



(Picture from LOC early Mall)

Part 11: Concise History of the National Mall and Potomac Parks.

Today, the National Mall serves as America's front lawn – its “common” where public gatherings take place -- its playing field where athletes, actors, advocates, and citizens come to play the games of their choosing. Thrust onto the national stage during the building of the Federal City, the National Mall has evolved and expanded along with the nation that created it. However, the story of the Mall, one of the most famous and historic landscapes in the world, begins with a discussion of humble marshes, meadows and cultures.

The Tiber Creek floodplain which ran along what is now the base of Capitol Hill, was the hunting and fishing ground of Native Americans. With seventeenth century British colonization, most of this land eventually came into the ownership of the Carroll and Burnes families.

The Residence Act of 1790 authorized the president to choose the location for the new federal city. President George Washington chose an area between Maryland and Virginia at the confluence of the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River), Rock Creek,

Tiber Creek, and the Potomac River. The Act also designated three commissioners to have immediate authority over purchasing and accepting "...such quantity of land for use of the United States." Most of the land acquired by the commissioners, including the Carroll and Burnes properties, became this nation's first federal public parks. President Washington hired the military engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant to design the Federal City. It was L'Enfant's intention "...to turn a savage wilderness into a Garden of Eden."

The L'Enfant Plan of 1791. L'Enfant envisioned a city of parks. The Mall, or "Grand Avenue," was to be the central landscape of the city, stretching westward from the Capitol to a proposed site for a monument to George Washington, then conceived as an equestrian statue rather than the obelisk seen today. L'Enfant designed a formal park emanating from the foot of Capitol Hill where a grand cascade, fed by the Tiber Creek, would supply water for fountains, basins, and a canal running parallel to the Mall. Surrounding the Mall would be public buildings that housed government offices, museums, theaters, and foreign embassies which L'Enfant felt would provide "...all such sort of places as may be attractive to the learned and afford diversion to the idle."

Personality clashes with the three commissioners led to L'Enfant's dismissal in 1792. President Washington and Congress both approved a minor revision of L'Enfant's plan that was prepared by his successor, the surveyor Andrew Ellicott.

The revised plan was never fully implemented. In the following decades, growth and construction went unregulated. Despite commitment to an overarching plan, numerous construction projects began.

Workers erected the conservatory of the U.S. Botanic Gardens at the foot of Capitol Hill, the Smithsonian Institution (the "Castle"), and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad tracks, all of which impacted the viewshed and landscape of the developing "Grand Avenue".

The Downing Plan of 1851. In 1851, President Millard Fillmore appointed "rural architect" Andrew Jackson Downing to devise a landscape plan for the Mall. This was the first detailed landscaping proposal for the Mall. Downing desired a naturalistic setting. Downing's design for the Mall called for an informal setting, cut by curving carriageways, sidewalks, and plantings of trees and shrubs that would simulate a natural environment. Iron benches were added in the "European style" to encourage people to rest and enjoy their park. The Smithsonian "Castle," rather than the vista from the Capitol, became the centerpiece of the design. This plan was never completed, partly because of Downing's death a year later, and partly due to the nation's preoccupation with the impending threat of disunion. The Civil War that followed assured the neglect of Downing's plan. The Mall developed in fits and starts, with small tracts developed and administered by different agencies, with no unifying design goals.

Developments in the late 19th century included the construction of the old Department of Agriculture building, a depot for the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad, and the completion of the Washington Monument. Most significant was the creation of 723 acres of land from a reclamation project. By dredging the Potomac River, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was able to create West and East Potomac Parks. An Act of 1897 designated

these new parks for scenic and recreational purposes.

The National Park Service on the Mall.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order #6166, which reorganized the National Park Service. As part of this reorganization, the Park Service acquired stewardship of the Mall. The following year, in order to consolidate the Mall and complete the Senate Parks Commission (McMillan) Plan, the Park Service gained jurisdiction of Union Square (from the Architect of Congress), Seaton Park (from the Treasury Department), and the Agriculture Grounds (from the Agriculture Department).

With these acquisitions, the Park Service was able to develop the Mall as one centrally administered greensward. Using funds from the Depression-era Works Progress Administration, the Park Service cleared the Mall of structures, installed lighting and underground sprinkler systems, straightened the roads on the east-west axis, landscaped Union Square, and planted 333 American elms to flank and highlight the now opened vista between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. Also in 1934, Congress authorized the Thomas Jefferson Memorial directly south of the White House, completing the north-south alignment that complements the Mall's east-west axis.

Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill Plan of 1966. To prepare for an anticipated increase in visitation during the 1976 Bicentennial, the Park Service invited the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill to make new design suggestions. This 1966 plan reaffirmed the Mall as "the great park of the American people" and reemphasized that the park should continue to be a national open space, preserving its vistas and providing a setting for national memorials, buildings,

and events. The main recommendations were for building a reflecting pool at Union Square to serve as a visual link with the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool at the opposite end of the east-west axis and for the development of Constitution Gardens as a Downing-inspired, naturalistic relief to the formality of the re-christened "National Mall."

Today the National Mall is home to majestic and historic vistas linking the Capitol, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The National Mall also provides sites for other national memorials, celebrations, demonstrations, vigils, and protests, a wide assortment of recreational opportunities, and habitat for many native and migratory species of wildlife. It continues to serve as a national open space, providing both classroom and playground to "the learned" and "the idle."

Potomac Park. When the city of Washington was in its infancy, there were few farms in the surrounding, undeveloped territory. As settlement and development increased, citizens cleared land for roads and buildings, canals and bridges. As a result, loose soil and debris washed into the Potomac River. Below Georgetown, the water velocity of the Potomac River decreased abruptly, causing sediment and debris to settle on the river bottom and along bridges and shallows.

Silt and debris accumulated into mud flats at Long Bridge, the site of today's 14th Street Bridge. As the river continued to silt up, its navigability was threatened. Local merchants became alarmed, fearful of losing commerce and profits. At first the merchants hired engineers to dredge out the shipping channels, but without fail, the channels would silt up again. As silt deposits grew

along these mud flats, so did grasses. This area became known as "Potomac Flats".

In 1867, Congress designated the Army Corps of Engineers as the proponent for public works and improvements in the District of Columbia. The next year, Corps of Engineers Officer in Charge Major Nathaniel Michler submitted a plan to reduce the width of the Potomac River, thus increasing its water velocity. He believed the speed of the water would attack the mud flats and wash the accumulating silt and debris down river and away from the all-important shipping channels.

In 1870, Major Michler altered his plan and offered to reclaim land from the river. He said "In this way the water could be confined to the main channel; the flats, now detrimental to the city could be employed to some useful purpose, instead of being deposited in the river, as has heretofore been the case".

Over the years, numerous engineers suggested plans to improve the navigability of the river and reclaim land from the Potomac. In 1882, a board headed by Lieutenant Colonel Quincy A. Gillmore of the Army Corps of Engineers was created to consider alternative proposals. Later that year, with congressional funds assured, work finally began on what was to become Potomac Park.

Soon after, workers started building retaining walls and sluicing ponds, and eventually they began dredging operations. In 1887, engineers began to install gates at the entrance and exit of the pond that would become the Tidal Basin. The gates would work with the tides. As water in the river rose, the Washington Channel gate would be pushed shut and the river gate would be forced open to let water fill the basin. As the

tide receded, the water in the basin would push the river gate shut and force the channel gate open, flushing out the Washington Channel each time the tide changed, thus the name "Tidal Basin." By 1890, the reclaimed land rose above the "high tide" stage and the Tidal Basin gates were completed and tested.

As dredging continued, officials and citizens began to discuss what could be done with the 723.4 acres of new land. Some wanted a park, others called for commercial development. Railroad companies and industrialists also had their eyes on the land.

Indeed, many Congressmen supported selling the land to pay for the cost of its reclamation! In 1895, Congress disapproved a motion to designate the area a public park. However, influential supporters continued to lobby for the park. One such proponent was Washington banker and financier Charles Carroll Glover. Finally, on March 3, 1897, Congress passed Senate Bill #3307 which established, "The entire area known as Potomac Flats, and now being reclaimed, together with the tidal reservoirs, be, and the same are hereby, made and declared a public park, under the name of the Potomac Park, and to be ever helped and used as a park for the recreation and pleasure of the people."

Soon after the bill passed the Senate, Glover visited President Cleveland at the White House. During the visit Glover commented that it was "...certainly gratifying to know and to feel that wonderful stretch of land is to become the great National Park of this country". The President told Glover that he had not yet signed the bill into law, and explained his preference to use the land for a truck garden. Glover spent the next hour trying to convince Cleveland that the land should be a park, but left without receiving the President's endorsement. Eventually,

Glover's argument made the difference and President Cleveland signed the bill.

On August 12, 1901, the first 31 acres of reclaimed land, adjacent to the Washington Monument, were transferred to the office of Public Buildings and Grounds for development as park land. By 1909, West Potomac Park was finished and would soon be the site of the Lincoln Memorial and the Reflecting Pool. By 1911, all the land in East Potomac Park, now home of Hains Point and the Jefferson Memorial was completed.

On March 2, 1934, Potomac Park was reorganized as a part of the National Park Service which maintains it, "...to be ever held and used as a park for the recreation and pleasure of the people."

Lesser-Known and Rarely Visited Attractions Within Our Park. Within the Mall and the Potomac Parks, there are numerous places of interest that are not commonly discussed or frequented. These include statues, bridges, fountains, special stones, gardens, and even memorials.

●**Lesser-Known Statues:**

The Awakening. At Hains Point, the southern end of East Potomac Park, you can see a statue that resembles a mighty giant, emerging from the ground. Sculptor J. Seward Johnson, Jr. technically owns this work but has displayed it through an open-ended loan to National Park Service.

Mr. Johnson hopes the visual experience will challenge viewers to create their own narratives. He also means for visitors to climb upon the statue as part of their experience. This work was installed May 27-29, 1980. It was cast over a two year

period at the foundry of Johnson Atelier. The Awakening is made of cast aluminum and consists of five parts. Workers had to use six truckloads of topsoil to install the statue and give it the desired effect. The sculptor's local representative is Paula A. Stoeke, Curator, Sculpture Placement, P.O. Box 9709, Washington, DC 20016, (202) 362-9310. All queries concerning this sculpture should be directed to her. Posters of the sculpture have been available through Sculpture Placement for \$15.00 each.

In 2008, the Awakening has been moved to a new location at National Harbor in Maryland.

John Paul Jones Statue. The first monument in Potomac Park was dedicated on April 17, 1912.



This was a statue of the American Revolutionary War naval hero, John Paul Jones. Commodore John Paul Jones was born John Paul, Jr. in Arbigland, Scotland on July 6, 1747. He added the surname Jones later in life. He died in Paris, France, on July 18, 1792.

On June 8, 1906, Congress established the John Paul Jones Memorial authorizing its erection on public grounds. Congress created a commission to choose a site for the memorial and oversee its construction. In 1908, the commission chose Mr. Charles Henry Niehaus to be the sculptor of the memorial statue. They selected a site for the memorial in the newly created Potomac Park in 1909.

The bronze statue of John Paul Jones, by Niehaus, represents Commodore Jones standing on the deck of the *Bonhomme Richard* during an engagement with the *Serapis* and other British ships off the coast of England, September 20, 1779. He is wearing the uniform of a Naval Officer of that period. On his chest is the Military Order of Merit given to him by the French King, Louis XVI. The base of the statue was designed by Thomas Hastings, an architect and associate of Niehaus.

Above the statue there is an eagle and wreath with an anchor on each side and the inscription:

JOHN PAUL JONES

Beneath the statue is the inscription:

**1747 1792
FIRST
TO COMPEL A FOREIGN
MAN-OF-WAR
TO STRIKE COLOR TO THE
STARS AND STRIPES**

On the opposite side of the base is a relief showing John Paul Jones raising the Stars and Stripes on a United States warship. Above the relief is the inscription:

**SURRENDER?
I HAVE NOT YET BEGUN TO FIGHT**

Below the relief is inscribed:

**IN LIFE HE HONORED
THE FLAG-IN DEATH THE
FLAG SHALL HONOR HIM.**

It was on September 23, 1779 that Jones, while in command of the *Bonhomme Richard* captured the much superior warship *Serapis*. During the battle, seeing that the *Bonhomme Richard* was mortally damaged, the Captain of the *Serapis* called out, asking if they would surrender. To which Commodore Jones gave his now famous reply, "Surrender? I have not yet begun to fight!" Jones captured the *Serapis* and transferred his crew and Flag to that ship and two days later the *Bonhomme Richard* sank. Congress later gave Jones a gold medal for his capture of the *Serapis*.

Jones was the first to raise the American flag above an American man-of-war. This was probably the "Grand Union" flag which had the Union Jack and thirteen stripes. He was also the first to raise the current form of the American flag, the "Stars and Stripes" above an American man-of-war. In fact, when Congress adopted the "Stars and Stripes" as the national flag, the same resolution appointed John Paul Jones to the command of the U.S. man-of-war *Ranger*.

His response to this was:

"The flag and I are twins; born the same hour, from the same womb of destiny, we cannot be parted in life or in death."

He was also the first to receive a salute to the American flag from a foreign power, that being from France. Commodore Jones was the first to raise the American Flag over a captured enemy man-of-war.

John Ericsson Statue. This statue rests at the corner of Independence Avenue and Ohio Drive, just south of the Lincoln Memorial, sculpted by J.E. Fraser. The seated figure of Ericsson carved in pink granite honors him as the inventor of the screw propeller and designer of the iron-clad Monitor. It is the largest single block of granite outside of Egypt. The figure is surrounded by an allegorical group. The granite base is 150 ft. in diameter.



John Ericsson Statue

Approved by an Act of Congress August 31, 1916 (39 Stat. 671). Erected by the United States Government and private subscription by Americans of Scandinavian descent at a cost of \$60,000. Dedicated May 29, 1926.

•Lesser-Known Bridges:

Kutz Memorial Bridge. One of Washington's most "visited" memorials, but probably one of its least known, is Kutz Memorial Bridge which crosses the Tidal Basin in West Potomac Park. The bridge was named in honor of Brig. Gen. Charles W. Kutz, who served as the District of Columbia's Engineer Commissioner in 1911-1917, 1918-1921,

and 1941-1915. Kutz is remembered for writing the District's first zoning law, and for his work in regulating the city's public utility companies.

During his last term in office, Kutz oversaw the building of 15 bridges in the city, including the one that now bears his name. (From 1878 until home rule began in 1967, three Commissioners appointed by the president governed the District. One of them was always an engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers who oversaw the District's public works and highways.)

Born in Reading, Pennsylvania in 1870, Kutz graduated second in the West Point class of 1893. He joined the Army Corps of Engineers, coming to Washington in 1914 to oversee area river and harbor improvements, a position which led President Wilson to appoint him Engineering Commissioner. World War I interrupted Kutz's first term as he left for France to command the 13th Engineers.

Reappointed District Engineer Commissioner upon his return, Kutz served until 1921. Kutz retired from the Army in 1930, but he was recalled for emergency service in early 1941. Soon reappointed to his old post, he served throughout World War II, retiring once more in September 1945. Kutz died in Washington on January 25, 1951.

The bridge itself was built in 1942-1943 as part of the westward extension of Independence Avenue from 14th Street to Memorial Bridge. This was done at the request of the War Department, which wanted better access to its new Pentagon Building across the Potomac River in Arlington.

Designed by architect Paul Cret, the bridge is of continuous steel beam and concrete construction. 840 feet long, the bridge is supported by four main piers, and five smaller piers. These piers are concrete, faced with light gray colored granite stones. The bridge's abutments are also concrete, but are faced with a beige colored limestone. The bridge's roadway is 34 feet wide, with 6 foot wide sidewalks on each side.

The District Commissioners awarded the contract for the bridge's construction to the firm of Alexander and Repass of Des Moines, Iowa on June 5, 1942 at a cost of \$773,845. It is interesting to note that Archie Alexander, the firm's founder and senior partner, was one of the few African-American engineers in the United States. Despite the prejudices of the time, Alexander had built a successful contracting business which specialized in bridge and public works construction. His partner, Maurice Repass, who was white, was a football team mate of Alexander's at the University of Iowa. Active in Republican politics, President Eisenhower appointed Alexander governor of the Virgin Islands in 1954.

Alexander and Repass completed the bridge construction in late July 1943, and the District of Columbia Highway Department opened it to traffic at the end of that month without any dedication ceremony or fanfare.

Originally known as the Independence Avenue Bridge, the District of Columbia Commissioners voted to name the span in honor of Kutz on July 17, 1953. The Commissioners unveiled a bronze plaque naming the bridge for the General at a dedication ceremony on February 24, 1954. Among those attending the

ceremony was Kutz's widow Elizabeth, and National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth.

•Lesser-Known Stone Markers and Ceremonial Objects:

Jefferson Pier Stone. Just west and north of the Washington Monument, one can find a small headstone like marker. It bears the following inscription:

“Position of the Jefferson Pier Erected Dec. 18, 1804. Recovered and Reerected Dec. 2, 1889. District of Columbia.”

The original marker was moved or destroyed in 1874 as engineers were again studying the Washington Monument foundation prior to recommencing construction. The marker provides interesting insight into the mind of President Thomas Jefferson, a surveyor, map maker, and scientist in his own right. In 1804, the President ordered Nicholas King to survey a line that passed south through the center of the President's House (White House) to a point where it intersected a line drawn due west from the Capitol. King accomplished the survey on October 15, 1804. In December, workers erected a small monument or pyramid of stones at that point.

President Jefferson wanted the north-south line running through that point to serve as the country's official first or prime meridian, the point of demarcation for east-west measurements. Of course America never fully adopted Jefferson's idea of having a national meridian and we recognize Greenwich, England as the prime meridian for official east-west demarcation.

This coincidentally marks the point proposed in 1790-1791 by L'Enfant for the equestrian statue of George Washington. Scholars still dispute the reason for the current positioning of the Washington Monument: did Robert Mills believe the area marked by the Jefferson Pier was too soft to support the monument to Washington, or did he simply allow Jefferson's stone to remain where it had been positioned?

Japanese Pagoda. Adjacent to the southern Tidal Basin entranceway to the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial, you will find an authentic Japanese pagoda. This granite structure was dedicated on April 18th, 1958, a gift to the city of Washington from the Mayor of Yokohama, Japan. In 1957, it arrived as a set of disassembled pieces, packed in five crates, and unfortunately, devoid of any assembly instructions. Specialists from the Smithsonian Institution assembled the pagoda based upon other examples.

Japanese Lantern. Just north of the Tidal Basin, in a grove of cherry trees south of Independence Avenue and just west of Kutz Bridge rests a centuries-old granite Japanese lantern. This was a gift from the Governor of Tokyo to D.C. Commissioners as a token of Japanese-American understanding. The gift specifically commemorated the centennial landing of Commodore Matthew Perry in Japan.

The Japanese had originally offered the lantern in November, 1921, sending a photograph of the proposed lantern with their written proposal. The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the photograph and proposal and suggested a smaller decorative lantern instead. Unfortunately, Japanese-American

relations were then strained by confrontational meetings that occurred during the Washington Naval Conference, and the Japanese postponed the offer indefinitely. Further preempted by World War II, this stone lantern was finally dedicated on March 30, 1954.

The lantern was constructed in Japan around 1651 and was part of a pair of lanterns dedicated to warlord Tokugawa Iemitsu in that year. The remaining one stands in Tokyo.

•Lesser-Known Gardens:

Constitution Gardens. Constitution Gardens is a memorial to our national Founders and their efforts. The land was reclaimed from the Potomac River. The old river bank followed Constitution Avenue, 17th Street, and Maine Avenue. Late 19th century reclamation projects added this land. During World War I and II temporary office buildings stood here, the last being torn down in 1971. In 1972 President Richard M. Nixon announced that a formal park commemorating events relating to the Revolution and the founding of the republic would be created.

Construction began in 1974. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Inc. designed a landscape that would complement the nearby Presidential memorials and offer a reflective setting. The park consists of 50 acres, including a 6.5 acre artificial lake with a one-acre island. Constitution Gardens was dedicated on May 27, 1978. On September 17, 1986, President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation in honor of the Bicentennial of the Constitution. The proclamation made Constitution Gardens a living legacy dedicated to the commemoration of the

United States Constitution.

As a living legacy, Constitution Gardens has become a tribute to the successful experiment in government begun by the Founders. It is at quiet, contemplative spot, in the midst of a bustling capital.

German-American Friendship Gardens. Just north of the 16th Street Oval parking lot on the Washington Monument grounds lies a small garden created in 1983 by Senate Joint Resolution 260. This site commemorates the contributions made by people of German descent in the development of our country, as marked on 20 January, 1983 when President Reagan designated 1983 as the tri-centennial anniversary of German settlement in America.

•Lesser-Known Memorials:

56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial. On April 17, 1978, Congress authorized creation of the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial. The Signers' Memorial, designed by EDAW, Inc. consists of 56 low, horizontal granite stones in 13 groups that represent each of the original states. They form a half circle on a cobbled plaza at the center of the island. On each stone is carved the Signers signature, his profession, and his home. The memorial was dedicated on July 2, 1982.

The District of Columbia World War (I) Memorial, or The Memorial To The Armed Forces From The District Of Columbia Who Served Their Country In The World War. This circular, small, wonderful Greek-styled Doric temple stands just south of the Reflecting Pool along Independence Avenue.

On June 24, 1924, Congress established a commission to erect a memorial to those Washington, D.C. citizens who served in World War I. Construction began April 11, 1931 and was completed in November, 1932.

The memorial cost \$169,022 and was constructed by architects Frederick Brooke, Horace Peaslee, and Nathan Wyeth. With a diameter of 44 feet, the building, designed to be both a memorial and a bandstand, is said to be just large enough to accommodate the United States Marine Corps Band. The memorial is made of marble from Danby, Vermont, as are the outer elements of its larger cousin, the Jefferson Memorial. Twelve 47-foot tall fluted Doric columns support the dome, and two staircases ascend to the bandstand at the portico level.

The memorial cornerstone contains the names of the 26,000 D.C. residents who answered the call to duty during World War I. Six medallions featuring the official seals of the military departments are carved in the marble base of the memorial, as are the names of 500 residents who made the ultimate sacrifice during the war.

President Herbert Hoover dedicated the memorial on Armistice Day, November 11, 1931, at 11:00 a.m., the precise hour of the Armistice for World War I. As he gave his dedicatory speech, he could not have known how neglected this place would become in the 21st Century. He proclaimed that "Great shrines in our National Capital mark reverent remembrance of those who have given sacrifice and glory to the Nation... This temple will recall for all time their service and sacrifice."

The Grant Memorial. In 1895, Union war veterans began a movement to create a memorial to Grant. On February 23, 1901, Congress passed the Hepburn Act, which authorized \$250,000 for the Grant Memorial. It was the greatest amount of money ever spent on the commissioning of a statue. Edward Pearce Casey was chosen to be the architect, while Henry Merwin Shrady, whose father had been Grant's doctor, was chosen to be the sculptor. Their work would take 20 years to complete. The site was approved by Congress in 1906, the ground was broken in 1907, the marble superstructure was completed in 1909, the Artillery statue was erected in 1912, the Cavalry statue in 1916, and the Grant statue was completed in 1920.

Surrounding the memorial are bronze statues representing the army that Grant commanded. On the south side of the memorial is a depiction of an artillery unit moving into battle. A cavalry unit preparing for a charge is depicted on the north side. Both of these statues graphically illustrate the horrors of war with their representations of suffering in combat by both man and animal. Throughout, the figure of Grant is calmly watching the battle in progress. Infantry movements are shown in bas-relief on the pedestal. Nothing else appears on the pedestal except "GRANT" carved on its front.

At the time of its completion, the statue was the second largest equestrian statue in the world. Only the statue of King Victor Emmanuelle in Rome was larger.

The dedication was on April 22, 1922, the centennial of Grant's birth. His daughter and granddaughter unveiled the

statue. Architect Casey was present, but sculptor Shrady had died ten days before the ceremony. The Vice President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, accepted the Memorial on behalf of the people of the United States. Also in attendance were General John J. Pershing and Chief Justice William Howard Taft.

Located on the west side of the Capitol at

Union Square (3rd Street), the Grant Memorial brings to the National Mall a symbol of one man's desire to force a war to the extreme in order to ensure a lasting peace. The Grant Memorial signifies determination. No matter what the obstacle, Grant did not let anything get in the way of achieving final victory: the preservation of the Union.

Chronology Of the National Mall

Pre- European: Numerous Native American tribes occupied the areas within or adjacent to current D.C. The valley at the foot of present-day Capitol Hill, drained by Tiber Creek, provided fishing grounds for the Nacchatanke (later anglicized to Anacostia), the main tribe on the Maryland side of the Potomac. Other local tribes were the Monohoacs and the Monoconos.

1635: 400 acres called “Rome” laid out for Francis Pope, gentleman. Goose Creek was renamed Tiber Creek.

1790: Residency Act established the “Federal District” and authorized the President to appoint three federal commissioners to lay out the seat of government. These commissioners are given exclusive control over all public land with power to purchase or accept such quantity of land... for use of the United States.

At this time, the area of the future Mall was owned mostly by Carroll of Duddington and David Burnes. The land consisted of pastures, interspersed with stands of trees.

1791: President Washington appointed the three commissioners.

Pierre L’Enfant appointed the Surveyor.

The 19 original landowners agreed to convey their lands to the government for federal use.

1792: Andrew Ellicot succeeds L’Enfant, who is dismissed for insubordination.

Cornerstone for White House set on October 13th.

1793: “Ellicot Plan” is approved by Congress and President Washington. The Ellicot Plan called for a National University to be built in the middle of the Mall. The original Mall was 175 acres.

George Washington helps place the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol on September 18th.

Samuel Blodgett, a real estate speculator and developer, wrote to Carroll of Duddington that it was “Very desirable that many monumental trees should be left in the mall with taste.” Once the Mall was designed the Commissioners would buy the trees from Carroll.

1796: Commissioners proposed using The Mall as the location for Foreign Embassies. Foreign governments balked at the idea because the area had an unhealthy environment and was prone to flooding.

- 1802: Congress abolished the Office of Federal Commissioners. Replaced by the Superintendent of Public Buildings.
- 1804: Jefferson Pier Marker is dedicated by President Jefferson to serve as the first meridian for all other official east-west measurements. Marks the point of intersection for lines emanating from the White House and Capitol.
- 1814: British forces burn the White House and Capitol, August 24th.
- 1815: Washington City Canal opened as a shortcut between the ports of Georgetown and Anacostia River.
- 1816: Congress abolished the Office of Public Buildings and replaced it with a Commissioner of Public Buildings and Public Grounds.
- 1842: Congress authorized construction of U.S. Botanic Gardens on the Mall.
- 1847: James Smithson bequeaths money to advance learning in America. Smithsonian Institution created by Congress. On May 1st, construction began on the Smithsonian “Castle” without any consideration as to its impact on the original plans for the greensward.
- 1848: Construction of Washington Monument began.
- 1849: Department of Interior created, and given authority over certain local park lands.
- 1850: U.S. Botanic Garden Conservatory built on the eastern end of Mall.
- 1851: President Fillmore appointed Andrew Jackson Downing, a “rural architect”, to lay out local public parks. Downing refers to the “National Park” in a letter to the President. Downing dies in 1852.
- 1854: Congress permits the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to run tracks across the Mall at the base of Capital Hill.
- 1855: The Smithsonian Institution Building is completed.
- 1856: The Downing Memorial is completed, the first memorial erected on the Mall, originally. It was placed near the site of today’s Natural History Museum.
- 1860 – 1865: Civil War Years. The Mall area was used as training ground for Union troops. Armory Square created at 7th and B Street housed a 760-bed hospital, morgue, barracks and medical offices. The open Mall was also used for the Aeronautic Section, Balloon Corps under Dr. Thaddeus Lowe who tested observation balloons here. The Washington Monument grounds were used as a remount station for the cavalry and as a cattle slaughterhouse.

1867: Washington Monument grounds had become home to vagrants, prostitutes and criminals. The grounds were nicknamed “Murderers Row”.

Congress transferred authority over the Mall to the Chief Engineer of the U.S. Army.

Construction began on Department of Agriculture office building.

1871: Washington City Canal filled in. Never successful, it had become an open sewer.

1873: Baltimore & Potomac Rail Road opened its depot at 6th and B-North.

1880s: Smithsonian Institution began keeping zoo animals in sheds on the Mall for study.

Center Market allowed livestock to graze on the Mall.

1881: A major winter flood inundated the Mall.

Smithsonian Institution Arts and Industries building opened.

President Garfield was shot at the Baltimore & Potomac train station.

1882: Statue of Professor Joseph Henry erected on Smithsonian grounds. He served as the first secretary of the Smithsonian.

Land reclamation and dredging of the Potomac River and mouth of Tiber Creek began.

Mr. Smithson was entombed in Smithsonian Castle.

1884: Exterior of Washington Monument was completed.

1885: Washington Monument dedicated.

1887: U.S. Attorney General ruled that President has ultimate authority over the Mall, as a direct trustee of the original landholders of the Federal City.

1888: Washington Monument opened to public.

1897: Congress passed Senate Bill 3307 which stated that the 723 acres of reclaimed land be designated Potomac Park and be developed as a public park for scenic and recreational purposes. President Cleveland held off signing the bill because he was in favor of the land being used as farmland.

1898: Congressional Act of July 1st put District of Columbia parks under exclusive control of the United States Army Chief Engineer. This clarified the status of all parks in the District—they were federal property.

1900: Centennial celebrations for the federal government's relocation to the District.

1901: Congress authorized the Grant Memorial.

Senator John McMillan, Chairman of the Senate Committee of the District of Columbia, appoints the Senate Park Commission to study the federal park lands in the District.

1902: Senate Park Commission submits proposal entitled McMillan Commission Report which is popularly called the McMillan Plan. Among other improvements, the Commissioners proposed creation of the Lincoln Memorial, a memorial for Founding Fathers, a third presidential memorial, and numerous federal buildings.

1903: Army Corp of Engineers acquires the lock house from C&O Canal Co. to be used as a watchman's office.

1904: Congress passed Statute 4845 which established a restricted construction zone on the Mall. No structures could be built within 400' of a central line running between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. The only surviving exception is the Smithsonian Castle.

1909: B & P Railroad tracks removed from the Mall and the depot is relocated to current site of Union Station.

1910: Congress established the Fine Arts Commission, mainly to implement Senate Park Commission findings.

Museum of Natural History opened.

Congress passed the building height limit, mandating that no new structures within the District would rise above the height of the Capitol.

1911: Congressional Act provides for the development of the Mall between the Washington Monument and Potomac River.

Congress established Lincoln Memorial Commission.

1912: 3000 Japanese Cherry Trees are received from the City of Tokyo, and planted on the Tidal Basin.

John Paul Jones Memorial Completed

1913: Congress created the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission.

1914: Construction began on Lincoln Memorial.

1915: Cornerstone of Lincoln Memorial laid.

Canal lockhouse moved 50' west to its present location.

1917: National Sylvan Theater is built on the Monument Grounds.

WWI temporary buildings erected on sections of the Mall and West Potomac Park for military and civilian staff. Most were replaced in the WWII era.

1922: Lincoln Memorial dedicated on Memorial Day.

Grant Memorial dedicated.

Lincoln Memorial reflecting Pool is completed, December.

West Potomac Park is completed.

1923: Freer Gallery of Art is opened.

1926: Ericsson Memorial is dedicated.

Congress created the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

1929: Congress passed Act of March 4th, authorizing the development of "The Mall Parkway" based on the L'Enfant and McMillan plans.

1931: The District of Columbia World War Memorial is dedicated.

Cornerstone laid for the new Botanic Garden Conservatory.

1932: Arlington Memorial Bridge completed and opened to traffic.

1933: President Roosevelt issues Executive Order #6166 which reorganized the National Park Service. Through this order NPS gains stewardship over various Agricultural Department and War Department sites, and the National Capital Parks including the National Mall, Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial.

1934: In the Interior Department Appropriations Act, the Office of National Parks and Buildings is changed to the National Park Service.

Congress authorized the building of the Jefferson Memorial.

NPS acquired Union Square. This acquisition provided for one greensward from the Capital to the Lincoln Memorial.

Workers began developing the Mall under a WPA project called the “Public Works Mall Development Project”. The project:

1. Opened the vista between Capitol and Robert E. Lee Mansion.
2. Demolished WWI temporary buildings.
3. Developed Union Square.
4. Developed lawns.
5. Constructed roads and walkways.
6. Planted 333 American Elm trees along the Mall.

1937: National Gallery of Art opened.

1938: Construction began on Jefferson Memorial.

1939: President Roosevelt placed the Jefferson Memorial cornerstone.

Lincoln Memorial played host to Marian Anderson performance, signaling the use of the Lincoln Memorial for civil rights gatherings.

1941: National Gallery of Art opened.

1943: Jefferson Memorial dedicated.

Kutz Bridge completed.

1947: First case of Dutch Elm Disease discovered on the Mall trees on the south side of the Lincoln Memorial.

1951: The National Grange Marker is dedicated on the Mall at Madison Drive and 4th Street.

1958: Japanese Pagoda, a gift from the City of Yokohama, is erected and dedicated at a site on the west bank of Tidal Basin.

Japanese Lantern, dedicated on north bank of Tidal Basin. Lantern dates back to 1650s.

1959: Congress authorized the FDR Memorial.

1963: March on Washington D.C. for Freedom and Jobs. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I Have a Dream Speech” at the Lincoln Memorial.

NPS dedicates the National Capital Region Park Headquarters building in East Potomac Park.

- 1964: Museum of History & Technology (now Museum of Natural History) opened.
- 1965-1966: Architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill developed master plan for Mall and West Potomac Park that assured the maintenance of those places as open, public spaces.
- 1967: Union Square Reflecting Pool built.
- 1971: Last of temporary WW II structures around the Reflecting Pool were removed.
- 1974: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden opened.
- Fine Arts Commission approves plan for Constitution Gardens.
- 1976: Constitution Gardens dedicated as an American Revolution Bicentennial Project.
- Air and Space Museum opened.
- Washington and Adams Drives converted to gravel walkways from 3rd Street to 15th Street.
- 1980: Congress authorizes the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
- The privately owned statue “The Awakening” installed at Hains Point.
- 1982: Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated.
- 1983: German-American Friendship Garden created.
- 1984: 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial is dedicated in Constitution Gardens.
- Flag and soldier statue added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
- 1986: Korean War Veterans Memorial authorized by Congress.
- Congress authorizes The Black Patriots Foundation to build memorial to Black Revolutionary War heroes on the Mall.
- 1988: Congress approves site for Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial near Constitution Gardens Lake, pending successful fund raising.
- 1992: Public Law 102-277 authorizes the creation of the George Mason Memorial. Selected site is near Fountain Four and the Jefferson Memorial.
- 1993: World War II Memorial authorized by Congress.

Vietnam Women's Memorial added to Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

1994: Workers break ground at the FDR Memorial site.

1995: Korean War Veterans Memorial dedicated.

President Clinton dedicates a plaque marking the official site of the future World War II Memorial at the Rainbow Pool.

1996: Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial authorized by Congress.

1997: Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial is dedicated.

1998-2000: NPS Partnership leads to comprehensive restoration and renovation of the Washington Monument.

1999: Ground broken at site of National Museum of the American Indian (Smithsonian).

President Clinton and others gather for ceremonial groundbreaking at site of World War II Memorial, despite lack of construction permit and pending lawsuit.

Officials dedicate plaque marking the official site of the future Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial between Kutz Bridge and the FDR Memorial.

2000: President Clinton dedicates forecourt and new FDR statue at the FDR Memorial.

2001: Bombing of New York's Twin Towers and Pentagon. Officially known as 9/11.

2004: World War II Memorial is dedicated.

2009: Barack Obama became first African American president.

MLK Memorial site contract signing and ground breaking.