The Washington/Veteran's Circle World War I Memorial Monument in Hopewell was the first World War I monument in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It was financed and erected by Hopewell Post No. 80 of the American Legion and dedicated on Memorial Day, 1924. It is a prominent, highly visible and imposing edifice, anchoring a traffic circle on South 15th Avenue in the City of Hopewell. At the time of its construction, it was the entrance to the city. It is unlike any other World War I memorial in the state. The designers incorporated industrial components in the construction, so it reflects the unique industrial history of the city. For almost 100 years this handsome structure has borne witness to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is a decidedly unique monument that is an important part of the city's architectural history and deserves state and national recognition. This designation would validate the importance of the structure and help ensure that future preservation efforts are undertaken appropriately and sympathetically.

*In 1997 the name was change to Veteran's Memorial Circle. Memorial benches were placed that honor Hopewellians who lost their lives in all wars, not just WWI.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits?  Yes _____ No _____

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR’s easement program? Yes _____ No _____

1. General Property Information

Property name: Washington/Veteran’s Memorial Circle WWI Monument.

Property address: S. 15th Avenue and Washington Circle
City or Town: Hopewell, Virginia
Zip code: 23860

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: City of Hopewell

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):
Building _____ Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: The circle is 100 feet in circumference = approximately 796 square feet

Setting (choose only one of the following):
Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural _____
Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The monument is located in the center of a traffic circle on South 15th Avenue. The circle has a circumference of 100 feet = 796 square feet, and the land is flat. It is a heavily trafficked area, but when it was designed and constructed, beginning in 1921, this was the entrance to the city, hence the stone City Gates design was particularly appropriate. The surrounding area is zoned commercial. There are currently several mature Chamaecyparis shrubs along the outer edge of the circle, two marking the steps/entrance to the monument. None of these plantings are near the monument itself. A local garden club also maintains small flower beds on the perimeter of the circle, as well. The surrounding concrete coping and sidewalks need repair and/or replacement, since they are approximately 100 years old.

3. Architectural Description
Architectural Style(s): ____________________________

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: John Cortesini

If the builder is known, please list here: John Cortesini

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1921 construction began, dedicated in 1924

Narrative Description:
In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance, and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodeling, or other alterations.

The Washington Circle Memorial design is one of a massive portal to the City of Hopewell. When the monument was originally constructed, this location did, indeed, mark the entrance to the City of Hopewell, from neighboring Prince George County. The following description is taken from page 92 of the History of the American Legion, 1919-1924, published by the William Byrd Press, Inc., Richmond, Virginia.

MONUMENT IMPOSING

Hopewell Post 80 is exceedingly proud of the fact of having erected and unveiled the first monument in Virginia dedicated to the boys who made the supreme sacrifice.

The imposing monument stands in Washington Circle, at the entrance to the town. This monument consists of two columns of Vermont granite, twenty feet in height, four feet in diameter, sixteen feet apart, connected with a handsome iron grill work, bearing ten insignias of the American legion, surmounted by a large bronze eagle. At the top and side of each column are large porcelain globes, upon which are the engraved the emblems of the Legion and Auxiliary. Midway between these columns is a very handsome gothic fountain seven feet in height by six feet in diameter, in the center of which is a figure of Cupid. The circle is 100 feet in circumference, around which is a concrete coping. Beautiful beds of flowers will ornament the entire circle.
John Cortesini was the designer and contractor, and his name is visible on the structure. On the North and South sides, the date 1924 is clearly visible. Mr. Cortesini, a Richmond concrete contractor, was known as the “King of Concrete” because of all of the work that he performed in the city. This title was bestowed upon him by Hopewell’s first mayor, Dr. D. Lane Elder. Some say that the columns are acid drip tanks salvaged from a ravine. They would have been used in Dupont’s legendary guncotton factory.

American Legion Post 80 which was responsible for the design and construction of the monument, was organized in 1919 and remained viable through the late 1950’s. The veterans who built this wonderful monument established a “Last Man Standing Club”. Having purchased an expensive bottle of whiskey to be left sealed, the “Last Man” was sworn to set up glasses, open the bottle and drink a toast to his fallen comrades. This decades old pact was fulfilled by Augustus “Gus” Robbins in 1980, the “Last Man Standing”. VFW Post #637 currently cares for the structure, and in 1997 a secondary memorial was erected on the site honoring Hopewellians who have made the supreme sacrifice in all wars. At that time the name was changed from the Washington Circle Memorial to Veteran’s Circle.

The monument is in fair condition. It has obviously suffered the effects of exposure to the elements. Metallic staining is excessive and accelerated. It would benefit from treatment. The community venerates this monument, and it continues to be the site of Veteran’s Day and Memorial Day festivities. Several local VFW and American Legion chapters have contributed to cosmetic refreshes of plantings within the circle. The fountain was recently restored to full working order, and plans are underway to install an irrigation system to maintain the plant materials.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

As referenced in the narrative above, a secondary memorial was erected on the site honoring Hopewellians who have died in service to their country. Memorial stone benches have also been placed within the circle. No changes or alterations to the original monument have been made.

4. Property’s History and Significance
In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

According to information in the 1924 publication, History of the American Legion, 1919-1924, the “form of the memorial was agreed on at a meeting of the Post (80) and Auxiliary February last and steps were immediately taken to have it completed in time for unveiling Memorial Day.” We know that it was dedicated on Memorial Day, 1924. It was the first World War I memorial in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The designer and contractor seems to be John Cortesini, a concrete contractor in Richmond, Virginia. It is a unique, one-of-a-kind structure. Over the course of the last 100 years the site has endured periods of neglect, and at one time there were calls to demolish and/or move it. However, in the 1960’s community interest was rekindled, and the site has garnered attention. One observer noted that the massive stone City Gates form an architecturally harmonious approach to downtown Hopewell, as well as a monument of civic pride. It is documented in DHR records under ID #116-0018.
5. Property Ownership  (Check as many categories as apply):
   Private: _____ Public\Local  x  Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

   Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)
   name/title:  Chris Ward, Interim Director of Planning and Development, City of Hopewell
   organization:  City Liaison to Architectural Review Board (ARB)
   street & number:  300 North Main Street
   city or town:  Hopewell  state:  Virginia  zip code:  23860
   e-mail:  cward@hopewellva.gov  telephone:  804-541-2221

   Legal Owner's Signature:  
   "Signature required for processing all applications."

   In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.
   Contact person: 
   Daytime Telephone:  

   Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)
   name/title:  Rita E. Joyner, Chairman
   organization:  Architectural Review Board
   street & number:  711 Francis Street
   city or town:  Hopewell  state:  Virginia  zip code:  23860
   e-mail:  Ljoyner2@comcast.net  telephone:  804-731-9380

6. Notification

   In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager
   name/title:  March Altman/City Manager
   locality:  City of Hopewell
   street & number:  300 N. Main Street
   city or town:  Hopewell  state:  Virginia  zip code:  23860
   telephone:  804-541-2203
Monument

1924 Dedicated on Memorial Day

1928 Appomattox Garden Club plants Barberry bushes

1944 City offers to aid in repairs

1946 Considered and eyesore and traffic hazard. The Legion wanted to Chamber to put out feelers as to moving the monument or doing away with it.

1947 Work begins to improve the monument. Old shrubs are removed, new eagle and lights.

1958 Damage to concrete curb due to car accident.

1961 The Hopewell High School D. O. Club cleaned the stone and the rust off of the cannon.

During the 1960's Veteran's Day parade began at the monument and ended downtown.

1965 Rejuvenation of the monument.

1968 Local high school fraternity cleans the circle, paints the grillwork and plans to fix plumbing to the fountain.

1969 Cannon, given to the City by World War I Veterans is removed. Rumors are swirling the entire monument will be removed.

1970 Cannon returned.

1973 Hopewell Garden Club plants summer and fall flowers at the monument.

1973 Cannon hit by car. The wheels were knocked off and other damage.

1975 Restoration of the monument began.

1976 Restoration completed by the VFW.

1976 Cannon repaired and returned to the monument.

1987 Cannon vandalized. Shop students ant HHS volunteered to fix it. The repaired cannon was returned to its place of honor.

1997-1998 Monument refurbished. Name changed to Veteran's Memorial Circle. The monument now pays tribute to all Hopewellians who lost their lives in war. The benches were added and the MIA Flag unveiled.
HISTORY OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA

1919-1924

Including History of Individual Posts
and Roster of Membership
as of August 1, 1924

Published by
THE WILLIAM BYRD PRESS, INC.
RICHMOND, VA.
HOPEWELL POST No. 80
HOPEWELL

The Post was organized October 2, 1919, in “B” Village Y. M. C. A. Since the organization the commanders have been as follows: Dr. J. N. Eldler, 1920; W. U. Mosher, 1921; Captain O. S. Lineros, 1923; Major W. B. Davis; 1924; Major H. H. Hunt.

ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY

The Post has been active in all charitable and civic movements since its organization. Holding Memorial and Armistice Day celebrations annually.

Aiding the ex-service men materially and securing positions. One of the most valuable bits of public service of the Post was the assistance rendered in beautifying the parks of Hopewell. The present officers are: Major H. H. Hunt, commander; Captain Marcus P. Taylor, vice-commander; B. B. Carter, adjutant; R. C. Petts, finance officer; F. H. Hildebran, war risk officer; J. W. Graham, chaplain; J. J. Manchia, sergeant-at-arms.

MONUMENT IMPOSING

Hopewell Post No. 80 is exceedingly proud of the fact of having erected and unveiled the first monument in Virginia dedicated to the boys who made the supreme sacrifice.

The imposing monument stands in Washington Circle, at the entrance to the town. This monument consists of two columns of Vermont granite, twenty feet in height, four feet in diameter, sixteen feet apart, connected with a handsome iron grill work, bearing ten insignias of the American Legion, surmounted by a large bronze eagle. At the top and sides of each column are large porcelain globes, upon which are engraved the emblems of the Legion and Auxiliary. Midway between these columns is a very handsome gothic fountain seven feet in height by six feet in diameter, in the center of which is a figure of Cupid. The circle is 100 feet in circumference, around which is a concrete coping. Beautiful beds of flowers will ornament the entire circle.

The form of the memorial was agreed on at a meeting of the Post and Auxiliary February last and steps were immediately taken to have it completed in time for unveiling Memorial Day. On this occasion we had the honor of having with us to make the principal talks Dr. Kate Waller Barrett and Colonel John A. Cutchins.
The fountain did not shoot up very high.
MEMORIAL UNDER CONSTRUCTION to be UNVEILED on MAY 30 by HOPEWELL POST NO. 80
Dedicated
In Memory Of
The Brave Veterans Of
Hopewell Who Gave
Their Lives In The
Service Of
Their Country

WORLD WAR I
WORLD WAR II
KOREA
VIETNAM
DESERT STORM

DONATED BY VFW POST 637
1997
PIF column
PIF Cortesini Plaque
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

JERRY D. ELLIS
APRIL 14, 1953
APRIL 11, 2018

IN MEMORY OF

JERRY D. ELLIS