

With its grand residences, cafes and restaurants, and majestic fountains and bronze statues, Mount Vernon is reminiscent of a European city. Visitors need not venture farther than 10 blocks north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor to find the lush parks, museums, galleries, and revered cultural institutions that this national historic landmark has to offer.

Named after George Washington's Virginia plantation, Mount Vernon has been the address of literary greats, political leaders and many other influential members of American society, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Woodrow Wilson and H.L. Mencken. Today, the vibrant neighborhood is home to a diverse mix of students, artists, musicians, professionals, and families—all with an appreciation for Mount Vernon's rich culture.

History & Architecture

Mount Vernon was at the heart of Baltimore's metamorphosis in the 1800s and 1900s—from a harbor city to a nationally prominent society of wealth and culture. Donated by John Eager Howard, a war hero and governor of Maryland from 1788 to 1791, the land, on a wooded hillside originally the setting of the first memorial to George Washington.

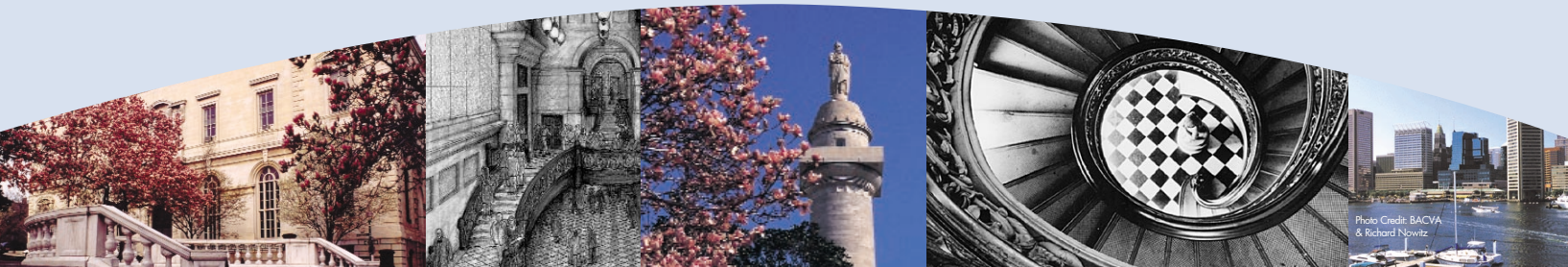
In 1829, Robert Mills completed the Washington Monument, a 178-foot-high classic Greek Doric column

that would come to serve as the city's centerpiece. In the 1830s, Mt. Vernon's four parks were laid out around the monument based on the London residential squares of the Georgian period.

After the Civil War, many of American society's leaders, including railroad barons and statesmen, moved to Mount Vernon and built magnificent residences in the house lots facing the squares. The neighborhood's brownstones and townhouses represent a cross-section of 19th-century architectural styles, including Georgian, Greek Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Beaux Arts.

In 1857, George Peabody first conceived the idea of bringing culture to Baltimore's residents and wrote to 25 of the city's leading citizens with a proposal to create such an institution in Mount Vernon. From 1859 to 1866, English architect Edmund Lind designed and built the Peabody Institute in the Renaissance Revival style. Known as Baltimore's "Cathedral of Books," the George Peabody Library is considered to have one of the most dramatic interiors on the east coast with its elaborate wrought iron stacks soaring up to a skylighted roof.

Inspired by Peabody, a philanthropic spirit permeated the atmosphere, and many wealthy residents, including Robert Garrett and William Walters, commissioned



famous architects to design buildings and monuments for the area. Notable buildings that rose during that prosperous period include the Thomas-Jencks House, by Niernsee and Nielson (1 West Mt. Vernon Place); the Jacobs House, by Stanford White and enlarged by John Russell Pope (9-11 West Mt. Vernon Place); and the Walters Art Museum, by Delano and Aldrich (Washington Place and Centre Street).

In the early to mid-1900s, the area began to decline when its wealthier residents moved to the suburbs, and many mansions were transformed into rental units. Despite the decline of Baltimore's society, preservationists fought to sustain Mount Vernon's historic buildings and monuments. After several wars and a depression, the area experienced an urban renewal during Baltimore's push to rebuild and revitalize the area.



A symbol of Mount Vernon's continued growth, the Peabody will complete a \$26.8 million renovation in 2004—including a grand arcade with curving, balustrade

stairs that cascade down from the entrance—which reflects the institution's efforts to make it easily accessible to residents and visitors of the community.

Culture in a Thriving Metropolis

From visual art to performing art, the area's museums, galleries and institutions make Mount Vernon Place the cultural Mecca of Baltimore. Fourteen of Baltimore's most dynamic cultural institutions—all within three blocks of the Washington Monument—comprise the Mount Vernon Cultural District, which receives more than one million visitors each year.

Today, Mount Vernon is a flourishing, modern area of Baltimore that reflects its noble past and inspires its prosperous future. In addition to its cultural institutions, galleries and museums, there are more than 35 cafes and restaurants, more than 100 shops, and five blocks of antique stores—making a visit to Mount Vernon both an edifying and an entertaining experience.

