



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 2, 2015

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**AMERICA'S FIRST WASHINGTON MONUMENT CELEBRATES
BICENTENNIAL AND REOPENING ON JULY 4TH
WITH REDEDICATION CEREMONY AND FESTIVAL**

With its cornerstone laid on July 4, 1815, Mount Vernon's Washington Monument became the first public monument to honor George Washington and the ideals of American Democracy he represented. Baltimore is celebrating this iconic time in American history with the **Monumental Bicentennial**, a one-day celebration featuring the official **reopening of Baltimore's restored Washington Monument**. Presented by the **Mount Vernon Place Conservancy** and **Bank of America**, the event takes place on **Saturday, July 4, 2015** from **8:30am to 5pm** beginning with a naturalization ceremony and an official rededication and ribbon cutting ceremony. An old-fashioned country fair follows with entertainment, children's activities, baking contests, delicious food and beverages and more. The event is centered on the **600 block of N. Charles Street** with festivities taking place throughout the four surrounding park squares. Sponsors include Agora Inc., CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, The Johns Hopkins University, Venable LLP, BGE, Brown Advisory, Hotel Indigo and Baltimore City. The Monumental Bicentennial is produced by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts in partnership with the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy. Admission is free.

At 8:30am, on the day America celebrates its independence, a naturalization ceremony takes place in which 40 people will become American citizens. The **Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University** and the **Baltimore School for the Arts** perform during the ceremony.

After being closed since 2010, the restored Washington Monument reopens with an official rededication ceremony and ribbon cutting at 10:45am. The ceremony includes live performances from the **Maryland Defense Force Band** and **Fort McHenry Guard Fife & Drum Band**.

The country fair beginning at 11:30am features live entertainment from historical re-enactors including **George Washington** and musical acts **Ken Kolodner, Larksong, Andy Poxon** and **The Crowdaddies**. Colonial-style food and picnic fare includes **Dooby's** fried chicken and corn bread, barbecue by **Jurassic Pork, Brewer's Art** Monumental Ale, grilled oysters by **Ryleigh's Oyster**, flights of whiskey and Washington State wines from **Spirits of Mount Vernon** and ice cream by **The Charmery. Pahl's Farmstead** holds a farmer's market and petting zoo with farm animals on-site. A baking competition also takes place where local bakers compete with recipes for the best cornbread, cherry or peach dessert.

The "Colonial Kids" area features family-friendly activities like hands-on crafts, colonial period demonstrations and games, a pixelated photo booth, blacksmith, live entertainment, story telling and more.

Festival-goers are encouraged to venture out into the neighborhood where many Mount Vernon Place institutions and businesses present activities such as a neighborhood scavenger hunt, organ performances and tours at the **Engineers Club**, and a **Walters Art Museum** art activity. **Camp Center Stage** and the **Baltimore School for the Arts** also perform in the park squares. Many businesses, restaurants, the **Walters Art Museum, The Peabody Institute** and the **Mount Vernon United Methodist Church** will be open for the day. The **Maryland Historical Society** remains open and exhibits artifacts from both 100 and 200 year old time capsules found within the Washington Monument during the restoration.

Baltimore's Washington Monument, the centerpiece of a National Historic Landmark District, was constructed 200 years ago when Baltimoreans envisioned and commenced one of the most beautiful urban spaces in America, Mount Vernon Place. Baltimoreans were particularly proud to be erecting this monument to Washington in light of their recent role in securing American liberty during the Battle of Baltimore, a turning point in the War of 1812. They were similarly proud that it was built of local white marble, from quarries north of the city in Baltimore County.

In 1829, the main column of the monument was completed when the statue of Washington, sculpted by the Italian artist Henrico Causici, was raised to its top. The statue depicts George Washington submitting his resignation as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in Annapolis in 1783, an act symbolic of his belief in the new American form of democratic government and the world's

most famous peaceful transfer of power. Decades later, Mills designed the more well-known monument in the nation's capital whose cornerstone was not laid until 1848. This larger monument was not completed and dedicated until 1885.

The Mount Vernon Place Conservancy was formed in October 2008 with leadership from the Mount Vernon Belvedere Association and Friends of Mount Vernon Place. Their first action commissioned a restoration and management plan to renovate the Washington Monument and surrounding park squares. The Conservancy, led by its Board of Directors chaired by Henry H. Hopkins, launched a \$14.5 million capital campaign to create an enduring public space. The first project, restoration of the Washington Monument, began in January 2014 and cost \$5.5 million.

For information on the Monumental Bicentennial, call the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts at 410-752-8632, visit www.promotionandarts.org or www.MonumentalBicentennial.org.

For more information on the Washington Monument and the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy, call Cathy at 410-560-0180 or 443-904-4861 or email Info@MVPConservancy.org. You can also visit mvpconservancy.org or Facebook.com/MountVernonPlace.

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