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Sent: Friday, May 13, 2011 10:00 AM

To:

Subject: Emailing: 2011-05-08 John Kelly article in the Wash Post.jpg on the U.S. Presidency Monument

Thought you might be interested:

There are a few discrepancies with this article, but it does give a brief history of the travels of the U.S. Presidency Monument.

1. Michael Jackson was in no way part of the creation of this Monument. He did put up the money to transport it from California to DC.
2. The funding for the Monument actually came from an Australian, an Italian, and an American. The sculptor was Australian.
3. The Monument was designed originally to be placed at the South Portico of the White House.
4. The signature plates are exact replicas of the signatures of the Presidents, the signers of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
5. The cost to produce the Monument was \$2,000,000.
6. There is a set of five (5) plaques going into each school. Four pages of the Constitution and the one page of the Bill of Rights.



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Where eagles fear to tread: A tangled tale of misfit monuments

By John Kelly, Published: May 7

Back in the early 1990s, I was a D.C. police officer working out of the Narcotics and Special Investigation Division on Third Street NE. The building has a large garage, and for a while it was used to store a huge eagle statue. We were told that the statue was commissioned by Michael Jackson as a gift for Ronald Reagan and was being stored there

temporarily until a place could be found for it. Well, temporarily turned into several months, and after a while the U.S. marshals came in and placed a lien on the statue. The statue was eventually removed. I was wondering if this was the true history of the statue and what finally happened to it.



- The monument is dedicated to the U.S. presidency.

“It’s not a statue, it’s a monument,” Larry Creeger said when Answer Man reached the Virginia businessman by phone recently. Larry was able to provide details on the monument’s current whereabouts. As for what it’s a monument to, officially it’s to the U.S. presidency.

Unofficially, however, it might be to the strange journeys that works of art sometimes take. Of course, wouldn’t you be surprised if something involving Michael Jackson wasn’t strange?

Our story begins in 1987, when an artist named Brett-Livingstone Strong created a monument to the bicentennial of the Constitution. It also featured a bald eagle and had the support of Ronald Reagan and Chief Justice Warren Burger. It was displayed briefly in Philadelphia.

The positive reaction to that work prompted Strong to create a complimentary piece honoring the presidency.

It was even bigger: 17 feet high, 20 tons, with a bronze bald eagle, wings outstretched above a U.S. seal, the granite base covered with the Constitution, Bill of Rights, facsimiles of signatures of the Founding Fathers and the names of all the presidents, from George Washington to the first George Bush. Strong was assured President Bush would welcome the monument.

But the work took longer than Strong thought to complete — and cost more, too: \$650,000, including the expense of bringing it to Washington atop two flatbed trucks. People here seemed to like it, but no one knew where to put it.

Bush was out of office by then. The monument ended up in the garage of the narcotics division building, beloved by the few people who saw it, police officers mainly, and a few drug suspects. There it sat for months and months.

Michael Jackson’s role in the affair is hard to pin down. He might have paid to ship the work to Washington. He was a friend of Strong’s, who was sort of the court painter to Jackson. (A portrait Strong painted of Jackson was bought by a Japanese businessman in 1990 for \$2.1 million.) Strong promised that when the presidential monument was finally unveiled in Washington, Jackson would appear to sing the national anthem backed by a children’s chorus.

The artist eventually sold most of his rights to a group of investors. Tangled finances resulted in it being sold in 1993 for \$135,000 by federal marshals. The buyer was a Chicago businessman and Pez-dispenser collector named Howard Tullman, who hoped to place the monument near the White House — and to turn a profit selling small facsimiles.

But Tullman soon realized it is not easy to give the U.S. government a 20-ton statue.

“What you come to appreciate is that these things do require maintenance and an annuity to maintain them,” Howard told Answer Man recently. “Literally, these guys said to me, ‘We have warehouses full of statues.’”

Howard gave up. He sold the monument. Then it was sold again. It ended up in a warehouse in Northern Virginia (D.C. police had complained it was in the way).

Then Brett-Livingstone Strong tried unsuccessfully to get it back. For a while it was owned by a group of Las Vegas investors. Finally, it found a home with Larry Creeger.

The Richmond businessman (he once owned the nation’s largest special events company) also has Strong’s Constitution monument, and he is head of a nonprofit that is trying to place a plaque of the U.S. Constitution in schools across the country.

“I feel like I rescued not only the monuments but this entire process, which was a vision of Reagan and Warren Burger, from what would have been a catastrophe,” Larry told Answer Man. “I didn’t mind spending a lot of time and a lot of money to bring this to fruition.”

In 2007, the monument finally found a public home, though it’s a far cry from the White House grounds. It’s in an office park in Glen Allen, Va., next to the headquarters of Markel Insurance.

But that, too, might be temporary. Larry said he’s in negotiations to make it the centerpiece of a “presidential park” somewhere. He’s eyeing a spot in New Orleans, right along the Mississippi. In addition to the monument, there would be huge busts of the presidents, a history of the office, a continuously running show on Andrew Jackson’s New Orleans exploits, and a sound and light show visible from the riverboats that ply the Big Muddy.

Michael Jackson would have approved.

Potential buyer for Presidents Park?

Modified:

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YORK -- The man who salvaged the Presidential Bicentennial Monument in Glen Allen says he is negotiating to buy Presidents Park.

In his Answer Man column in Saturday's Washington Post, John Kelly writes that Richmond businessman Larry Creeger is in talks to buy the park of oversized presidential busts. It comes sans Barack Obama, for whom original owner Haley Newman was unable to raise the \$60,000 needed for the 12,000 pound bust.

In an email, Creeger told Kelly he has been negotiating with the bank to buy President Park, hopefully with Virginia investors. As part of a grand opening, Creeger would bring in another monument by the same artist, a bronze bald eagle statue created by Brett-Livingstone Stone that stands 17 feet high and weighs 20 tons.

Its wings outstretched, the eagle is perched above a U.S. seal. Its granite base features the Constitution, Bill of Rights, signatures of the Founding Fathers and the names of every president except Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama.

The eagle statue would later move to a new presidential park in New Orleans built around another set of artist David Adickes's busts.

"We would hopefully keep the park in Williamsburg as a sister park to the one in New Orleans," Creeger told Kelly. "As with any large project, nothing seems to come easy, even when it's about the presidents."

A sister Presidents Park near Dearwood, S.D. has also closed. Adickes blamed a short tourism window -- three months -- and said a throng of 500,000 bikers who come to nearby Sturgis each August tends to cause families to scatter. He even tried marketing to the bikers, but only about 1% would visit the park.

Creeger, once owner of the country's largest special events company, also heads up a nonprofit trying to place plaques of the U.S. Constitution in schools.