

### THE WOMAN'S TITANIC MEMORIAL

February's newsletter looks at maritime history as it relates to the Southwest Waterfront and draws chiefly upon *OUTDOOR SCULPTURE OF WASHINGTON, D.C., A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORICAL GUIDE* by James M. Goode (Smithsonian Institution Press 1974) for this month's article on the designer and placement of the Woman's Titanic Memorial on the Southwest Waterfront, commemorating the best known maritime disaster in history—the sinking of the Titanic in 1912.



*Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*  
Robert Henri (1916)

I first encountered the Woman's Titanic Memorial (its original name) from the Washington Channel as a sailing instructor. From this vantage point, the memorial appears nothing less than the crucifixion of Christ. This misapprehension in this led to sailing instructions that went something like "Take us down south of Jesus and come about." As it turns out, the memorial is about self-sacrifice, albeit patriarchal stereotypes regarding the role of men and women in the early twentieth century.

Considering its designer Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney was anything but conventional, one biographer described her as "existing in two worlds. In one, she was the perfect, icy formal

*(continued on Page 2)*

### MARINA PROJECTS / EVENTS

#### Red Rocks in the Sunset

The removal of the large stones and installation of anti-rat wire in the park between Zanzibar



and the Channel Inn has been completed and new crushed red landscape stone has been placed in each of the beds. There were serious concerns raised by GPSA that the prior rocks were too large and would become projectiles thrown against our vessels. The Deputy Mayor's Office agreed and the new appearance the red stone gives the park is quite striking. This same park will undergo another upgrade next week with the installation of new halyards and flags on the 60' flag poles next week by the National Capital Flag Company. This same procedure (installation of anti-rat wire and crushed red stone) will begin next week in the park between the Phillips Flagship and H20.

#### Flags on Water St.

By next week, we will be selecting the supplier for the Water St. flag project. As presently envisioned, the flags will be rotated celebrating the opening of Diamond Teague Park, the National Cherry Blossom Festival, The Washington Waterfront and businesses that line Water St.



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*(continued from Page 1)*

uptown matron ... in [the] other she was a passionate bohemian who took lover after lover; a lady bountiful to impoverished American artists with who she shared a riotous life in Greenwich Village," it is difficult to reconcile her life as an artist with the art she produced.

In addition to being an heiress to the New York Railroad and Standard Oil fortunes, Whitney had a fair bit of maritime history in her family. Her great grandfather was Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, and her father-in-law, Secretary of the Navy William C. Whitney. More to the point, she had experienced the direct effects of maritime disaster as her own brother, Alfred Vanderbilt, would perish in the sinking of the *Lusitania* the same year she began bronze studies for the Woman's Titanic Memorial. Several critics have noted a striking resemblance between the memorial's features and her brother's.

Whitney studied sculpture in New York City and Paris under Hendrik Christian Anderson, James Earle Fraser and Andrew O'Connor. Fraser and O'Connor were particularly influential in Whitney's development in becoming a sculptor of public monuments. Believing her prominent family precluded unbiased criticism, she exhibited her works under a pseudonym until 1910 when her early works began to receive favorable reviews.

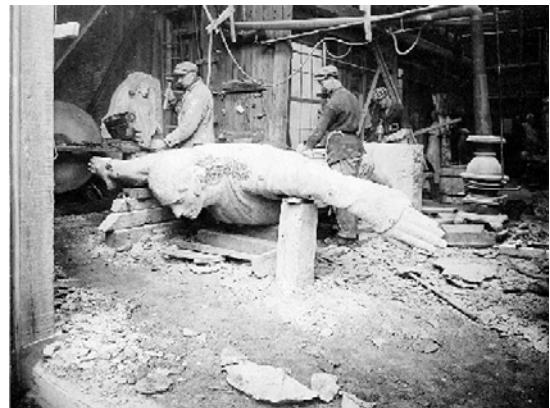
From this time forward, Whitney became a leading patron of American artists providing both space in her New York studio and financial support. In 1912, she secured the contract to execute the Aztec Fountain for the Pan American Union Building on Constitution Ave. Her additional works in Washington include the Founder's Memorial at DAR Constitution Hall (1929).

After the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, an organization which went by the same name as the memorial was formed in Washington and, by July, occupied multiple offices collecting donations from across the country for construction of a memorial, as the *NEW YORK TIMES* described, to commemorate "woman's tribute to the chivalry and bravery of man as exemplified in the Titanic disaster." Within two years, the organization had raised \$43,000 towards the \$50,000 commission for the winning design. On January 14, 1914, the Washington Fine Arts Commission selected Whitney's design which, according to the Commission, "showed the figure of Heroism, a man of noble proportions, fifteen feet

high, the face, arms, and whole posture of the body exemplifying a willing sacrifice, a smiling welcome to death," over seven other "sculptors of prominence."

Whitney began bronze studies for the final work in 1915. One of these has survived in Collington, Maryland at the Holy Trinity Cemetery affixed to the grave site of a Whitney relative. This early study, signed and dated by Whitney, differs from the Woman's Titanic Memorial in that the male figure is completely nude with drapery flowing over his shoulder.

The final work, which is considered Whitney's greatest achievement in sculpture, was unveiled by President Taft's widow on May 26, 1931, along Rock Creek Parkway near New Hampshire Avenue. The 18 foot figure was actually sculpted by John Horrigan from a single block of red granite in Quincy Massachusetts. The entire work, including its six foot pedestal and thirty foot long exedra designed by the architect of the Lincoln Memorial, Henry Bacon, was completed in 1930.



*John Horrigan—Sculpting the Memorial*

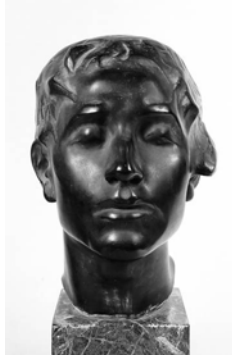
There is scant information regarding the seventeen year delay from the work's commission to dedication. Prior to the U.S. entry into World War I, Whitney, in the Spring of 1914, established and financed a field hospital for wounded allied soldiers in France, who she personally cared for until 1915, when she suffered what appears as a nervous breakdown and returned to New York.

During the 1920's, Whitney spent far more time working in her Paris studio exhibiting works including a black marble bust of the Titanic Memorial in 1921, which was purchased by the French Government and remains on display in Paris at the Musee national d'Art

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moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou. Commentators have suggested this work and the memorial itself may actually have more to do with the loss of her brother on the Lusitania than her well healed aristocratic acquaintances on the Titanic.



*Titanic Memorial Bust  
Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1921)*

Whitney's greatest achievement in art did not come as a sculptor but, as a patron of American arts. Having commissioned numerous works and assembled one of the largest collections of American art in 1924, she requested the Metropolitan Museum of Art to accept her collection as a gift for which she would build the Met a new wing to display it. The Met declined the offer which led Whitney to found the Whitney Museum of American Art installing her longtime personal secretary, Juliana Force, as the museum's first curator. Force was of like mind when it came to celebrating life. Force was renowned for greeting guests at one of Whitney's studio parties while sitting in the bathtub drinking champagne.

Today, being included in a Whitney Biennial Exhibition is one of the highest honors that can be bestowed in American arts. Paradoxically, in 2000 when the Whitney published the most important American artists from 1900 to 2000, *American Century, Art and Culture*, the museum's founder was included, not as an artist but, merely as the subject of the 1916 painting by Robert Henri.

In 1966, the Memorial was removed and stored at Ft. Washington, Maryland during the construction of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. It was re-erected in 1968 without ceremony on the Washington Channel.

Those responsible for its current site selection could hardly have picked a more inauspicious location. Leaving aside whether Whitney or the memorial merit inclusion in the pantheon of American art, the memorial remains

relevant, not as an homage to chivalry as the Committee intended but, far more darkly, industrializations gift to modernity—spectacular carnage on an unprecedented scale. This is, after all, the very essence of the fascination with the Titanic and is equally apropos for what would establish itself as the most violent century in history.

As this is written in the winter of 2008, the monument is showing signs of its neglect. Bacon's exedra suffers from significant spalling, which will soon efface its carved flanking dolphins, and the figure's head is covered in guano, obliterating its features.

Amidst so much "world class" hyperbole and a waterfront "history" that simply does not exist, returning the memorial to the central promenade where it can be appreciated makes far more sense than juxtaposed to a remote weather station at the far southern end of the bulkhead.

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## **WINTER WATER**

For the safety of your neighbors and marina staff, disconnect your hose immediately after filling your water tank. Do NOT use a wrench on any tight water spigot handles as more likely than not if the spigot will not turn by hand it has frozen. Employing a wrench or other tool in attempting to turn the spigot on will break internal components which will require marina staff to replace it. If you can't turn the spigot handle by hand, wait until it unfreezes or contact the marina office for assistance.

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## **SLIP WAITING LISTS**

We have names on our wait list for all sized slips in the marina. If you do not intend to re-rent your slip for the 2008 contract year (4/1/08-3/31/09), please advise us as soon as you know so that we may advise those on the wait list that we have slips available for them. Likewise, if you do not return your completed 2008 Slip License Agreement by close of business Monday, 3/31/08, we will begin to assume that we have your slip available to rent to someone on the wait list.

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## EVENT / PARTY BARGE

K-dock will be cleaned off of bird droppings and the tent cover re-placed in late March. Don't forget to get your reservations in early if you plan to have a party on the Event Barge. Reservation forms are available in the Dock Master's office. Only Gangplank Marina slipholders may reserve the barge. Groups/Organizations within the marina that reserve the barge must provide the marina with a certificate of general liability insurance (\$1million each occurrence, \$2million general aggregate, and the marina named as an additional insured). There is no fee to reserve the barge; however, there will be a minimum fee of \$125 if marina staff has to clean the barge immediately after your event. The barge cannot be reserved on major holidays. On holidays, the barge and the barbeque are open to all slipholders and their accompanied guests. The marina supplies propane for the barbeque, however, it is the slipholders' responsibility to advise us when the tank is empty. As a courtesy to your neighbors, please clean and re-cover the barbeque after you use it.

## WHERE TO PLACE RECYCLABLES

We do NOT handle the recycling of:

- Anti-freeze
- Gasoline
- Fire extinguishers

In the green commingled recycling bins on the docks:

- Paper (newspaper, cardboard and office paper)
- Aluminum, steel and tin cans
- Brown, green and clear glass bottles and jars
- Plastic food containers and bottles (optional)

In the Security Office:

- Fluorescent bulbs
- Household batteries

Get info from Security:

- Oil, diesel and other petroleum based products (NOT gasoline)
- Car & boat batteries

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## 2008 SLIP LICENSE AGREEMENTS

Approximately one-quarter of our slipholders have received their 2008 Slip License Agreements (SLAs) from the marina. Those who have been offered a 2008 SLA are those who are in full compliance in the following three areas: (1) evidence in marina files of 2007 or later DC vessel registration, (2) a Dock Master approved survey no older than two years, and (3) current insurance (\$500K liability with the marina named as an additional insured). If you feel you are in compliance with those three areas and have NOT yet received a 2008 SLA, please contact Deana in the Dock Master's office (202.554.5000 ext. 10) and she can review your file with you.

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### General Information:

#### Gangplank Marina

- **Phone #:** 202.554.5000
- **FAX #:** 202.554.2740
- **24-Hour Security Cell Phone:** 202.345.0663
- **Email Addresses:**
  - General Inquiries [GPDockOffice@comcast.net](mailto:GPDockOffice@comcast.net)
  - General Manager Dave Gohsman: [GPManger@comcast.net](mailto:GPManger@comcast.net)
  - and Assistant Manager J Nickerson: [GPMain@comcast.net](mailto:GPMain@comcast.net)
  - Dock Master Robert Lynch, Office Manager Sandie Glasgow, Admin Assistant Deana Volker: [GPDockOffice@comcast.net](mailto:GPDockOffice@comcast.net)
- **Website:** [www.gangplank.com](http://www.gangplank.com)
- **Business Office Hours:** Monday thru Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm / Saturday & Sunday, 9 am to 4 pm
- **Latitude & Longitude:** N 38 Degrees 52 minutes 36.2' / W 077 degrees 01 minute 20.0'

#### Other Important Phone Numbers

- **DC Metro PD Harbor Patrol:** 202.727.4582
- **DC Fire Boat:** 202.673.3200
- **USCG (Baltimore):** 410.576.2525

