

Washington Monument Encyclopedia Article

Washington Monument

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Washington Monument

The Washington Monument's tall, slender obelisk towers above the Mall in the nation's capitol, dominating the skyline. A grateful public constructed it in the nineteenth century to commemorate George Washington. Federal architect Robert Mills won a competition in 1845 with his proposal for a 600-foot obelisk and circular temple at the base. The monument was completed in 1884 without the temple and 45 feet shorter than Mills's design. Unlike the capitol's other presidential monuments, the Washington Monument is abstract, with no images or words; its power comes from the simple beauty of its form. It has been largely uncontroversial, which is unique for a political monument. And unlike the nearby Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument has not been the site of any significant political events. Instead, it has stood for over 100 years in quiet solemnity as a proud testament to "the Father of our country."

Further Reading:

Liscombe, Rhodri Windsor. *Altogether American: Robert Mills, Architect and Engineer*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1994.

Scott, Pamela. *Temple of Liberty: Building the Capitol for a New Nation*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1995.

Scott, Pamela, and Antoinette J. Lee. *Buildings of the District of Columbia*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1993.