had been burned by the British, including its principal governmental buildings the Capitol and the White House—a severe blow to the city and nation. By the early 1820s, these symbolic buildings were in various stages of rebuilding. The city of Washington desperately wanted the perceived boost to its economy promised by the canal. That George Washington himself had fostered an early canal along the Potomac River as a way to connect the East Coast with the West, was likely not lost on those promoting the new canal initiative as a patriotic endeavor in the 1820s.

The editors of the *Intelligencer* were well aware of the “monumental” activities going on in Baltimore, since they routinely reprinted news articles from Baltimore newspapers about the monuments, as well as advertisements placed by the Washington Monument’s lottery. Whether Gales actually coined the phrase “the monumental city” or heard it in conversation from others may never be known, but within days of its initial appearance in the paper, readers were repeating the phrase. Nathaniel H. Carter (1787–1830), the editor of the New York *Statesman* who happened to be traveling from Washington back to New York at the time, stopped in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on February 12, and wrote an installment of his travelogue that recounted his stay in Baltimore. The editors of the *Baltimore Patriot* choose to reprint this “flattering” account from a “gentleman of observation and fine talents.” Carter began by observing that he had left Washington on Monday morning (February 10, two days after the *Intelligencer* article) and that early in the evening he had “arrived at the ‘monumental city,’ as the *Intelligencer* fancifully calls it.” While he was in Baltimore, local editors showed their colleague the sights. Carter’s account devotes most of its space to a description of his visit to the Washington Monument, which, though still awaiting the arrival of the statue on its pinnacle, was complete to the level of the upper balcony. Led by a boy with a lantern, they climbed the steps to take in the views of the city. Carter thought that, when complete, the monument might provide ideas to a committee in New York then entertaining the idea of building their own monument to Washington. Carter was impressed by this “new” city and called it “one of the finest built places” he had ever seen. He found the public springs a rare adornment and admired Latrobe’s Merchant Exchange, once again observing that his native city might learn from the experience of the Baltimore merchants. The same page announced that the “Potomac Bill” had been withdrawn from the Maryland House of Delegates and would not be introduced again in the present session.<sup>21</sup>

Some Baltimoreans were quick to take up the new title, including one aggrieved citizen who wrote to the *Intelligencer* claiming that “enemies of the Monumental City” were unfairly attacking Baltimore for opposing the Potomac Canal while supporting the idea of a canal from the Susquehanna to their city. One critic of Baltimore defended his comments, writing that “the magnanimous monumental city of Baltimore gives graves to her enemies.”<sup>22</sup> The fall of 1823 saw the meeting of a three-day-long Canal Convention in Washington to discuss the building of the

C&O Canal, by which time enough Maryland support had been garnered for the project to move forward.

At the conclusion of the meetings, the citizens of the District of Columbia hosted a public dinner for more than a hundred assembled guests and national dignitaries, including representatives from the District, Maryland, Virginia, and neighboring states. According to reports, the toasts at its conclusion were not planned, but many spoke to patriotism and the prosperity to be gained by internal improvements such as the C&O, which would link the Potomac and the Ohio, Maryland and Virginia, and, more generally, the East and the West. Charles Carroll of Carrollton toasted the City of Baltimore. “May her benefit from the Potomac and Ohio Canal equal the merit and patriotism of her people.” Joseph Gales offered, “Baltimore: the Monumental City—an union of interest and object between her and the city of the Hero, Washington.”<sup>23</sup>

Although Gales’s 1823 “monumental” take on the city of Baltimore started as a bit of sarcasm, by the following year the phrase was being used in an honorific and celebratory manner. In 1824, the *Statesman*, whose New York editor Carter had apparently been one of the first to employ the title, published another article repeating that reference to the city that was reprinted in Baltimore and other newspapers. Baltimore’s own press used the nickname in discussing plans for the Marquis de Lafayette’s visit to the city in 1824. In 1826, when John Cleves Symmes Jr. (1779–1829), bypassed Baltimore on his lecture tour regarding his theories of a hollow Earth, the *Baltimore Patriot*, postulated that he might find some of the cities he had visited in his “concave regions” but not so the “Monumental City.” For this “city of monuments and of patriotic devotion” he would look in vain. Later, in 1826 when a new frigate, the *Baltimore*, was launched from its namesake waterfront, the toasts included one by Capt. Alexander Claxton of the U.S. Navy to “The ‘Monumental city’—Marble columns may perpetuate her *gratitude*, but this noble frigate establishes her *greatness*.”<sup>24</sup>

In 1827, before President Adams came to Baltimore, several other toasts to the Monumental City had already been published and thus his use of the phrase in his own October 1827 toast was not new at all but established in common usage. Although Adams may have known of the phrase for several years, Joseph Gales was also in Baltimore the day Adams visited North Point and later made his toast, and was one of several Washington residents who called on him in between events. It is not unreasonable to suggest that they might well have discussed the day’s activities in “The Monumental City.”<sup>25</sup>

Because the phrase emerged from the newspapers, its origin quickly became hard to establish. Baltimore’s earliest chronicler, Thomas W. Griffith, in the 1833 edition of his *Annals of Baltimore* (1824), recounted Adams’s 1827 visit, noting that the president visited the North Point battleground and attended a dinner at Barnum’s Hotel, where he “addressed the company in a speech of much erudition of energy, referring to the

gallantry of the Monumental City.” In not mentioning Adams’s specific toast, Griffith left unclear whether Adams had specifically called Baltimore the Monumental City, or if that was merely the author’s own construction.<sup>26</sup>

In the early 1830s with histories like Griffith’s and illustrated guidebooks like John H. B. Latrobe’s *Picture of Baltimore* (1832) appearing, one need not have read American newspapers in the previous decade to understand Baltimore’s claim to its patriotic title. Latrobe devoted a chapter specifically to the city’s monuments. “Baltimore is known throughout the Union as the ‘Monumental City,’ and the pride which is felt in the title, makes the subject worth a separate chapter.” British actress Fanny Kemble spent time in Baltimore at just this time, noting, with typical European disdain for the cultural accomplishments of the young United States, that its two monuments had “given Baltimore the appellation the monumental city, which never could have befallen it in any other country under heaven but this.” There emerged in the following decades numerous references to the Monumental City in contemporary American and European magazines, journals, and in extremely popular travel accounts like Kemble’s and Baird’s.<sup>27</sup> Several handsome prints of the Washington Monument also appeared in this period, including William Henry Bartlett’s depiction, which was included in Nathaniel Parker Willis’s 1840 publication, *American Scenery*. Bartlett’s view was reprinted shortly thereafter in Leipzig, Germany, by British-born Albert Henry Payne, who paired it with a cut of Washington’s tomb at Mount Vernon (also copied from a Bartlett view), flanking a small portrait of the general. The pairing suggests that Baltimore’s Washington Monument functioned as the American monument to Washington until the one planned for the nation’s capital slowly took over that distinction after its groundbreaking in 1848.<sup>28</sup>

With the appearance of such publications as John C. Gobreight’s *The Monumental City, or Baltimore Guide Book*, and other American and European volumes devoted to travel, the sobriquet was a commonplace by the middle of the nineteenth century. Most of the significant late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century histories of Baltimore, while using the phrase “The Monumental City,” do not cite its origin, including Howard’s 1873 volume, which took the moniker for its title.<sup>29</sup> By the first years of the twentieth century, the phrase was in such common usage that it appeared in dictionaries listing “Notable American Sobriquets,” where, in looking up “Baltimore,” one found “See Monumental City.”<sup>30</sup>

Baltimore had had other nicknames prior to Monumental City, including apparently somewhat briefly around 1812 the less flattering “Mobtown.” When war was declared on Britain in that year, a group in favor of war demolished the office of the *Federal Republican and Commercial Gazette* because the paper had denounced the war. Several people were killed in the following days. Over the years, this name would bubble up again in the press whenever a public disturbance brought the earlier civil disgrace to mind. Perhaps indicative of the relative popularity of “Mobtown” and “The Monumental City” as references to Baltimore is the number of times each

appears in available online newspaper searches encompassing the hundred years between 1812 and 1912. “Mobtown” was used to describe Baltimore perhaps fewer than one hundred instances, while “The Monumental City” came up nearly seven thousand times.<sup>31</sup>

Given that for nearly 150 years the origin of Baltimore’s monumental nickname seems to have been unknown, how is it that the present day believes it was first uttered by John Quincy Adams? In 1971, director of the Peale Museum and Baltimore historian Wilbur Harvey Hunter, writing a brief essay about public sculpture in the city, was apparently the first to state that Adams’s 1827 toast was the origin of the city’s moniker. His discovery of this information seems to be the basis for assumptions by others whose writing has appeared in numerous online sources and published books up to the present.<sup>32</sup>

Hunter’s discovery came at a time when Baltimore was eagerly seeking a catchy slogan to rebrand the city. In July 1974, the Baltimore Promotion Council, looking for a way “to lure tourists and conventions,” enlisted several advertising agencies to come up with a new slogan under the theme: “Baltimore has more history and unspoiled charm tucked away in quiet corners than most American cities put in the spotlight.” Using images such as the Washington Monument, “The Block,” and pictures of white marble steps, the campaign observed: “While the wrecking balls of other cities have been busy leveling tradition in the name of progress, Baltimore has been meticulously rerouting progress around its history.” The rhetoric of this pre-*Inner Harbor* redevelopment campaign came in response to the very recent defeat of the proposed highway extension that would have destroyed much of Federal Hill and Fells Point. As the “Charm City” campaign got further underway in 1975, Mayor William Donald Schaefer was pictured holding brochures with the Washington Monument, among other icons, on the cover. As the 1976 American bicentennial approached, the campaign was promoted as a link to Baltimore’s history with the expectation that many would be traveling through the city on their way to the national capital.<sup>33</sup>

Although the campaign focused on Baltimore’s “successful interplay of preservation and progress,” and promotional films featured the Washington Monument and Mount Vernon Place, what had made Baltimore “The Monumental City” was conspicuously absent in the dialogue. In fact, in the significant newspaper announcements of the campaign, that early designation was not even mentioned. By mid-1976 the campaign was thought to be a dud. According to the leadership of the Greater Baltimore Committee, there was not significant “buy-in” into the campaign, with some civic leaders claiming that it “seemed small townish.” By 1977 plans were underway to adopt a new slogan, “Baltimore than you know,” and others would follow to this day.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the initial disappointment in the “Charm City” marketing campaign, over the next four decades, as a number of other slogans came and went, this one

has had the longest staying power. Most subsequent campaigns focused on the newly built Inner Harbor, and by 2003 the harbor was thought to be the “natural” focus of any marketing strategy, even though defining the spirit of the city was thought to be a “Monumental task.” As the city approached the bicentennial of the War of 1812, the 1814 Battle of Baltimore, and the writing of “The Star-Spangled Banner” by Francis Scott Key, some, such as video documentarian Mike Wicklein, argued that these campaigns were futile, and that the city might be better served by using ideas expressed in Francis Scott Key’s National Anthem: “free and brave.” Wicklein, while acknowledging that “The Monumental City is an old tag that still applies and gets used,” did not make the connection that the very monuments that gave rise to the name “Monumental City” in fact stand for American democracy and its freedoms and honor those brave souls who fought to preserve them. As this article goes to press, the City of Baltimore has officially adopted yet another slogan, “Baltimore: Birthplace of The Star-Spangled Banner,” hoping to capitalize on the recent success of its bicentennial celebrations.<sup>35</sup>

As Wicklein noted, however, “The Monumental City” has never completely gone out of use. It seems to appear when Baltimoreans desire to evoke pride in their past, or when discussing the present, to challenge current cultural expressions to live up to the nationally important and recognized events of the past. What sets “The Monumental City” apart from modern slogans, is that unlike them it was not created by city “promoters” or branding campaigns. It was, in fact, begun by others outside the city, and even though originally ironic, at its core, the appellation recognized that Baltimore had accomplished something vitally important to the new nation—the erection of the first heroic monument to honor the father of American democracy and American nationhood.<sup>36</sup>

## NOTES

1. George W. Howard. *The Monumental City, Its Past History and Present Resources* (Baltimore: J.D. Ehlers & Co., 1873), 68.
2. Howard does not discuss the board that was formed to build the monument in the national capital, or its subsequent completion by the U.S. government; on this within the context of Robert Mills’s career, see John M. Bryan, *Robert Mills, America’s First Architect* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 289ff.
3. Howard. *The Monumental City*, 68. Howard’s account is generally accurate, but much more precise accounts have since been assembled.
4. A concise history focused on the monument remains J. Jefferson Miller II, “The Designs for the Washington Monument in Baltimore,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 23 (1964): 19–28. On the Baltimore Washington Monument within the context of Mills’s career, see Bryan, *Robert Mills*, 105ff. The earlier date of the sculptural memorial for the site made available by the eventual demolition of the courthouse was not known to the above authors. It is discussed in “Miscellany: Improvements in Baltimore, From the Baltimore *Evening Post*,” May 1, 1807, *Newburyport (Mass.) Herald*.

5. Miller, "Designs for the Washington Monument in Baltimore," 19, quotes from the original petition. See "An Act respecting a Monument or Statue to the memory of Washington," *Laws of Maryland, November Session 1809*, chap. 113. Miller, 23, quotes Mills's "American" qualifications. See the competition notice in "Monument to the Memory of General Washington," *Baltimore Patriot*, March 11, 1813. This lament regarding American sculptors and architects is repeated a decade later in "Opinions Abroad—American Painters," *Boston Commercial Gazette*, November 11, 1824.
6. Gilmor noted both of these concerns in his letter to Mills, May 2, 1814, as quoted in "Robert Mills and the Washington Monument in Baltimore," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 34 (1939): 159–60. Gilmor in his letters to Mills, August 7, 1814 and January 21, 1815, discusses his efforts with Howard, as published in "Robert Mills and the Washington Monument in Baltimore," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 35 (1940): 178, 179. The design as it stood at the time of the cornerstone laying is reproduced as the frontispiece of the publication documenting the entire ceremony. See *An Authentic Account of all the Proceedings on the Fourth of July, 1815, With Regard to Laying the Corner Stone of the Washington Monument, Now Erecting in the City of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1815).
7. *An Authentic Account of all the Proceedings*, 5–8. The complete text was published in the Baltimore newspapers and picked up in a number of American cities.
8. On the cornerstone contents see Yvonne Wenger, "Messages from long ago: Contents of Washington Monument time capsules revealed," *Baltimore Sun*, June 2, 2015. See "The 4th of July, 1815," in the *Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 6, 1815.
9. Although extensive documentation of the building of the monument survives in the Washington Monument Papers, MS. 873, MdHS, a detailed account of its construction is not provided in most standard modern sources on the column. The general patterns can be gleaned from the bills and receipts in the financial records, Box 4.
10. These ideas are explored in the author's work on Baltimore's Robert Gilmor Jr., who for many years was the president of the board of managers of the Washington Monument. For a cross-section of these ideas, see the Lance Humphries, "Gilmor, Nationalism, and National Organizations, in "Robert Gilmor, Jr. (1774–1848): Baltimore Collector and American Art Patron," (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1998), chapter 9. Most recently the author discussed these ideas in a lecture "Baltimore's Washington Monument and the Development of National Artistic Symbols in the New Republic," delivered at the George Washington Symposium "The Face of the Nation: George Washington, Art, and America," George Washington's Mount Vernon, November 2014.

Important early understandings of the emergence of culture in the United States include Lillian B. Miller's *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), reflecting the interpretations of its time in suggesting that Americans largely wanted to break away from European culture. Newer interpretations, including the author's and that in Gordon S. Wood's *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), suggest that these new Americans wanted to embrace all Old World culture and move it forward in whatever direction the emerging "new" American culture dictated. See especially Wood's Chapter 15, "The Rising Glory of America."

11. This discussion of Congress's plans for a monument to Washington is based on Vivien Greene Fryd, *Art & Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815–1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 62–63. The various proposals include: House, *Mausoleum to General Washington*, 6th Cong., 2d sess., December 19, 1800, American State Papers Miscellaneous, no. 138:215–16. Earlier discussions included: Senate, *Obsequies of General*

Washington, 6th Cong., 1st sess., December 23, 1799, American State Papers Miscellaneous, no. 115:191; House, *Statue and Monument to the Memory of General Washington*, 6th Cong., 1st sess., American State Papers Miscellaneous, no. 135:214; as cited in Fryd.

12. On the original proposal see Fryd, *Art & Empire*, 62. On the mausoleum see Kirk Savage, “The Self-made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, 22 (1987): 228–31. Savage does not address the issue of the intended sculpture, only the mausoleum.

13. The modern origins of this notion are discussed below. On the purpose of the visit see “Visit of the President of the U.S.,” *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, October 15, 1827, which reprinted the committee’s invitation letter to Adams and his response. See John Quincy Adams, entries for October 14–16, 1827, Diary 37, Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Adams noted his two-year-old promise on his final day in Baltimore, October 16.

14. On the North Point visit and the evening’s celebrations and his toast see Adams’s entry for October 16, 1827, Diary 37. The printed versions differ only slightly in punctuation and capitalization; see for instance “Baltimore, Wednesday, October 17, 1827,” in that date’s issue of the *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*. Adams’s Baltimore toast was reprinted in the papers of the significant East Coast cities as well as others. The assumptions about the spread of the phrase are made possible by the database of American Historical Newspapers created by Newsbank. The inquiry is of course limited by the accuracy of the OCR (Optical Character Recognition) used to create the word search terms from images of the scanned newspapers. On the erection of the North Point monument and these attributions, see the account of it in the column “Baltimore, July 28,” in the issue of that date, *Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*.

15. See the column “Saturday, February 8,” in the issue of that date, 1823, *Daily National Intelligencer*, hereafter *Intelligencer*. The assumption that this is the first use of the phrase is based on currently available newspapers in Newsbank’s American Historical Newspapers series, and the many scans of books and periodicals now available on Googlebooks. As other materials are scanned and made available this interpretation could change.

16. See the reprints in respectively, *Alexandria Herald*, February 10, 1823, and *Enquirer*, February 13, 1823.

17. See Robert Baird, *Impressions and Experiences of the West Indies and North America in 1849* (Edinburgh, 1850), 2:191. On the Mall see Richard Longstreth, ed., with a new introduction by Therese O’Malley, *The Mall in Washington, 1791–1991*, National Gallery of Art, Studies in the History of Art, vol. 30 (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2002).

18. Many nineteenth-century accounts discuss both the Battle and Washington Monuments (and mention other monuments), as did Baird, before making this observation. See his *Impressions and Experiences of the West Indies and North America in 1849*, 2:188. In 1845, when Baltimore was considering improving the public squares around the Washington Monument, it noted of the monument that it was “the proud column which has given our home the distinguished name of the ‘Monumental City.’” See *Journal of the Proceedings of the First Branch of the City Council of Baltimore, January Session, 1845* (Baltimore, 1845), 357. T. Addison Richards, writing of Baltimore, noted that the monument was “chief among the structures of this kind, from which Baltimore has won the name of the Monumental City.” See Richards’s *Appleton’s Illustrated Hand-Book of American Travel, Part II. The Southern and Western States, and the Territories* (New York, 1857), 199. At the end of this period Charles L. Shipley, writing in his “Monuments of the ‘Monumental City,’” *Book of the Royal Blue*, vol. 10, no. 12 (September 1907), 1, notes that the title arose from building the first monument to Washington. Notably he observed that more recently the title has been questioned because



other American cities now have as many if not more memorials than Baltimore. This early article hints at reasons why the sobriquet lost some of its potency in the twentieth century, especially as the nearby city of Washington, D.C. expanded its monumental core on the National Mall.

19. Several years later, on July 4, 1827, the residents of Boonsboro, Maryland, began erecting a memorial of rough-hewn stone on a prospect on the nearby South Mountain. Discussed in the local Hagerstown, Maryland, newspaper ("Washington's Monument, Near Boonsborough," *Torch Light*, July 12, 1827), the story was picked up by several papers available in American Historical Newspapers, but does not seem to have garnered much notice at the time. Its location in a rural setting did not lend itself to newspaper notices. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Boonsboro monument emerges in newspaper articles amid a debate over whether it or the Baltimore monument was the first. It has crumbled into a ruin and been rebuilt several times.

20. On the Battle Monument within Godefroy's career, see Robert L. Alexander, *The Architecture of Maximilian Godefroy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 101–12. On these specific details in the Battle Monument see name change, "City Ordinances, 18," *Baltimore Patriot*, February 28, 1822; plans for statue and work to be done, "The Baltimore Monument," *ibid.*, September 3, 1822; and statue raising, "The Battle Monument," *ibid.*, September 13, 1822.

21. See "Baltimore," which introduces the reprint of Carter's account penned in Lancaster, *Baltimore Patriot*, February 19, 1823. Carter's account was probably published in his own newspaper, but the 1823 editions of that paper are not among those scanned by Newsbank. Other than this Baltimore reprint, the article does not appear to have been picked up in its entirety by others available in the scanned collection, although an excerpt omitting the first paragraph where the monumental city is mentioned was published in *Spoooner's Vermont Journal* (Windsor, Vermont) on February 24, 1823. Carter's observation about the *Intelligencer* "fancifully" calling Baltimore "The Monumental City" is the most compelling evidence that this is, in fact, the earliest reference to the term.

22. See "To the Editors," *Intelligencer*, July 3, 1823; and Rowland's response in "To the Editors," in *ibid.*, July 23, 1823.

23. See "Chesapeake and Ohio Canal," and "Grand Union Canal Dinner," in the *Intelligencer*, November 11, 1823. These articles were picked up by many other papers including the *Baltimore Patriot*.

24. On 1824–1826 usage of the name, see "E. Bourne's Cash Store," *The [New York] Statesman*, August 3, 1824. This article was reprinted in the *Baltimore Patriot*, August 5, 1824, as well as a number of other papers. On Lafayette, see the untitled notice, *Baltimore Patriot*, August 9, 1824, an article that was reprinted in at least the Easton, Maryland, paper. Accounts of his visit use the term in other cities including "Gen. Lafayette," *Intelligencer*, October 9, 1824. On the Symmes visit, see the untitled notice in the *Baltimore Patriot*, May 20, 1826. On the frigate toast see "The Collation," *Intelligencer*, October 17, 1826.

25. On the other toasts, see "Fourth of July," *Hallowell [Maine] Gazette*, July 18, 1827, listing toasts held in various cities on the Fourth, and "Marion Rifle Crops," *Gloucester [Mass.] Telegraph*, July 21, 1827, reprinting a Georgetown (D.C.) notice. Adams noted that Gales was his visitor on October 16, 1827, *Diary* 37.

26. Thomas W. Griffith, *Annals of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1833), 265.

27. John H. B. Latrobe, *Picture of Baltimore, Containing a Description of all Objects of Interest in the City; and Embellished with Views of the Principal Public Buildings* (Baltimore, 1832), 182. In addition to the Washington and Battle Monuments, Latrobe included the Armistead

Monument. Frances Anne [Kemble] Butler, *Journal of a Residence in America* (Paris, 1835), 231–32.

28. See Nathaniel Parker Willis, *American Scenery; Or, Land, Lake, and River* (London, 1840), 2:92–93. The prints in the volume had been issued serially in the late 1830s. The Payne view is sometimes dated to 1844. It appears to have been issued in several versions, including one without the portrait in the middle. Charles Edward Lester, in 1845 discussing the Washington Monument in Baltimore and the recently completed Bunker Hill Monument, questioned whether the former was a “national” tribute, arguing that it was not “national” because it was not in the nation’s capital or sponsored by the federal government. See his *The Artist, the Merchant, and the Statesman, of the Age of the Medici, and of Our Own Times* (New York, 1845), 2:124–28. At the time his book was published, Mills’s monument in Washington had not yet been begun.

29. Though a comprehensive search is not possible, several of the most commonly used compilations and anecdotal histories have been examined, including: Brantz Mayer, ed. *Baltimore: Past and Present, With Biographical Sketches of its Representative Men* (Baltimore, 1871), mentions the term once (157). J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County, From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Representative Men* (1881; repr., Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1971), appears not to use the term. Clayton Coleman Hall, ed. *Baltimore: Its History and Its People*, 3 vols. (New York and Chicago: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912), used the term throughout to describe the city (often referring to Howard’s work), but uncredited. Letitia Stockett, *Baltimore: A Not Too Serious History* (1928; repr., Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) mentions (20) the title but does not provide a source. Francis F. Beirne, in his *The Amiable Baltimoreans* (1951; repr., Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) titles chapter 7 “The Monumental City” but does not discuss the origin of the name. Bierne, 102, notes that as of the date of publication the term was “seldom” heard. He states, probably incorrectly (94), that the term was used “quite as widely” as the name Mobtown, which modern book and newspaper search capabilities would seem to disprove.

30. Gobright’s volume was published in Baltimore by Gobright & Torsch, 1858. A number of turn-of-the-century publications have similar references; this reference is from Francis Andrew March and Francis Andrew March Jr., *A Thesaurus Dictionary of the English Language* (Philadelphia, 1906), p. 65 of the appendix section.

31. On the 1812 riots, see Paul A. Gilje, “The Baltimore Riots of 1812 and the Breakdown of the Anglo-American Mob Tradition,” *Journal of Social History*, 13 (1980): 556 and n55. Gilje cited Scharf’s 1881 volume as well as Beirne’s 1951 book on the term. Modern newspaper searching, unavailable to Gilje, seems to confirm that while there were earlier mobs in Baltimore, for instance in 1807 around the Luther Martin affair, “mobtown” was coined in 1812.

As with any historical newspaper search, this data is only as good as the OCR software used to scan the material. These assumptions are based on a search from 1812 to 1912 in all American newspapers available in American Historical Newspapers created by Newsbank. Several searches were conducted including “mobtown and Baltimore,” “‘mob town’ and Baltimore,” and “‘monumental city’ and Baltimore.” Other searches without Baltimore would increase the numbers, but, for instance, with “mobtown” it would include references to other cities called “mobtown”—which did occur. This data seems to refute notions about the pervasiveness of the term mentioned by Gilje, citing Beirne (who had stated that “mobtown” was frequently used).

32. Wilbur Harvey Hunter, “The Monumental City,” in *The Rinehart School of Sculpture 75th Anniversary Catalogue 1896–1971* (Baltimore: The Maryland Institute, College of Art and The

Peabody Institute of the City of Baltimore, 1971), 16, states “It is the first time I have discovered the use of the phrase as the sobriquet for Baltimore.” That this was new information is suggested in a review of the exhibition by Barbara Gold, “Monumental City’s Sculpture,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 4, 1971. Hunter’s discovery was solidified for future reference in his essay, “Baltimore in the Revolutionary Generation,” in John B. Boles, ed., *Maryland Heritage: Five Baltimore Institutions Celebrate the American Bicentennial* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1976), 231. Adams’s toast is rarely quoted with documentation, nor is the origin of his statement as “the first” rarely credited to Hunter. See for instance Cindy Kelly, *Outdoor Sculpture in Baltimore: A Historical Guide to Public Art in the Monumental City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 3, 59.

33. Modern slogans for the city are best explored in the *Baltimore Sun*, available through ProQuest. The *Sun* was not in existence in the 1820s when “The Monumental City” was coined. On “Charm City” and the timing of its origins, see: “Ads dub Baltimore ‘Charm City,’” *Baltimore Sun*, July 11, 1974; James D. Dilts, “Expressways to Spare Harbor Area,” *ibid.*, March 30, 1974; James A. Rousmaniere Jr., “‘Charm City’ gets 5-fold boost,” February 13, 1975; and Robert A. Erlandson, “Charm City is 2 Years Behind: Bicentennial Ad Goofs; Puts Key, Flag in 1812,” June 19, 1975; all in the *Sun*. Some of these and the slogans discussed below were not officially adopted by the City of Baltimore but were used by promotional offices.

34. On the presence of the Monument in the efforts, see “Charm City Premieres in Promotional Film,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 25, 1975; on the campaign’s perceived failure see “‘Charm City’ Ad Was Wallflower,” *ibid.*, May 30, 1976; and on the new campaign see Tracie Rozhon, “City Promotion Effort Is to be Reorganized,” *ibid.*, August 21, 1977.

35. Problems in branding the city are discussed in June Arney, “Monumental Task Finding Brand for City,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 17, 2003 (this article incorrectly puts the “Charm City” campaign in 1972); see Mike Wicklein, “Baltimore: Brave and Free,” *ibid.*, November 6, 2013; on the most current slogan see Yvonne Wenger, “New Baltimore Slogan Nods to City’s Star-Spangled History,” *ibid.*, January 12, 2015.

36. Wicklein, “Baltimore: Brave and Free.” The use of the phrase as a point of cultural pride is evident in Hunter’s 1971 essay and Gold’s review of it in the *Baltimore Sun*, as is also true of the title of Kelly’s 2011 book on sculpture. Expanding from this, Arney’s 2003 newspaper article on the branding of the city speaks to the challenges of living up to past successes.

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