

Restoration ongoing for Mast of the Maine; upcoming for JFK flame

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Two highly-visited sites at Arlington National Cemetery are going through significant restoration and replacement projects.

The Mast of the Maine, located in section 24 on the west side of the Memorial Amphitheater, is in the first stage of a conservation and restoration project that is expected to be complete by Memorial Day 2014. The memorial is the actual main mast from the USS Maine, which was sunk in Havana Harbor, Cuba, Feb. 15, 1898.

The National Park Service is conducting the project in two phases. In the first phase, which began in September and is nearly complete, investigators are conducting thorough inspections of the memorial to identify and document construction assemblies and deficiencies and to recommend treatment options. Actual restoration work will take place in phase two of the project, expected to start in the spring. During this phase, the investigators will restore the memorial mast and rigging and associated plaza and concrete steps. The project is intended to restore the memorial to its original condition as much as possible, including restoring features that have been lost, damaged or altered over time.

The second project includes the eternal flame at the John F. Kennedy gravesite. The current flame, which was installed in 1967, requires replacement of underground parts that are no longer working effectively or efficiently.

The project includes installing a new natural gas burner for the flame with three additional burners available as needed for future replacement; installing two new ground utility boxes, one for the electrical components and one for the gas regulator; installing new power and gas lines to the utility



The Mast of the Maine is undergoing a restoration project to bring it back to its original condition as much as possible. *Photo by Melissa Bohan*

boxes and installing new spark modules and igniters. Other improvements include a new remote control panel which will provide a remote shut off switch and new sump pumps with remote failure alarms.

The project is expected to start in the spring, will take place during the cemetery's operating hours and be blocked from view by a six-foot white fence. During the work, visitors will still have access to the family gravesites and will be able to see a temporary flame. Once the work is complete, the eternal flame will look as it did previously.

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