Survey of Washington Square Plaques & Waysides

Independence National Historical Park
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Contents

Preface..……..…Page 1

Map …….…....Page 2

Identification Plaques……...……..……..…Page 3

Memorial Plaques ……..……..…….….….Page 9

Waysides…….……..…..Page 28

Preface

The following is a survey of the current memorial plaques, waysides and identification plaques found throughout Washington Square as of January 2006. The memorial plaques in the square include everything from plaques that honor individuals and their work, those that commemorate important events, to identifying tree genus and species. Current waysides contain history about the Square and Philadelphia, while the identification plaques consist of various informational markers.

The accompanying map locates the forty-two plaques and waysides currently within Washington Square. This map is divided into quadrants and further divided into zones, with each plaque and wayside appropriately located on the map.

Other information found in this survey includes dimensions of the metal plaque or stone wayside, material from which the marker is made, installation or dedication date (if known), and the inscription that can be found on the plaque or wayside. In addition, two photographs of the plaque or wayside are included, one being a close shot of the marker at the time this survey was conducted, and another photograph showing the single marker within the wider surroundings of Washington Square.

Identification Plaques

Zone 5
Identification Plaque No. 1
Southeast Quadrant
Size: 18”x18”
Stone
Installed: October 2002
Inscription: “Welcome to Washington Square” with map.

Zone 10
Identification Plaque No. 2
Southwest Quadrant
Size: 18”x18”
Stone
Installed: October 2002
Inscription: “Welcome to Washington Square” with map.

Zone 13
Identification Plaque No. 3
Northwest Quadrant
Size: 18”x18”
Stone
Installed: October 2002
Inscription: “Welcome to Washington Square” with map.

Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Identification Plaques Nos. 4-10
Northwest Quadrant
Size of Metal Plaque: 5”x1”
Metal plaque
Installed/Dedicated: Assumed to be part of 1957 installation.

Inscription: Rhode Island

Inscription: Maryland

Inscription: Virginia

Inscription: North Carolina

Inscription: New Hampshire

Inscription: New York

Inscription: South Carolina

Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Identification Plaques Nos. 11-17
Southwest Quadrant
Size of Metal Plaque: 5”x1”
Metal plaque
Installed/Dedicated: Assumed to be part of 1957 installation.

Inscription: Connecticut

Inscription: Delaware

Inscription: Georgia

Inscription: Pennsylvania

Inscription: Massachusetts

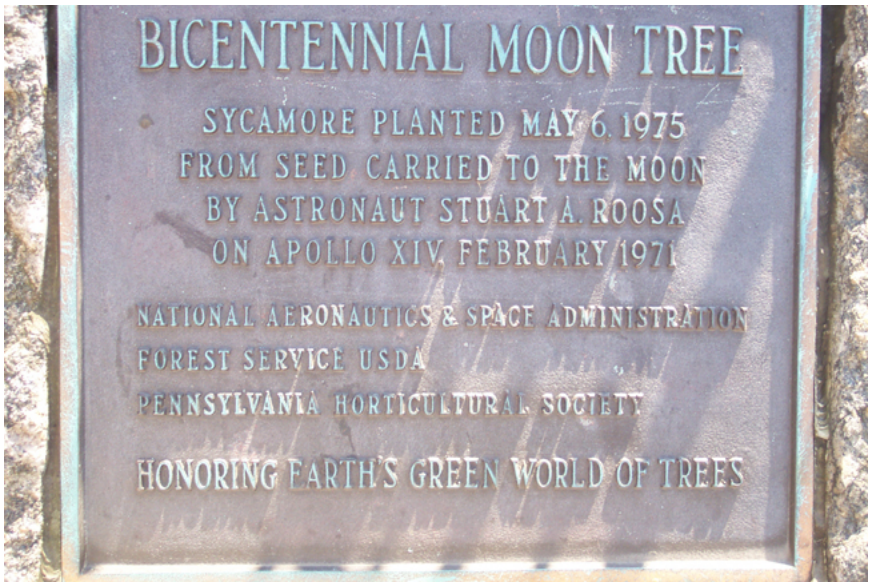
Inscription: New Jersey

Inscription: First Flag of the United States

Memorial Plaques

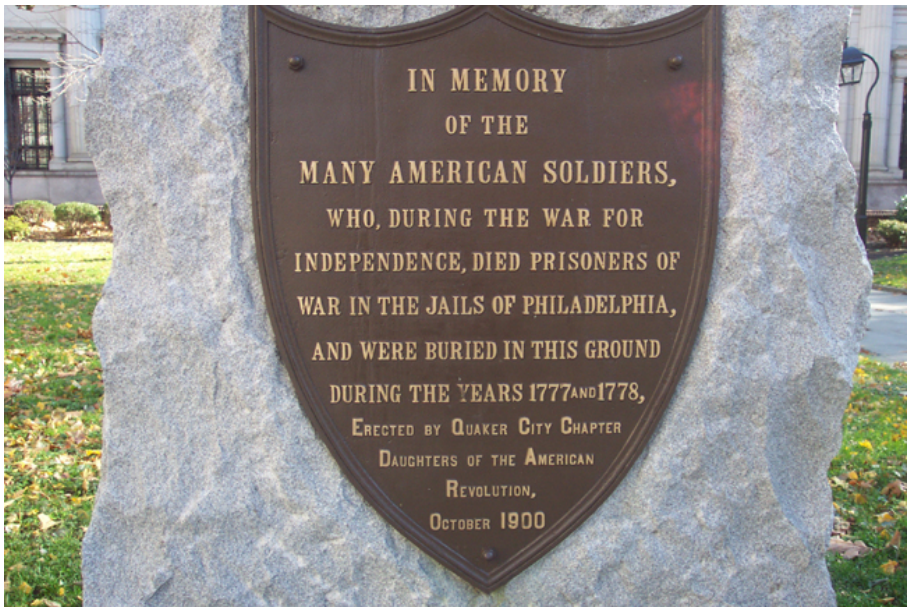
Zone 1
Plaque No. 1
Northeast Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 44”x34”
Metal plaque set on stone
Installed/Dedicated: Unknown
Inscription: “Washington Square is one of the original five squares laid out by William Pen and his surveyor Thomas Holme in the plan for the city of Philadelphia in 1682. First designated as Southeast Square, it was reamed Washington Square in 1825 in honor of America’s most illustrious Revolutionary War General and First President of the United States, General George Washington. During the American Revolution, Washington Square served as a burial ground for over 2,000 Continental soldiers and British prisoners. It has remained as open space public parkland since 1816 as have three of the other original squares – Franklin, Logan and Rittenhouse. Center Square, at Broad and Market Streets is now the site of Philadelphia’s landmark city hall. Park Rules. No dogs, bicycles, or alcoholic beverages are permitted in the square. Your cooperation in helping protect and maintain this historic area is requested and appreciated. The Fairmont Park Commission.”

Zone 2
Plaque No. 2
Northeast Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 20”x17”
Metal plaque set on stone
Dedicated: 1975
Inscription: “Bicentennial Moon Tree. Sycamore planted May 6, 1975 from seed carried to the moon by astronaut Stuart A. Roosa on Apollo XIV February 1971. National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Forest Service USDA. Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Honoring Earth’s Green world of trees.”



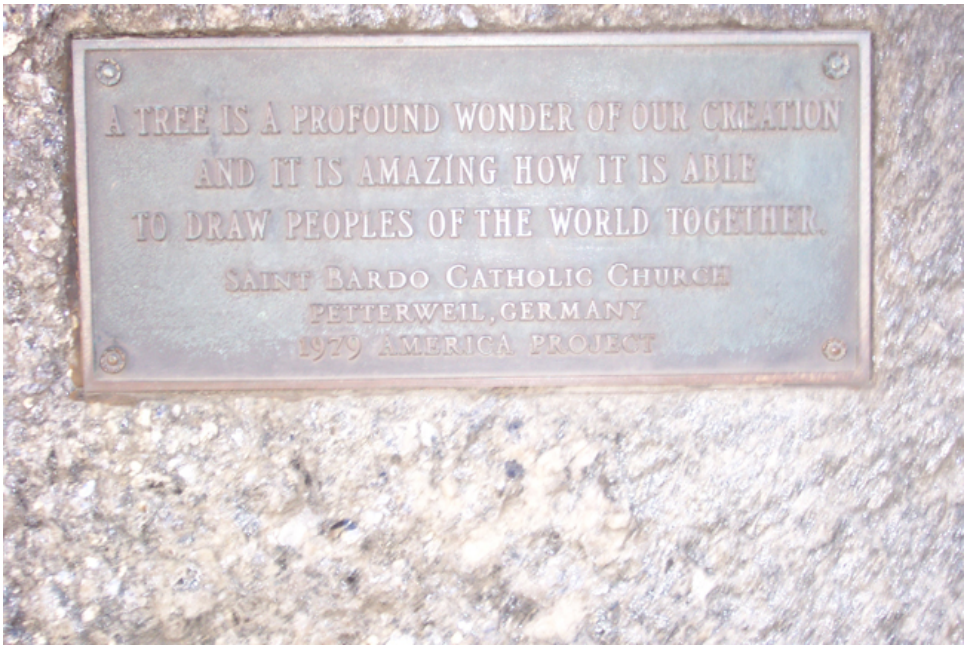
Zone 2
Plaque No. 3
Northeast Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 8”x4”
Metal plaque on rock
Dedicated: April 1974
Inscription: “In honor of Mayor and Mrs. Richardson Dilworth, April 1974.”

Zone 2
Plaque No. 4
Northeast Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 27”x36”
Metal shield shaped plaque on rock
Dedicated: October 1900
Inscription: “In memory of the many Americans soldiers, who during the war for independence, died prisoners of war in the jails of Philadelphia, and were buried in this ground during the years 1777 and 1778. Erected by the Quaker City Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution, October 1900.”



Zone 3
Plaque No. 5
Northeast Quadrant
Size of area where plaque was attached: 10”x6”
Installed/Dedicated: Unknown
Plaque either missing or stolen

Zone 3
Plaque No. 6
Northeast Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 18”x8”
Metal plaque on stone
Installed/Dedicated: 1979
Inscription: “A tree is a profound wonder of our creation and it is amazing how it is able to draw peoples of the world together. Saint Bardo Catholic Church. Petterweil, Germany. 1979 America Project”



Zone 5
Plaque No. 7
Southeast Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 17”x15”
Metal plaque on stone
Dedicated: 1982
Inscription: “Washington Square. One of Philadelphia’s original squares planned for by William Penn. 1682. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Heritage conservation and recreation service. United States Department of the Interior. On the occasion of the tricentennial of the city of Philadelphia, 1982. William E. Green, Mayor. Property of the commission of Fairmount Park.”

Zone 8
Plaque No. 8
Southwest Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 8”x6”
Metal plaque on stone
Installed/Dedicated: 1945
Inscription: “White Oak. *Quercus Alba*. Planted December 17, 1945.”

Zone 12
Plaque No. 9
Northwest Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 24”x12”
Metal plaque on stone
Dedicated: 1980
Inscription: This tree planted in honor of Carolyn Randall, Supreme President by the California State Association of Emblem Clubs and Nevada - Hawaii Clubs. Nadine Burns, President. September 23, 1980.

Zone 16
Plaque No. 10
Northeast Quadrant
Size of metal plaque: 23”x27”
Metal Plaque on Stone
Installed/Dedicated: Unknown
Inscription: “Tom Foglietta. City Councilman, Citizen of Philadelphia, Ambassador to Italy, Congressman, Champion of Historic Preservation.”

Zone 16
Plaque No. 11
Northeast Quadrant
Size of Metal Plaque: 8”x6”
Metal plaque on stone
Installed/Dedication: 1937
Inscription: “The Society of Little Gardens. 5 trees commemorating signing of Constitution. 1787-1937.”

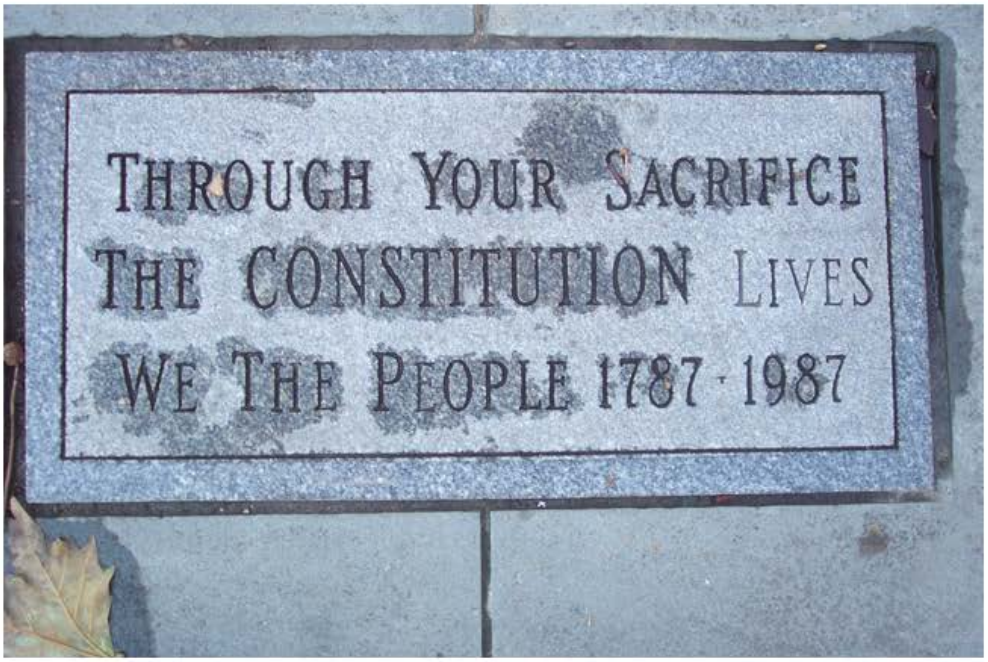
Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Plaque No. 12
Northeast Quadrant
Size of Metal Plaque: 18”x10”
Metal plaque on stone
Dedicated: November 11, 1995
Inscription: “In grateful appreciation to the officers and crew of the USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) under the command of Capt. J.R. Hutchinson, USN. Capt. Gerald Hoewing, USN. Every morning and evening from November 1993 to September 1995 an honor guard from the Kennedy raised and lowered the American Flag in Washington Square in honor of the thousands of American War heroes buried here. Dedicated by the Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution. November 11, 1995.”

Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Plaque No. 13
Border between Northeast and Southeast Quadrants
Size of Metal Plaque: 24”x20”
Brass plaque on stone
Installed/Dedicated: 1991
Inscription: “America’s First War Heroes. Revolutionary soldiers who fought and died for this nation’s independence are buried beneath this ground. This brass plate is from the hull of the Aircraft Carrier USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63) which was rebuilt at Philadelphia’s Naval Shipyard from September 1988 until July 1991. During this period the crew of the “Hawk” under the command of Capt. F.L. Tillotson Jr., USN and Capt. D.L. Rainly Jr., USN raised and lowered the flags in Washington Square in honor of America’s first war heroes.”

Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Plaque No. 14
Southeast Quadrant
Size of Metal Plaque: 18”x10”
Metal plaque on stone
Dedicated: November 11,1995
Inscription: “Dedicated to the officers and crew of the USS Forrestal (CVT-59) under the command of Capt. R.L. “Bunky” Johnson, U.S.N. From her arrival in May 1992 until her decommissioning in September 1993 the crew of the Forrestal took part in every ceremony in Washington Square honoring the thousands of unknown heroes of the American Revolution buried here. Placed by the American Revolution Patriotic Fund in grateful appreciation. November 11, 1995.”

Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Plaque No. 15
Border between Northwest and Southwest Quadrants
Size: 32”x40”
Stone
Installed/Dedicated: 2002
Inscription: “Washington Square restored through the cooperation of the American Revolution Patriots Fund, Barra Foundation, City of Philadelphia, Fairmount Park Commission, Independence National Historical Park, National Park Service, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, National Society Sons of the Revolution and the Color Guard, Washington Square Association, William Penn Foundation. 1991 – 2002.”

Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Plaque No. 16
Border between Northwest and Southwest Quadrants
Size: 12”x23”
Stone
Installed/Dedicated: 1987
Inscription: “Through your sacrifice the Constitution lives. We the people. 1787 – 1987.”

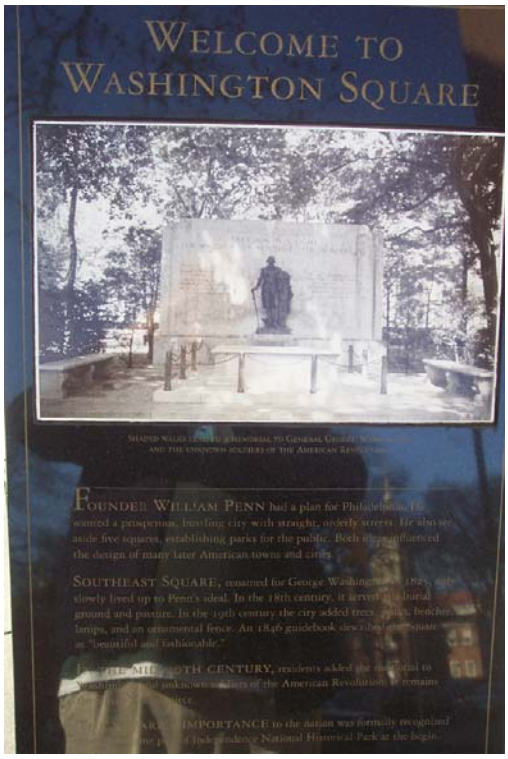


Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Plaque No. 17
Border between Northwest and Southwest Quadrants
Size: 17”x22”
Stone
Dedicated: June 28, 1957
Inscription: “This monument together with its court of flags, the fountain, and the colonial wall surrounding the square were made possible by the generosity of many interested business firms and individual friends of Washington Square. Dedicated June 28, 1957.”

Fountain/Memorial Paved Area
Plaque No. 18
Border between Northwest and Southwest Quadrants
Size: 12”x12”
Stone
Dedicated: 1976
Inscription: “The eternal flame dedicated in 1976 by Continental Bank in memory of those who fought and gave their lives so that we might celebrate our 200th anniversary as a free people.”

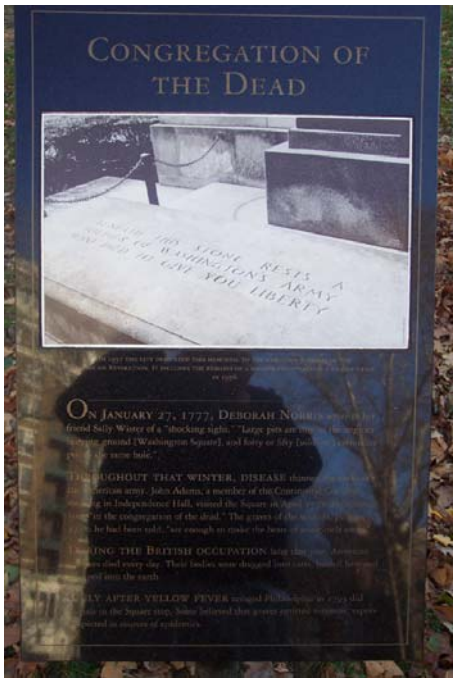
Waysides

Zone 1
Wayside No. 1
Northeast Quadrant
Size: 20”x32”
Stone on metal pole
Installed: October 2002
Inscription: “Welcome to Washington Square. Shaded Walks lead to a memorial to General George Washington and the unknown soldiers of the American Revolution. Founder William Penn had a plan for Philadelphia. He wanted a prosperous, bustling city with straight, orderly streets. He also set aside five squares, establishing parks for the public. Both ideas influenced the design of many later American towns and cities. Southeast Square, renamed for George Washington in 1825, only slowly lived up to Penn’s ideal. In the 18th century it served as a burial ground and pasture. In the 19th century the city added trees, walks, benches, lamps, and ornamental fence. An 1846 guidebook described the square as “beautiful and fashionable.” In the mid-20th century, residents added the memorial to Washington and unknown soldiers of the American Revolution. It remains the square’s centerpiece. The square’s importance to the nation was formally recognized when it became part of the Independence National Historical Park at the beginning of the 21st century.”



Zone 4
Wayside No. 2
Northeast Quadrant
Size: 20”x32”
Stone on post
Installed: 2002
Inscription: “Sorrow and Joy. Philadelphia supported a thriving African American community that celebrated its rich heritage in festivities in Washington Square. Until the 19th century, this was often a sorrowful place. Many people knew it as a potters field, a “publick burying place for all strangers,” for soldiers, sailors, convicts, and the “destitute whose remains are walked over.” A lonely Acadian refugee found eternal rest here, along with epidemic victims, Catholics and African Americans. Only free and enslaved African Americans brought a measure of mirth to this square which, according to oral tradition, they called “Congo Square.” One 19th century historian recorded that during fairs and holidays perhaps as many as a thousand Black Philadelphians came here to dance “after the manner of their several nations in Africa, speaking and singing in their native dialects over the sleeping dust below.” He also wrote of those from Guinea (a term once used to encompass several African areas) “going to the graves of their friends early in the morning, and there leaving them victuals and rum.”

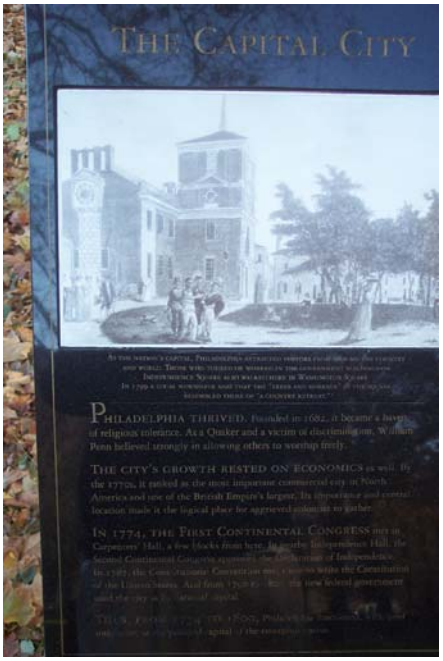
Zone 4
Wayside No. 3
Northeast Quadrant
Size 20”x32”
Stone on post
Installed: 2002
Inscription: “Congregation of the Dead. In 1957 the city dedicated this memorial to the unknown soldiers of the American Revolution. It includes the remains of a soldier discovered in a nearby grave in 1956. On January 27, 1777, Deborah Norris wrote to her friend Sally Wister of a “shocking sight.” “Large pits are dug in the Negroes burying ground [Washington Square], and forty or fifty [soldiers’] coffins are put in the same hole.” Throughout that winter, disease thinned the ranks of the American Army. John Adams, a member of the Continental Congress meeting in Independence Hall, visited the Square in April 1777. He spent an hour “in congregation of the dead.” The graves of the soldiers, perhaps two thousand he had been told, “are enough to make the heart of stone melt away.” During the British occupation later that year, American captives did every day, their bodies wee dragged into carts, hauled here and dumped into the earth. Only after yellow fever ravaged in Philadelphia in 1793 did burials in the Square stop. Some believed that graves emitted miasma, vapors suspected as sources of epidemics.”



Zone 4
Wayside No. 4
Northeast Quadrant
Size 20”x32”
Stone on post
Installed: 2002
Inscription: “Linked in Memory. Washington Square has many moods. It can be a delightful as well as solemn place. Paths and trees reflect Penn’s vision. The memorial to Washington and the unknowns who died during the American Revolution offer an appropriate setting for national ceremonies and commemorations. A statue of the most famous American, George Washington stands near the square’s center. It keeps a vigil at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier who died during the war for Independence. Revolution linked them in life. The shrine joins them in our memory. In 1825 the city renamed its five public squares. This one became Washington Square. Organizers raising money for a suitable monument hoped for success as the 1832 centennial of the president’s birth approached. They actually laid a cornerstone in 1833, but failed to raise enough cash for a statue. Success waited for over a century. A new drive begun in 1953 finally funded the joint memorial that you see today.”

Zone 16
Wayside No. 5
Northeast Quadrant
Size: 20”x32”
Stone on post
Installed: 2002
Inscription: “A Fashionable Promenade. The appearance of Washington Square changed many times. By the 19th century, visitors could relax or play in “an admirable city arboretum.” In the 17th century, when the square first appeared in the city plan, streams drained into a deep gully in front of you. Then, beginning in 1833, geometric plans invited visitors into a leveled square planted with hundreds of trees. By 1846, Washington Square, with its seats, lamps, and ornamental fence, had dramatically changed from the “offensive nuisance” of the 18th century into “a beautiful and fashionable promenade” where adults strolled and children played marbles. In 1853, American Landscape Architect Andrew Jackson Downing’s Rural Essays praised Washington Square reporting that it had “more well grown specimens of different species of forest trees than any similar space of ground in America.”

Zone 16
Wayside No. 6
Northeast Quadrant
Size: 20”x32”
Stone on Post
Installed: 2002
Inscription: “The Capital City. As the nation’s first capital, Philadelphia attracted visitors from around the country and world. Those who toured or worked in the government buildings on Independence Square also walked here in Washington Square. In 1799 a local newspaper said that the “trees and herbage” in the Square resembled those of “a country retreat.” Philadelphia thrived. Founded in 1682, it became a haven of religious tolerance. As a Quaker and a victim of discrimination, William Penn believed strongly in allowing others to worship freely. The city’s growth rested on economics as well. By the 1770’s, it ranked as the most important commercial city in North America and one of the British Empire’s largest. It’s importance and central location made it the logical place for aggrieved colonists to gather. In 1774, The First Continental Congress met in Carpenters Hall, a few blocks from here. In nearby Independence Square, the Second Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence. In 1787, the Constitutional Convention met there to write the Constitution of the United States. And from 1790 to 1800, the new federal government used the city as its national capital. Thus, from 1774 to 1800, Philadelphia functioned with brief intervals, as the political capital of the emerging nation.”



Zone 16
Wayside No. 7
Northeast Quadrant
Size: 20”x32”
Stone on post
Installed: 2002
Inscription: “Penn’s plan. The original names of the five public squares reflected their locations in the city’s center and its Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest corners. Early Quaker Leaders avoided naming them after people. William Penn learned many lessons in life. Living in 17th century England taught him that open space offered breathing places for the great cities and also slowed the spread of fires. He applied what he had learned to Philadelphia. He insisted on a site that was “navigable, high, dry, and healthy.” He wanted “uniform” streets with “houses built in a lane.” He envisioned “gardens, orchards, or fields” around the houses, Penn wanted a “green country town, which will never be burnt, and always be wholesome.” Penn’s city plan, drawn up by surveyor Thomas Holme, included five public squares, the center one for “houses of publick affairs” and the others as green oases carefully placed throughout the developing city.