

Preservation for the Future
Student Conservation Association Interns Aid in the Restoration of Monuments at
Valley Forge

At Valley Forge National Historical Park, over 40 monuments play an invaluable role in telling the story of Valley Forge. The monuments range from small stone markers that mark some of the brigade sites, to major bronze statues such as the General Wayne equestrian statue, to the magnificent National Memorial Arch. This year five of the major monuments were selected for preservation treatment.

All outdoor structures are affected by the elements, and monuments need regular care. As the years go by, noticeable amounts of green corrosion build on the bronze elements of the park's large outdoor statues. This corrosion is caused by airborne pollutants from traffic and power generation in this urbanized area. Acidic rain and snow also hasten the corrosive process as they pool atop the monuments. If the monuments are not treated at least every three to five years, this corrosion slowly eats away at the fine details.

The stone components of the monuments accumulate a significant amount of dirt and sap through the years, causing discoloration and wear. Though most of this grime can be washed off, the stone can be left stained beyond repair unless regular preservation treatment is given.

Annually the park staff inspects and evaluates the monuments throughout the park, determining which of them will be cleaned and waxed to slow the destructive aging process and preserve the monuments for future generations. This year's work included:

- the Daughters of the Revolution Obelisk, erected in 1901;
- the General Anthony Wayne Statue, erected in 1908;
- the Pennsylvania Columns, erected in 1910;
- the New Jersey Memorial, erected in 1913; and
- the General von Steuben Statue, erected in 1915.

Several stages are required to complete a full cycle of preservation. The bronze and stone are initially cleaned with hot water under high pressure, and hand scrubbed using soft bristle scrub brushes. Next, the pores of the bronze elements are opened through the use of heat from a blow torch, and wax is ground into the metal to seal it. A second coat of thinner wax is then sprayed or painted on to add even more protection. Finally, the monument is buffed by hand first with terry cloth, then with micro-fiber, and then with lambs' wool mitts to compact and harden the wax and provide a shine to the metal. Each of the five monuments is located on the park's tour route—please stop and look closely at them next time you are in the park—they are especially beautiful.

Some of this work is carried out high in the air on mechanical lifts; some is carried out at the hands-and-knees level. This year's work was carried out by Ronald Boice, park Exhibit Specialist at Valley Forge NHP and two talented cultural resource interns from the Student Conservation Association (SCA): Elizabeth Seubert of Farmington, Maine and Allison Edgren of Collegeville, Pennsylvania.

In the SCA program, interns learn a conservation ethic through their hands-on service, benefiting both the land and the individual. The experience leads many interns to become lifelong stewards of the land; 60% of SCA interns go on to careers in many areas of conservation. SCA is dedicated to encouraging a new generation of conservation leaders, advancing the land ethic, and helping to conserve our nation's natural and cultural resources. The organization places nearly 3,000 high school, college, and graduate student members in the field each year, and they provide more than 1.5 million hours of conservation service in national parks, forests and other public lands.

To find out more about the SCA, contact Kevin Hamilton at 603-543-1700 extension 185, or at khamilton@theSCA.org, or visit the website at www.theSCA.org. To find out about other internships or cultural resource volunteer opportunities at Valley Forge NHP, check our website at [XXXXXX](#).