

GRANT

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE AT GRANT'S TOMB: AN UPDATE

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A special feature, "Remaining Work to be Done," remains anchored atop the otherwise changing news and articles on the Grant Monument Association's website, www.grantstomb.org. The feature stays there because it describes continuing issues that drive our agenda at the Grant Monument Association. Our priorities are as follows:

A visitor center is crucial to the site. The GMA has made a detailed study of the options and has suggested solutions to the National Park Service and the City of New York that would help to realize the full civic and educational potential of the site. This newsletter has detailed efforts to pursue this goal, but a lack of funds has prevented any tangible progress on this front. Bound up in this issue is the future of the overlook pavilion, which is decaying to the west of the tomb.

Second, other parts of the tomb's surrounding grounds, including its stairways and paths, also remain in serious disrepair.



Western pathway behind Grant's Tomb

The mosaic benches should be relocated to a more appropriate location more fitting to their spirit and that of the tomb, perhaps nearby in Riverside Park.



Mosaic benches



Overlook pavilion



Grant Monument Association

GRANT

Newsletter staff

Editor

Frank Scaturro

Senior Editor

Scott Berman

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To submit a story idea or letter to the editor, write to:
GMA Newsletter
P.O. Box 1088
FDR Station
New York, NY 10150-1088
gma@grantstomb.org

Julia Dent Grant Statue Dedicated in Galena

August 12, 2006 was reported by the hometown paper to be a “big, big day” in Galena, Illinois. A statue of First Lady Julia Dent Grant was unveiled on the lawn of the Grant Home. Many attended the ceremony, and there were related festivities in the city, including a Civil War-era encampment, a sidewalk sale, and a parade. The new public recognition of the pioneering First Lady is within sight of Galena’s statue of U.S. Grant in Grant Park.

According to local reports, the sculptor of the statue, Lily Tolpo, recognized Mrs. Grant’s successful efforts to enlarge the role of First Lady. The first First Lady to write her memoirs, Julia Grant played a decisive role in the selection of the site of Grant’s Tomb.



The newly dedicated Julia Grant statue.
Courtesy of The Galena Gazette.

The GMA Mission:

- To commemorate and perpetuate the accomplishments of Ulysses S. Grant and Julia Dent Grant and their memory.
- To undertake educational activities and ceremonies as they pertain to President Grant’s service to his country.
- To cooperate with public and private parties to insure the repair, maintenance and upgrading of Grant’s Tomb in New York City.
- To raise funds to accomplish the foregoing purposes.

Grant at Long Branch

Today, somewhere on the grounds of a retreat center in Long Branch, New Jersey, is the site of the center of the presidency during a pivotal period in the nation’s history. From 1869 to 1876, this was the location of the “summer White House” of President Grant. The president’s ties to this seaside community are not commonly remembered today. But it was to Long Branch that President Grant and his family journeyed each summer to escape the literal and political heat of Washington.

The Grants became acquainted with Long Branch—at that time a chic Mecca for the well-to-do—some time around 1869, when they were invited there by Philadelphia newspaper publisher George W. Childs. Childs, industrialist George Pullman, and bank magnate Moses Taylor bought a cottage near Childs’ home on Ocean Avenue and let the Grants use it for the rest of their lives, writes author Mark Perry.

Perry writes that reporters referred to Long Branch as the nation’s “summer capital,” but the location was not just about official business. Grant’s wife, Julia, wrote in her memoirs that the Grant family, including their children and

her father, rushed to Long Branch for the summers as soon as Congress adjourned. She found the cottage a “boon” to the weary president, who recharged his batteries there amid the resort’s “health-giving breezes and its wide and restful piazzas.”

The Grants received guests at their cottage, attended balls at the nearby West End Hotel, swam in the sea, and went on what Julia called “glorious drives on that enchanting beach.” Perry writes that Grant, during and after his presidency, was known locally as the community’s “first citizen.” Residents and tourists would stroll past the Ocean Avenue cottage to catch a glimpse of the president sitting with his wife on their porch.

Grant enjoyed playing poker with friends every Friday night during the summer. Otherwise, his routine at Long Branch included taking his carriage out twice a day, driving his horses quickly along Ocean Avenue, returning from his morning drive to have breakfast, and reading his mail on the veranda. On July 4, 1872, he was at Long Branch “amidst cannons firing, bells ringing, and fireworks going off.” Three summers later, the

president spent July 4 visiting nearby Heightstown.

Jesse later wrote that his mother relaxed the most and was happiest as first lady at Long Branch. After once being teased by the president about spending so much time sitting on the porch, she displayed her physical fitness by suddenly mimicking a Jesse routine—vaulting the veranda railing.

The president’s presence at Long Branch injected thousands of dollars into the local economy each day and set local trends. Once Grant started attending horse races at the nearby Monmouth Park racetrack, which opened to disappointingly small crowds in 1871, “the masses followed,” according to Melissa Kozlowski. The racetrack owners, probably aware of Grant’s pull (if Grant visited the new racetrack, others would, too), installed a statue of the president at the front entrance. The racetrack has long since been demolished without a trace.

Most Thursdays during their

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summers by the beach, the Grants would take “delightful sails” up to New York, Julia wrote. These continued after Grant’s presidency, including in 1880, when the Grants were house-hunting in New York City. The Grants would sail to the city to visit friends and supporters until the collapse of the investment firm Grant & Ward in 1884, which financially ruined the Grant family. Grant’s first public appearance after that setback occurred in nearby Ocean Grove, where he attended an army chaplain convention and was encouraged by his warm welcome.

Long Branch was where Grant met with *Century Magazine* associate editor Robert Underwood Johnson in 1883 and agreed to write several articles for the publication—a project that would lead to Grant’s acclaimed *Personal Memoirs*. It was also where Grant first experienced the throat pain that was eventually diagnosed as the

cancer that would take his life.

The Grant cottage was demolished in 1963. Modern



This marker at the Long Branch monument features President Grant. Courtesy of Joan Schnorbus.

homes in today’s upscale neighborhood have replaced many of the original properties, says Joan Schnorbus of the Long Branch Historical Museum Association. She points out there is no marker on the cottage’s exact site. That spot is currently a vacant lot used by the neighboring Stella Maris Retreat Center “as a water retention/open space site,” reports local historical activist Edward Thomas. That retreat house has been owned since 1941 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace.

Grant was the first of a procession of presidents who visited Long Branch. The others were Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, and Woodrow Wilson. Grant is commemorated, along with the others, in a small beachfront monument in Long Branch. But the site of the summer White House of one of history’s preeminent figures remains unmarked, just a lawn on the

GRANT MONUMENT ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

The life and extraordinary public service of General and President Ulysses S. Grant is reflected in the grand monument in New York City that serves as his final resting place – popularly known as Grant’s Tomb. The Grant Monument Association (GMA), the successor to the organization of the same name that built and administered Grant’s Tomb until it was transferred to the National Park Service in 1959, was formed to ensure that this important part of our heritage would be preserved. To become a member of the GMA or renew your membership for 2007, fill out the form below. Contributors of \$50 or more will receive a signed copy of Frank Scaturro’s *President Grant Reconsidered*.

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Check out www.grantstomb.org for information on important work that remains to be done at Grant's Tomb, and new exclusive features on the life and legacy of U.S. Grant.

WHAT REMAINS: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Overgrown trees need to be pruned or removed, in keeping with the original vision of the grounds and sound landscape architectural practice. The gardens beside the Tomb need to be tended to.

Third, while the Tomb proper underwent a refurbishment during the 1990's, there are remaining issues in the interior: Various spots need to be refurbished, including decay in the upper stairway beyond the area open to the public. The floor surrounding the sarcophagi is cracked and discolored.

As we at the GMA see it, the site has the potential to be an exciting showcase of history, education, and civic ideals for students and citizens from all over the world. We look forward to working with the National Park Service and the City of New York to help make this a reality.

-Edward S. Hochman

President, Grant Monument Association