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PRESIDENT'S PARK NOTES



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EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF GENERAL ANDREW JACKSON Lafayette Park, Washington, D.C.

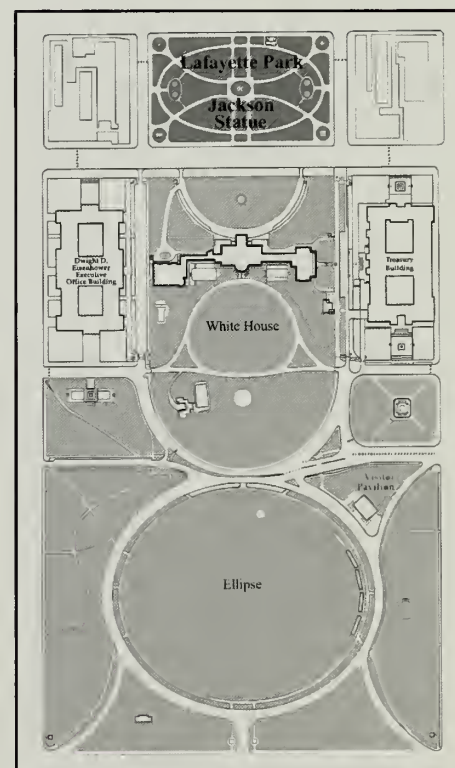
When the equestrian statue of General Andrew Jackson was unveiled on January 8, 1853, twenty thousand people crowded Lafayette Square to witness and celebrate the event. Participants in the dedication ceremonies included President Millard Fillmore, his cabinet, members of Congress, officers of the United States Army and Navy, and the statue's sculptor, Clark Mills. When he was introduced to the assembled throng, Mills, a little-known, self-taught, former house plasterer, was too overcome with emotion to speak. Instead, he pointed silently to his work.

Standing nine feet high and twelve feet long, and weighing fifteen tons, the statue depicts Jackson reviewing his troops on the morning of the Battle of New Orleans. His horse rears, anxious to move along the line, but Jackson calmly holds the reins and raises his hat in acknowledgment of his soldiers. The Battle of New Orleans secured Jackson's place in American history. From that day forward, he would be known as "the Hero of New Orleans," the

man whose leadership and gallantry preserved the Union against the invading British troops. For his part in the project, Clark Mills would become known for his creation of Jackson's likeness in Lafayette Park. His work was the first equestrian statue designed, cast, and erected in the United States, and he solved a problem—that of balancing his rearing horse entirely on its hind legs—that had thwarted even Leonardo da Vinci, perhaps the most celebrated artist of the Italian Renaissance.

The Conception of the Monument

Andrew Jackson (1767–1845) spent much of his life in public service. He was elected Tennessee's first member of the United States House of Representatives when the territory was granted statehood in 1796. He served two terms in the Senate and was military governor of the Florida territory. His military career included many battles



Site plan of President's Park indicating the location of the Jackson Statue in Lafayette Park.

fought against Native Americans, which resulted in the acquisition of vast areas of land for the United States. Jackson is best known, however, for his victory over the British at New Orleans on January 8, 1815, which effectively ended the War of 1812. Jackson defeated incumbent John Quincy Adams in the presidential election of 1828. As president, Jackson opposed re-chartering the Bank of the United States because he felt it was a tool of the privileged classes. In 1833, during his second term as president, Jackson strengthened the federal government by opposing the principle of nullification, by which individual states could repeal national laws with which they did not agree. Jackson occupied the presidency during a time of great change in American history, and his actions strengthened both the executive branch of the government and the United States as a nation.

Jackson died at the Hermitage, his home near Nashville, on June 8, 1845. Calls for a monument to his memory and achievements followed almost immediately. The July/August 1845 issue of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* demanded "a glorious monument to the glorious old man," and it had a specific type in mind: "A grand, colossal Equestrian Statue in bronze, at Washington, to be erected by a voluntary national subscription, is the proper monument for Jackson."

The editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* was John L. O'Sullivan of New York. On September 10, 1845, he accompanied Secretary of State James Buchanan to the President's House to meet with President James K. Polk. O'Sullivan, according to Polk's diary for that day, "read a paper, the object of which was to form a central committee at Washington, to raise by subscription a sum of \$100,000 or more for the erection of a monument to the memory of General Jackson." This paper was, no doubt, very similar to the editorial that had appeared in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. In conversation with Polk, however, O'Sullivan also proposed including the president, the vice president, and members of the cabinet in the organizing committee, an idea to which Polk initially agreed. Attorney General John Y. Mason objected to it later that day, arguing that the administration's involvement with the monument might be seen as an attempt to appropriate Jackson's popularity for the purposes of the administration. Polk agreed.

The first meeting of the Jackson Monument Committee was held five days later on September 15, 1845, at



John C. Calhoun by Clark Mills
Collection of City Hall, Charleston, South Carolina

seven-thirty in the evening at Apollo Hall in Washington, D.C. John P. Van Ness was named president of the committee, with Amos Kendall and John Boyle as first and second vice presidents, and James Hoban (the son of James Hoban, architect of the White House) and John Walker Maury as secretaries. After these officers were selected, Hoban read five resolutions that required voting. Three of the resolutions called for 1) the American people to build a monument to Jackson's memory, 2) the monument to be a colossal, bronze equestrian statue, and 3) the money to be raised by subscription. The final two resolutions named other members of the committee. Francis P. Blair was made treasurer, and Cave Johnson, Thomas Ritchie, John C. Rives, William A. Harris, Jesse E. Dow, Benjamin B. French, Charles K. Gardner, and Charles P. Sengstack were added to the officers already chosen. The resolutions were passed unanimously. Over the years Van Ness, Hoban, and Dow died before the statue was completed, and Harris resigned from the committee. Their

places were taken by John M. McCalla, George W. Hughes, Andrew J. Donelson, and George Parker. Not surprisingly, all the members of the committee were Jacksonian Democrats active during the administrations of Jackson or Polk.

Clark Mills

Mills was born in Onondaga County, New York, near Syracuse. Various dates have been recorded for his birth, with the earliest being December 13, 1810. Most histories of sculpture in the United States use either September 1 or December 1, 1815, as his birth date, although Mills' son Theophilus thought the year of his birth was 1816. Mills' father died when the boy was five. When he was thirteen, Mills ran away from the uncle with whom he lived, apparently due to ill treatment. As a young man, Mills was employed in many occupations: farm hand, lumber wagon driver, canal worker, cabinetmaker, millwright, and an employee in a plaster and cement mill.

Mills traveled to New Orleans around 1829. A year later he was in Charleston, South Carolina, where he worked throughout the 1830s as an ornamental house plasterer. During this time, Mills also began a family. He married Eliza Ballentine in 1837, and the first of his four children was born in 1839.

Mills' skills as a plasterer were so much in demand that he was able to hire his jobs out. This allowed Mills time to develop a new method of taking life masks that required less time and was more comfortable for the subject than were previous methods. These life masks were then used to create plaster busts of the subject. His work first gained public notice in the early 1840s, but he gained official recognition with a stone likeness of South Carolina senator John C. Calhoun, President Jackson's first vice president. Mills asked Calhoun to sit for a life mask in April 1845, and the bust was finished by

October. In July 1846, the Charleston City Council awarded Mills a gold medal for his efforts.

Mills' early success inspired patrons to offer him financial help—three Charlestonians pledged a total of \$1,000 to send him to study in Italy early in 1846—and he also earned the patronage of John S. and William C. Preston (a former senator) from Columbia, South Carolina. John Preston invited Mills to Columbia, where the young sculptor executed ten plaster busts of prominent South Carolinians. William Preston suggested that Mills go to Washington to study the sculpture there and to produce busts of his friends, and he offered to pay the sculptor's expenses. Mills probably left South Carolina for Washington sometime between April 1846, when it was reported that he would leave for Italy, and March 1847, when four busts that Mills created at William Preston's request were put on display in the Capitol.

In the Nation's Capital, Mills encountered Horatio Greenough's immense sculpture of George Washington, seated and dressed in a Roman toga. This monument apparently fixed his devotion to realistic depiction. Mills later said that after seeing Greenough's statue, he decided that if he ever had the opportunity to create such a work, he would rather be criticized for being too realistic than not realistic enough. His pledge agreed with the wishes of the Jackson Monument Committee. Circulars printed to aid in the subscription drive for the statue stated that the committee sought a realistic depiction of Jackson at the time that he rendered his highest service to the United States: defending New Orleans against the British.

The Jackson Statue

The Jackson Monument Committee hoped to cast the statue from cannons that Jackson had captured in his military campaigns, but test castings using these cannons yielded unsatisfactory results due to the metal's high tin content. As a result, the statue was cast using copper and brass supplied by the United States Navy.

The statue rests on a simple marble pedestal that is eight feet six inches high, sixteen feet four inches long, and eight feet three inches wide. Horse and rider face west, but their heads are turned slightly towards the south. On the upper right side of the south face of the pedestal is carved CLARK MILLS, SCULPTOR. On the west face is carved JACKSON.

Below the general's name is inscribed a toast that Jackson offered at a banquet celebrating the anniversary of Thomas Jefferson's birthday in 1830: OUR FEDERAL UNION-IT MUST BE PRESERVED. The toast was added to the pedestal in 1909 when Andrew White informed President Theodore Roosevelt that it had been left off when the sculpture was originally constructed. White seems to have been in error, however, because Congressman Edward Stanly of North Carolina reported seeing the inscription during congressional debate on funding the completion of the pedestal in January 1853.

What happened to the inscription between the time Stanly saw it and the time White reported it missing? Two possibilities exist. One commentator concluded that the inscription simply had worn off by Roosevelt's presidency. The second possibility is that the inscription had been included originally, but then it was subsequently removed. The pedestal was not finished when the statue was dedicated, as suggested by appropriations made in March 1853 and May 1854 to complete it. A second piece of stone was delivered in late July 1853 to finish the sides of the pedestal, according to a contemporary newspaper report. The pedestal's incomplete condition at the time of the dedication and the delivery of the stone for its sides raise the possibility that Jackson's quote appeared on the pedestal in some impermanent form, such as a banner, and was then left off the completed pedestal. Also, Jackson's quote may have been included on the core of the pedestal when the statue was unveiled in January, but then covered up when Mills resurfaced the base that summer.

Although cannons could not be used to fabricate the statue itself, four cannons that Jackson had captured at Pensacola on May



*George Washington by Horatio Greenough
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Transfer from the U.S. Capitol*

28, 1818, stand at the corners of the pedestal. The Jackson Monument Committee requested that these cannons be placed at the base of the statue on July 15, 1850, and they appear in an 1849 rendering of the proposed monument. The cannons are not evident in the earliest lithograph of the statue, published by April 1853, but the cannon tubes, without their carriages, appear in the earliest photograph

of the statue, which is thought to date to 1853.

All four of the cannons were fashioned by Josephus Barnola at the Spanish royal foundry in Madrid. Two on the north side were made in 1748 and inscribed with the names *El Witiza* and *El Egica*, who were Visigoth kings of Spain. The two cannon on the south side are called *El Apolo* and *El Aristeo* after Greek gods and were made

by Barnola in 1773. Each cannon and its wooden carriage weigh approximately 870 pounds together. The tubes themselves weigh 300 pounds each. The two 1748 cannon are sixty-four inches long, and the two 1773 cannon are seventy inches long. Research has shown that at the time of the battle at Pensacola, the cannon carriages were probably the same pale, bluish gray hue that they are painted today. *El Apolo* is inscribed near its mouth with details of the surrender of the cannon to Jackson at Pensacola. It is not known whether this inscription was placed there shortly after the battle or when the cannon were chosen for use in the monument.

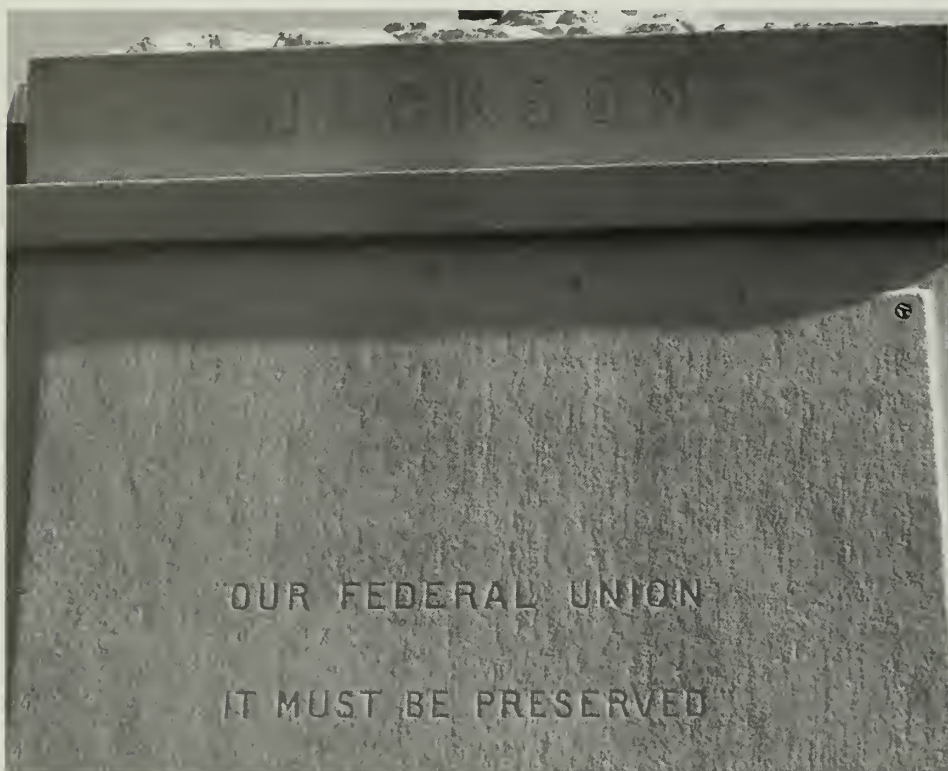
Congressional appropriations for the pedestal were made on August 31, 1852, March 3, 1853, and again on May 31, 1854. The last two mention the inclusion of an iron fence to surround the statue. This fence appears in the earliest photograph of the statue taken in 1853. The last payment from appropriations for the statue and its pedestal took place on May 14, 1856. All told, Congress appropriated \$28,500 for the Jackson statue (\$8,500 was for the pedestal, and Mills received \$20,000 for his fee and materials after the statue's completion). Expenditures exceeded appropriations by \$442.53, bringing the cost to the government to \$28,942.53. The Jackson Monument Committee paid Mills \$12,000 for creating the monument.

Execution of the Statue

On May 12, 1847, the *Charleston (South Carolina) Courier* reported that the Jackson Monument Committee had agreed to Mills' proposal to produce a model for the Jackson statue. Cave Johnson had invited Mills to submit a design for the project, but Mills initially refused since he had never before seen an equestrian statue. The young sculptor soon changed his mind. Mills returned to Charleston to create the model, and by the beginning of July he had fashioned the horse. He left Charleston by steamer with the completed model on March 7, 1848. Two weeks later, on March 22, Mills and the committee signed a contract to execute the statue, and the model was placed on exhibit at the Post Office Building in Washington.

Two other artists were considered for the Jackson statue commission. On September 19, 1845, the *Courier* repro-

The cannon at the northwest corner is *El Egica*, named for a Visigoth king of Spain, and fashioned at the royal foundry in Madrid by Josephus Barnola in 1748. This cannon with the others around the pedestal were surrendered to Jackson at Pensacola in 1818.



duced in part a letter from sculptor Hiram Powers that had been published in the *Nashville Union*. Responding to a request from Mr. William Harris of Tennessee, Powers estimated that a bronze equestrian statue of the general would cost \$30,000 total, with \$12,000 to \$15,000 for the casting alone. Since Powers was working in Leghorn, Italy, the inquiry must have been made long before the Jackson Monument Committee was organized. A bust also seems to have been requested since in his response the sculptor said he had “not sent off my bust of Jackson. I must retouch the drapery of it.” Another artist who sketched ideas for a Jackson monument was Robert Mills, who designed the Treasury Building while Jackson was president and who designed monuments to George Washington that are still in the Nation’s Capital and Baltimore. His drawings show a triumphal arch 130 feet high topped by a statue of General Jackson.

The *Charleston Courier* reported that the committee was pleased with both the model and “the terms on which [Clark

Mills] proposes to cast the statue.” Both of these factors may indicate why more established artists such as Powers and Robert Mills did not receive the commission. Powers’ reference to his statue’s “drapery,” rather than to a uniform, suggests that he planned a classicized portrait of Jackson, perhaps one similar to his 1835 bust of Jackson. This might have conflicted with the committee’s desire for a realistic portrayal. Money probably played an equally important role. The committee had raised \$12,000 for the completion of the statue—far short of their goal of \$100,000 and less than half of what Powers had estimated would be the cost. Neither could Robert Mills’ triumphal arch have been built for \$12,000. The committee considered contracting with Powers for a non-equestrian statue of Jackson, but Clark Mills’ model and his willingness to secure the execution of the statue won him the contract. While no copy of the contract has been found, congressional documents associated with the monument reveal aspects of it: the statue was to be one-third

larger than life, completed in two years from the date of the contract, and erected in Washington.

Having won the commission, Clark Mills faced the daunting challenge of designing and casting the statue itself, a goal made more difficult by his own inexperience and by the state of the fine arts and metalworking in the United States at the time. Renowned sculptors Hiram Powers and Horatio Greenough were working in Italy, and patrons urged Mills to go there, so he could study the great masterworks of sculpture and seek training from established artists. Nearly all of the monumental sculpture Mills would have seen in Washington at that time was created either by Europeans or by Americans residing in Europe. The only other equestrian statue previously erected in the United States—that of King George III, which had stood in New York City—had been made of lead and had been designed and cast in London by Joseph Wilton. Erected in 1770, it was melted down to make bullets during the Revolutionary War.

From the beginning, Mills sought to create a rearing horse balancing on its hind legs with no support from its tail or other props, a challenge that had foiled European artists for centuries. On two occasions, Leonardo da Vinci prepared preliminary plans for a statue in such a stance, but in both instances he finally decided to depict a walking horse. Other European sculptors, such as Gianlorenzo Bernini in the seventeenth century, had portrayed rearing horses, but they had always used props to keep the horse upright.

With no statuary to use as a guide, the young sculptor turned to nature as his tutor. He built a small, wooden structure at the corner of Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue (where the statue of General William T. Sherman now stands) as a residence and workshop, and he brought there a live horse. The *Washington Daily Union* reported that the horse, called Olympus, was a registered thoroughbred, and Mills had trained it to stand on its hind legs so he might study it. Mills was also said to have dissected dead racehorses to study their musculature.

The full-size model of the horse was completed by March 1849, and Mills applied the same diligence in his study of its rider. He carefully examined Jackson’s uniform, which was then held at the Patent Office, as well as the general’s saddle, holsters, bridle, and boots. He is thought to have had access to at least one and possibly two busts of Jackson created during the general’s lifetime. Mills completed his



Robert Mills’ sketch design for a monument to President Andrew Jackson (1845)
Papers of Robert Mills, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress

model of both horse and rider either by the end of 1849 or the beginning of 1850. The sculptor solved the problem of balancing the figures on the horse's hind legs by placing the statue's center of gravity directly over the horse's hind feet. The model was so well balanced that Mills, who weighed 156 pounds, hung from the horse's forelegs for a reporter, and still the statue did not topple.

Once the model was finished, Mills began to build a furnace in which to cast the statue. He later wrote that since knowledge of bronze casting did not exist in the United States, he was forced to learn from books and from his own experiments, a process that did not always go smoothly. Although Mills hit on a new and ultimately successful idea to conserve heat by building the furnace partially underground, an early batch of molten bronze leaked through joints in the furnace's bricks, forcing Mills to rebuild the furnace. The *Charleston Courier* reported on May 8, 1850, that Mills would be ready to begin casting the statue "in the course of a few weeks."

To fabricate Jackson's statue, Mills probably used the casting procedure known as the *cire-perdue*, or lost wax, method. In this centuries-old process, the sculptor first creates sections of the statue in clay or plaster. Wax is built up over the mold to the desired thickness of the final bronze cast and is sculpted to the finished form. A network of wax conduits is attached to the hardened wax form to allow the wax to escape when it is heated. Clay is applied over the wax and the whole is heated. The melted wax escapes, or is "lost," through the vents. Molten bronze is then poured into the space left by the wax. After the bronze has cooled and hardened, the inside and outside molds are removed. The bronze sections are cleaned, polished, and assembled into the final sculpture. Newspaper reports differed in their accounts of whether Mills' model was made of clay or plaster, and no papers have been found from the artist himself on the subject. It is impossible to determine from which material he made his model or if he fashioned it first from plaster to achieve the likeness he desired and then from clay to create the molds.

On February 19, 1847, before Mills' model had been accepted, the Jackson Monument Committee petitioned Congress for cannons captured during Jackson's military campaigns from which to make the statue. The petition, or "memorial," requested four brass cannons and two brass mortars, totaling 4,930 pounds. It included confirmation from an army ordnance officer that the guns

requested came from Jackson's victory over the Spanish at Pensacola in 1818 and that they were "unserviceable." The memorial stressed the appropriateness of using cannons captured during Jackson's campaigns and cited Napoleon's column in the Place Vendôme in Paris and Duke of Wellington's equestrian statue in London as precedents. The Senate tabled the measure in 1847, but it was introduced again in the summer of 1848. After the resolution was amended to exclude cannons considered national trophies, both houses of Congress passed it on August 11, 1848. This resolution also gave the president authority to determine where in the city the statue would be placed.

The issue of which cannons, if any, would be melted down for use in casting the statue was not finally resolved for another two years. On July 15, 1850, the committee stated that the cannons, as works of art, were worthy of preservation and requested that other unserviceable cannons that were not national trophies be supplied for use. The cannons that originally had been delivered, ones Jackson had captured at Pensacola, bore the Latin inscription *Violati Regis Fulmina*, which one congressman translated as "the thun-

ders of an invincible king." The petition asked that these be placed at the base of the Jackson monument to show "how harmless are the thunderbolts of kings when hurled at the men of iron, whose armor is the patriotism inspired by the Republic" (*Congressional Globe*, 31st Congress, 1st session, July 16, 1850, p. 1372). Both houses passed the resolution on July 29, 1850.

It was at this point that Mills discovered that the cannons delivered to him for the statue contained too much tin to be useful in casting the statue. In September 1850, Congressman Abraham Watkins Venable of North Carolina asked the House to consider a resolution that would exchange the second group of cannon delivered to Mills for copper and brass. Both the House and the Senate passed the resolution on September 20, 1850.

Mills made several tests, including a bust of Apollo and a bell, before casting the Jackson statue. In late September or early October of 1850, he began casting the statue itself, but unforeseen complications soon arose. At one point the crane used for raising and lowering the sculpture from the furnace broke. At another, the furnace itself exploded. Six attempts were



made before the horse was cast in four pieces. The figure of Jackson was cast in six pieces. The entire statue was completed by January 2, 1853.

On August 31, 1852, Congress appropriated \$5,000 for the erection of a pedestal for the Jackson statue based on a plan approved by Mills. The sculptor, not satisfied simply to approve the plan of another, wrote to Secretary of the Interior Alexander H.H. Stuart on September 22 asking for control of the entire project. The secretary concurred with this request. Thus, in the three months before the Jackson monument was to be unveiled, Mills busied himself with both casting the statue and supervising the erection of the pedestal on which it would stand. By January 2, 1853, Mills' statue of Jackson, covered in a protective frame, rested on the ground next to its pedestal in Lafayette Square.

Placing the Statue

While the president was given the authority to designate the site where the statue would be placed, no appropriate presidential proclamation or executive order exists from any of the three presidents—James K.

Polk, Zachary Taylor, and Millard Fillmore—who occupied the President's House during the statue's creation. No pertinent letter from one of these presidents to either the Commissioner of Public Buildings or the Secretary of the Interior has been found among the papers in the National Archives. Neither has evidence been found that identifies either the individuals involved in placing the statue or the date this decision was made.

It might be thought, since the Jackson monument was conceived during Polk's administration and indeed was given early life in the president's office, that Jackson's protégé might have wished to see his mentor's likeness from his front door. Mills' studio, built near the grounds of the White House, indicates Polk's support for the monument and perhaps foreshadowed a nearby location for the completed statue. Bolstering this conclusion is Polk's removal of David d'Angers' statue of Thomas Jefferson from the Capitol to the north side of the President's House in 1847. The placement of the Jefferson and Jackson statues opposite each other might indicate Polk's desire to honor publicly his political forefathers. It is also true that

three members of Polk's cabinet (Vice President George Dallas, William Marcy, and George Bancroft) and three members of the Jackson Monument Committee (Rives, Blair, and Ritchie) lived on the square during Polk's presidency. Placing Jackson's statue near so many prominent Jacksonian Democrats perhaps, then, should not be surprising.

The earliest published reference to the placement of the Jackson statue dates from the last days of Polk's presidency. On December 11, 1848, the *National Intelligencer* reported that it was "to occupy the centre of Lafayette Square, in front of the President's House." Not until Fillmore's administration does a government official mention the placement of the Jackson statue. In his annual report to Congress dated March 3, 1851, Commissioner of Public Buildings Ignatius Mudd requested funds for the improvement of Lafayette Square. "Its location," Mudd wrote, "independently of the fact that it is set apart for the reception of the equestrian statue to General Jackson, makes it particularly desirable that it should be promptly improved." Congress recognized Lafayette Square as the site of Jackson's statue when it appropriated \$5,000 for the pedestal on August 31, 1852.

At that time Lafayette Square had just undergone a transformation. A bird's-eye view of the President's House and the surrounding area in the mid-1840s shows that an allee of trees divided the square along the Sixteenth Street axis. In 1851, however, William Wilson Corcoran, a financier and resident of Lafayette Square, and Joseph Henry, first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, convinced President Fillmore to hire Andrew Jackson Downing to redesign the Mall and the grounds around the President's House, and Lafayette Square came under his jurisdiction. Downing, then a renowned horticulturist and author in America, designed Lafayette Square to reflect his own philosophy of natural beauty. In his scheme paths wound through dense plantings of trees and shrubs in picturesque curves quite different from the strong geometry of Pierre L'Enfant's neoclassical plan for the city.

Downing died in July 1852, ending the momentum of his designs for the public areas of Washington, but much of his plan for Lafayette Square seems to have been carried out. In his annual report dated February 20, 1852, Commissioner of Public Buildings William Easby stated that an appropriation of \$3,000 for Lafayette Square had been spent under Downing's direction. Before the year was out, \$5,500



more was spent on walks and plantings in the square, presumably following Downing's design. Calvert Vaux, Downing's business partner, wrote to a Marshall P. Wilder on August 18, 1852, that the square was nearly completed by the time of Downing's death.

The Dedication

On January 8, 1853, the thirty-eighth anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, the sky over Washington was clear, the temperature more like Indian summer than mid-winter. George W. Hughes, the chief marshal of the parade, gathered sixty-two assistants at the National Hotel, then moved to City Hall on Judiciary Square to organize and lead the participants in the procession. The marshals, followed by a military escort of nine different units and military bands, headed the column that moved from City Hall down 4 1/2 Street, (which no longer exists) to Pennsylvania Avenue and then toward Lafayette Square. Behind the marshals and the military escort came the Jackson Monument Committee and Mills, followed by Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois, who would deliver the day's oration, the chaplains of the House of Representatives and the Senate, city officials, members of Congress, and General Winfield Scott, the Commander in Chief of the Army, and his staff. Entering the White House grounds on the northeast, the procession followed the semicircular drive to the North Portico to salute President Fillmore and his cabinet, who then joined the cortege. The military units circled Lafayette Square to come in through the H Street entrance, while the civil procession crossed Pennsylvania Avenue and approached the square on the south side.

Douglas began his oration with remarks on the tradition of monumental statuary, citing Trajan's Column and the statue of Marcus Aurelius in Rome as examples, and ended with a long tribute to Jackson himself. As reported in the *Washington Daily Union* the next day, he spoke about Mills and his statue.

The statue before you ... is the work of a young, untaught American. I can not call him an artist. He never studied nor copied. He never saw an equestrian statue, nor even a model. It is the work of inborn genius aroused to energy by the triumphant spirit of liberty which throbs in the great heart of our continent—which creates the power of great conceptions, the aspiration and the will, the mental faculty and the manual skill,



to eternize the actors who ennoble the country, by giving their forms and expressions to imperishable materials.

After Douglas' speech, and amid shouts from the assembled spectators, Mills was introduced. His hair had turned gray while executing the statue, and he was so overcome with emotion that he could not respond to the cheers of the crowd, except by merely pointing to his covered statue. The frame was knocked away and Jackson was unveiled. The bands saluted the statue and its creator with military music. Taylor's Battery, one of the military units in the parade, answered the music with its guns. Cheers from spectators in the square and on the surrounding rooftops resounded once more. The ceremonies ended with a benediction from the chaplain of the House of Representatives and the withdrawal of the military units.

That evening the Jackson Democratic Association held a banquet in Jackson Hall, the headquarters of Blair and Rives' *Congressional Globe* on Pennsylvania Avenue. The Greek Revival building's soaring, second-floor halls were decorated with numerous flags, as well as with an engraving of Thomas Sully's portrait of Jackson and George Healy's portrait of President-elect Franklin Pierce. Mills, Stephen Douglas, George W. Hughes,

James Buchanan, Amos Kendall, and Thomas Ritchie were among those present. Rounds of toasts, accompanied by music, began at 9:30 and lasted until midnight. Attendees praised, among others, Jackson, President-elect Pierce, Douglas, the Constitution, the Army and the Navy, the American people, and Clark Mills. Among the more eloquent toasts to the sculptor was that given by William H. Minnix.

Clark Mills: Like the rivulet whose source is hidden in the shadows of the mountain-side, and glides on silent and unseen until it expands into the broad and majestic river—so the genius of Mills, nurtured in obscurity, has this day found vent in the execution of a work which for grandeur of conception and beauty of finish is unrivalled in the productions of art, and challenges the admiration of the world. [*Washington Daily Union*, January 14, 1853]

Mills' Later Career

Mills went \$7,000 into debt creating the statue of Jackson, but on March 3, 1853, Congress voted to pay him \$20,000 for his work. That summer the sculptor purchased property on Bladensburg Road in northeast



Mill's [sic] Colossal Equestrian Statue of General Andrew Jackson, published by Thomas Sinclair 1858. For artistic purposes, Jackson's toast, is inscribed on the north side of the pedestal. Today the inscription is located on the west side of the pedestal, as one faces Jackson. Original engraving, Library of Congress.

Washington, where he constructed a residence and a new foundry. His wife and children joined him there from Charleston.

It was at this foundry that Mills later designed and cast the equestrian statue of George Washington, today located at Washington Circle on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was unveiled there on February 22, 1860. He also received commissions to make two copies of the Jackson statue. One was dedicated in New Orleans on February 9, 1856, the other in Nashville on January 8, 1880. From 1860 to 1862, Mills worked on casting Thomas Crawford's statue of *Freedom*, which was placed atop the

new dome of the Capitol in December 1862.

Mills created a life mask of Abraham Lincoln two months before the president's assassination in 1865, and in the late 1870s he made casts of Native Americans at Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, and at St. Augustine, Florida. At approximately this same time he embarked on a plan to create a monument dedicated to Lincoln. The memorial never progressed beyond a sketch, but it would have consisted of thirty-six figures on five levels. Mills last appeared publicly at the dedication of the Jackson statue in Nashville. He died of heart disease on January 12, 1883.

Critical Reception of the Statue

The *Charleston Courier*, in reporting on the full-scale model for the Jackson statue on May 8, 1850, wrote that "the excellency and originality of the work consists in its being self-balanced, in a rearing position." Other early writers followed this line of praise and added a patriotic note. A letter to the editor of the *Washington Daily Union*, published on January 9, 1853, called the statue "a monument of Jackson's virtues, as well as of the triumph of American art." The writer compared Mills' accomplishment in balancing Jackson on his rearing horse to the invention of the steamboat and the telegraph.



Earliest known photograph of the Jackson Statue, ca. 1853.
Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Library

Mills' technical innovations, however, did not appeal to some critics. "Who cares forsooth," wondered the writer of a letter published in the June 1853 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, "whether Mr. Mills's horse stands firmly on two legs? who[sic] will care a hundred years hence?" Other critics agreed that those who praised the statue had confused mechanical skill and artistic ability.

It should be remembered that at this time American artists were struggling to define a uniquely American style. Just as Mills was criticized for emphasizing the mechanical over the artistic, Greenough and Powers were chastised for being too European in their adherence to classical standards of beauty. Newspaper writers also praised Mills for his determination in overcoming the long odds against his success, for learning the craft of bronze casting without instruction, and for building his own foundry with little help from others. Perhaps Mills' work did not illustrate a strong aesthetic sensibility, but it did help advance naturalism as the reigning style in American art, and it embodied the spirit of inventiveness that was then flourishing on the continent.

Continuity and Change

In March 1880, Mills requested equipment to lower the Jackson statue from its pedestal, presumably to clean and perhaps repair it. Except for brief removals for maintenance, the statue has occupied the center of Lafayette Square ever since its dedication. From time to time, however, efforts have been made to move the statue.

The logic of having Jackson's statue in a square named for Lafayette was first questioned when the statue of the French general was placed there in 1891. Six years earlier, in 1885, Congress appropriated \$50,000 for such a statue. A committee comprised of the Secretary of War, the chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library, and the Architect of the Capitol was given authority to determine its site. It decided to place the statue in Lafayette Square at a spot midway along its Pennsylvania Avenue boundary, that is, between the President's House and the Jackson statue. By the time Tennessee senator William Brimmage Bate discovered the intended site in the spring of 1890, the foundation for the pedestal had already been built. One of his chief complaints was that the Lafayette statue would obstruct the view of Jackson. Bate convinced Congress to keep the view of Jackson from the White House clear, and on May 13, 1890, he introduced the first of four resolutions that ultimately moved

Lafayette's statue to the southeast corner of Lafayette Square.

Others have questioned the illogic in having Jackson's statue in Lafayette Square, especially when the statues of generals Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Jean de Rochambeau, and Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben—all Revolutionary War heroes of foreign birth—were placed at the other corners of the square early in the twentieth century. On several occasions the suggestion was raised that the positions of Mills' statues of Jackson and Washington be switched, thus reuniting the Revolutionary War heroes and giving Jackson his own green space.

The Commission of Fine Arts was created in 1910 to deal with such aesthetic issues, and it remained consistent in its defense of the Jackson statue and its placement. Two of the greatest concerns were the historical importance of the Jackson statue and the perceived incompatibility of its realism with the neoclassical architecture seen elsewhere in the Federal City. This defense was first voiced in 1917. In the late winter of that year, Colonel William W. Harts, Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds for the Army Corps of Engineers, received a request from Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson to examine the possibility of

moving Jackson's statue to a position near the Treasury Building. Harts responded on March 12, 1917, with cost estimates and two photographic studies showing Mills' statue on both the north and the south sides of the Treasury Building. He told Burleson, however, that the Commission of Fine Arts was opposed to moving the Jackson statue because the building and statue were from different periods and in different styles and therefore would not be aesthetically pleasing.

Charles Moore, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, defended the placement of the Jackson statue, even though he did not have high regard for it. In 1925, in correspondence with a W.O. Hart, who was investigating the possibility of obtaining a copy of the Jackson statue for the city of Jacksonville, Florida, Moore wrote that the people of Jacksonville would not be satisfied with a copy: "They are too proud and the statues too poor." Jacksonville finally obtained its copy of the Jackson statue in 1987.

Moore's remarks and the attitude they reveal may have prodded congressmen to imagine the Commission wanted to move the Jackson statue even when that was not its intention. On August 3, 1920, Moore wrote to James Beauchamp "Champ" Clark and corrected a statement made by



the Missouri congressman in a speech. Clark thought the Commission of Fine Arts had occasionally tried to move the statue, but Moore pointed out that the commissioners unanimously opposed the move in 1917, the only time it had been brought before them. Three years later, Moore wrote to Tennessee senator Kenneth McKellar to convey the same message. In 1940, McKellar and Joel Clark, Champ Clark's son, stood up to another imagined attempt in the Senate to move the Jackson statue, while Illinois congressman Kent Keller did the same in the House.

Even President Franklin Roosevelt made an effort to remove the statue of Jackson from Lafayette Square. On January 18, 1934, Roosevelt sent a memorandum to Moore that proposed a more adequate monument for Jackson. Moore pointed out that the statue, the first equestrian monument designed and erected in the United States, was an outstanding achievement in American art. He added that it would be difficult to find another satisfactory site for its placement. The last major attempt to move the Jackson statue came in 1961, when plans to redevelop buildings around Lafayette Park were proposed. Through First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's efforts, these plans were not carried out, and instead the historic character of the buildings and the park was preserved.

The Statue in Its Landscape

Andrew Jackson Downing's plan, dating from the mid-nineteenth century, remained the guide for Lafayette Square until the late 1930s. The only significant change concerning the Jackson statue related to the original foundation for the Lafayette monument. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1891, the Army Corps of Engineers removed the granite sub-base of the foundation, which was twenty-five feet nine inches square, and covered this bare space with plants. A variety of plantings, including palms, tropical plants, yucca, evergreens, ivy, and flowers, was placed on this spot every summer for the rest of the century.

A planting plan for the square, dated March 14, 1925, submitted by landscape architect Irving W. Payne and approved by the Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds, showed that this area was to be planted with grass that spring. At around the same time, the plants on the south side of Lafayette Square were moved, thereby improving the view of the statue from Pennsylvania Avenue.

The 1925 planting plan for the central section of Lafayette Park includes the idea of a mall or planted strip along the Sixteenth Street axis, and this strip began to take shape over the next few years. At the same time, the meandering curves of Downing's plan gave way to simpler parabolas, and his elliptical secondary walks disappeared altogether. The work of simplifying Downing's original plan began with a recommendation by the Commission of Fine Arts in 1921 and received a significant boost from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1936–37. Low hedges were planted to help define the squared-off walk around the statue. Fine tuning of the WPA adjustment to Downing's original scheme continued when architect John Carl Warnecke was hired in 1962 to devise a plan to save the nineteenth-century townhouses on the square, a move instigated by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. Warnecke's plans were carried out during the administrations of Presidents Johnson and Nixon. In 1970, the two urns that had been installed in the square in 1872 were moved from their positions near the east and west entrances to the park to the Pennsylvania Avenue border. Flanking the central walks, they framed the view of the Jackson statue.

Plans contained among National Park Service records show that in 1952 four planting schemes were devised for the mound inside the iron railing around the Jackson statue. One plan, approved on April 18, 1952, has pink and white azaleas punctuated with roses on the east and west curves of the fenced oval surrounding the statue. A document titled "Existing Planting Plan" and dated August 29, 1958, however, shows no plants of any kind around the statue. Photographs taken in 1984 and 1992 show azaleas in the east and west curves of the oval. The azaleas proved to be havens for burrowing rodents that tunneled through the ground around the statue. To end this problem and to return the oval to its historical appearance, the azaleas were removed in 1994.

Maintenance

Although the Jackson statue is made of "imperishable" bronze, the statue and its cannons have always required maintenance. The cannons' carriages were replaced during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1877, perhaps the first time this procedure was necessary. Since the French Gribeauval carriages are made of wood, replacement would be required many times over the years. And as mili-

tary technology changed, replacing the increasingly obsolete carriages became more problematic and costly. In August 1901, the Ordnance Department of the Army replaced the carriages without charge. By 1915, however, "reconditioned" wheels cost \$150.

Also in 1915, the reconditioned wheels were placed on concrete blocks, which may have helped increase their life span somewhat. Experience has shown that the wheels and tailpiece—those parts of the carriages in contact with the ground—are the first to deteriorate, and the gun carriages have had to be replaced regularly. This was last done in 2000, when the oak carriages were replaced by mahogany ones at the National Park Service, Historic Preservation Training Center in Frederick, Maryland. The cannon tubes themselves underwent conservation at this time, and cannon and carriages were delivered to Lafayette Park on October 27, 2000.

Anchoring the carriage wheels to concrete blocks also helped secure them. In 1913, Washington resident Thomas B. O'Hagan wrote to the White House to say that the cannon were unplugged and dangerous. Colonel Harts responded to O'Hagan by saying that the cannon were not believed to be a danger, but to make certain the touchholes would be plugged. The muzzles of the cannon are also plugged, but it is uncertain whether or not this took place at the same time that the touchholes were plugged.

Visitors to Lafayette Park, and especially local residents who frequent it, have always been a source of information about the condition of the statue. On October 24, 1929, Major Alex. C. Soper, Jr., of the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, wrote to Lieutenant Colonel U.S. Grant III, U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers, Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Public Parks, to report that Jackson's saber was hanging precariously by one of its two chains. The chains were promptly fixed, but Soper again wrote to Grant on November 1 to report that the sword was not affixed to the statue correctly. Soper's complaint was that the upper chain crossed Jackson's leg to his saddle holster and the sword was further attached to the saddlecloth by a rivet. Both of these devices, if actually used at the Battle of New Orleans, would have prevented Jackson from dismounting. Although officials concluded that the sword was attached as Mills had originally intended it, they decided to attach the upper chain to Jackson's waist belt, as Soper felt was proper, and to tone down the rivet head on Jackson's saddlecloth.

The upper chain remains attached to the general's waist belt under his left arm, but the second chain, secured to the waist at Jackson's back, is no longer attached to the sword.

In 1975 a report on the Jackson statue stated that "interior corrosion of the steel is forcing the bronze outer covering to crack, exposing more steel and speeding the corrosion process." The report recommended sealing the steel and restoring the bronze. Concern had also been expressed that structural damage might have taken place in the hind legs. In 1993, boroscopic tests, which involved placing a camera inside the statue, were taken of the statue's cavity to determine the extent of interior deterioration.

These tests found that the corroded bronze had been removed from the statue in three places, exposing the inner core. Two on the right leg are small: one inch by three or four inches. The other, on the left foreleg, is larger, more than a foot long and three inches wide. The examination revealed that the body of the horse is 1 1/2 inches thick in places, which is much heavier than expected, based on historical casting methods. It also found that the casting is not supported by any type of skeleton but instead relies on the thickness of the bronze for strength. The tests provided significant clues as to how Mills may have balanced the horse on its hind legs. From the knee down the hind legs are composed of what appears to be solid cast iron that was then covered with bronze. This would have contributed additional weight to this part of the statue and provided more stability to the entire sculpture. These tests concluded that, in general, the bronze is in a surprisingly good state of preservation. The report also noted that Jackson's stirrups are missing, and the straps that held them are bent. The entire statue was most recently cleaned and waxed in the fall of 2000.

The pedestal has several cracked pieces along its base and edges that are held in place by the caulk used to seal its joints. Depressions have been filled in with small stones and adhesive. On the north face of the pedestal, two sections of stone have been replaced on the western edge. Another smaller piece of stone has been inserted at the bottom of the same edge. A significant, unrepaired depression is in the letter c in the word "Jackson" on the pedestal's west face.

Despite criticism, attempts to move it, and changes around and inside the monument, Mills' equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson today looks much as it did when it was unveiled nearly one hundred fifty years ago. The Jackson statue serves as the focal point of the parabolic walks in Lafayette Park, remnants of Downing's 1851 plan, and it continues the axis extending from the White House along Sixteenth Street, as defined by L'Enfant more than two hundred years ago. The statue also conforms to the scale and character of the nineteenth-century houses around Lafayette Square. It memorializes a man who defended his country from its last foreign invader and placed the continuance of the Union above states' rights. It was the first equestrian statue designed, cast, and erected in the United States, and its sculptor, Clark Mills, resolved a problem that had long confounded European artists. In addition, his self-fashioned foundry showed American artists that they did not have to send their works to Europe to be cast. In all these aspects, Mills' equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson keeps alive the memory of the early shaping of the nation, its initial struggles, and its inventive spirit.

To learn more about the Jackson Statue, consult these primary and secondary sources:

Primary Sources:

Textual Records:

Record Group 42: Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 48: Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 66: Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Photographic and Cartographic Records:

Geography and Maps Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Records Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

Secondary Resources:

Hopkins, Rosemary. "Clark Mills: The First Native American Sculptor." Master's thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 1966.

Kerr, Tim. "The History of the Equestrian Statue of Andrew Jackson, Lafayette Park, Washington, D.C." White House Liaison, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1999.

Newspapers: *Charleston (South Carolina) Courier*, *Washington Daily Union*.

Remini, Robert V. *Life of Andrew Jackson*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

Further information on Andrew Jackson is available at:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>
<http://loc.gov/>
<http://thehermitage.com/>

To learn more about the outdoor sculpture of Washington, D.C., see James M. Goode, *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974).

The statue of Andrew Jackson in Lafayette Park is administrated by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The statue and park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Address inquiries to: Park Manager, President's Park, White House Visitor Center, 1450 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20230

Further information is available at www.nps.gov/whho

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs by Terry J. Adams, National Park Service.

Tim Kerr researched and developed the history of the Equestrian Statue of General Andrew Jackson President's Park Note for White House Liaison, National Park Service. This project was made possible by the generous support of the White House Historical Association.



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