



Foundation Document Overview

General Grant National Memorial

New York

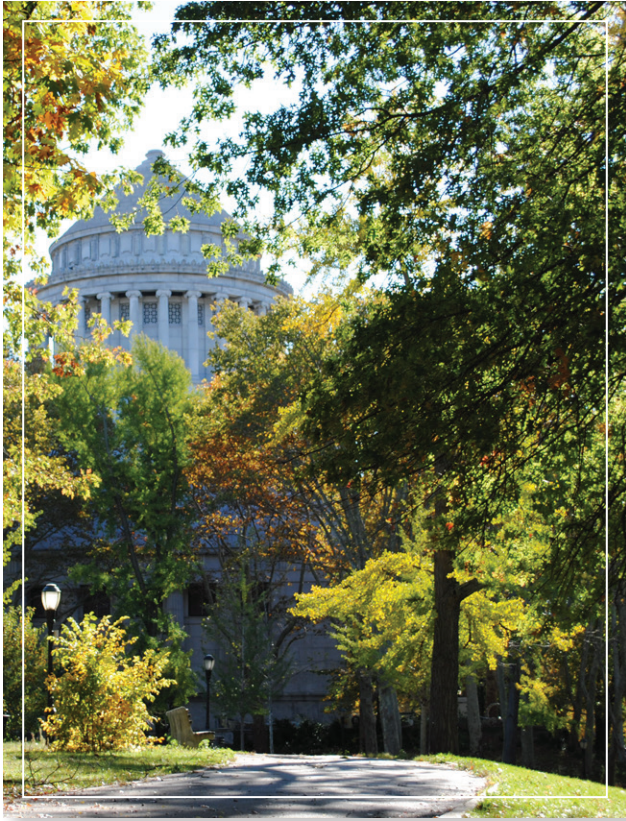


Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL MEMORIAL is to preserve the final resting place of Ulysses Simpson Grant and his wife, Julia Dent Grant, and commemorate the contributions of Grant as both commanding general of the Union Army who won the Civil War and 18th president of the United States.



Significance

Significance statements express why General Grant National Memorial resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The final resting place of former General and President Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia Dent Grant, is one of the largest mausoleums in the United States.
- The mausoleum's design exemplifies a mixture of classical forms and motifs resulting in one of America's most ornamental examples of commemorative architecture. Interior paintings, mosaics, and sculptures reflect differing embellishment strategies for the memorial, all made possible by the largest public fundraising for a memorial at that time.
- The memorial represents gratitude for the Civil War hero who helped preserve the Union, reunite the North and South during Reconstruction, and protect the civil rights of newly freed slaves.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Mausoleum (“Grant’s Tomb”) including the Sarcophagi of Ulysses and Julia Grant.** Completed in 1897, Grant’s Tomb combines elements of classical architecture designed to express the nation’s admiration, gratitude, and respect for General Grant. The mausoleum is one of the largest in America, featuring an impressive 8,000 tons of white marble and granite and soaring 150-foot domed ceilings. It contains the sarcophagi of General Grant and his wife, as well as a mix of artwork and flags from Union Army regiments.
- **Collections and Archives.** The collection includes historic objects and memorabilia associated with Ulysses S. Grant, military objects, bronze busts and statues, and the archives of the General Grant Monument Association, the private organization responsible for designing and building the mausoleum.
- **Opportunities for Commemoration and Reflection.** The physical environment of the mausoleum and surrounding landscape foster an awareness of patriotism and country as it pays tribute to the man who ended the bloodiest conflict in U.S. history as commanding general of the Union Army and then, as president of the United States, strove to heal the nation after the Civil War and made rights for all citizens a reality.

General Grant National Memorial contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Surrounding Memorial Grounds and Viewing Pavilion.** Grant’s Tomb is surrounded by Riverside Park, which was originally designed in 1874 by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, with later modifications by Robert Moses. Areas of the park immediately surrounding the mausoleum include a tree-lined plaza and viewing pavilion overlooking the Hudson River. These areas are part of the memorial experience and provide a place for respectful contemplation of Grant’s life and achievements, as well as an appreciation of the design and construction of the memorial.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Military Career.** Through his superior ability to adapt his knowledge of tactics and strategy to changing conditions in the field, Ulysses S. Grant rose to commander of the Union Army and ultimately led it to victory in the Civil War.
- **Grant the Man.** Throughout his life of leadership, service, and sacrifice, Ulysses S. Grant demonstrated several apparent contradictions between personal convictions and public responsibilities that paint a picture of a fascinating historical figure.
- **The Presidency.** The esteem with which Grant was held by the American people led to his election to two terms as president of the United States. His achievements in the areas of civil rights, American Indian rights, foreign policy, and public lands preservation were balanced by the difficult challenges he faced in reconstructing the southern states, managing the growing industrial economy, and especially in holding several unscrupulous officers of his administration to higher levels of accountability.
- **African American Civil Rights.** As a general and president, Ulysses S. Grant achieved a lasting, positive relationship with the African American community by his support for emancipation, the enlistment of black troops in the Union Army, and imposing measures to protect and improve the conditions of the freedmen in the South after the Civil War. The relationship was confirmed through significant contributions of African Americans toward the construction of Grant’s tomb.
- **Remembrance.** The monumental scale and impressive design of Grant’s Tomb serve as symbols, not only of the great esteem of a nation for a revered military hero, but also of the respect and reverence of a people reflecting on a fiercely fought, devastating civil war during which men of both sides served with honor.
- **Architecture.** The General Grant Memorial, based on a variety of architectural styles from the ancient and classical worlds and modeled in part after the Dôme des Invalides and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, is the largest such memorial in the United States and is an outstanding example of the use of monumental, inspiring building forms as integral elements of the City Beautiful movement in U.S. cities around the turn of the 20th century.

Description

General Grant National Memorial, commonly known as “Grant’s Tomb,” is on a 130-foot-high promontory overlooking the Hudson River in Riverside Park at West 122nd Street in the West Harlem area of Manhattan. The memorial mausoleum (constructed from 1891–1897) is a granite structure, 150 feet high, and 90 feet wide on each side.

This memorial to Ulysses S. Grant—victorious Union commander of the Civil War and president of the United States—includes the sarcophagi of Grant and his wife Julia Dent Grant. A West Point graduate, Grant served in the U.S.-Mexican War and at various frontier posts before rapidly rising through the ranks during the Civil War, was promoted to lieutenant general by President Abraham Lincoln in 1864 (the first person since General George Washington to receive this rank), and was commanding general of the Union Army by the end of the war. Grant’s tenacity and boldness led to victories in the battles of Vicksburg and Chattanooga and Commander Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. Scenes of these events are depicted in mosaics in the tomb. In 1866, Congress awarded Grant his fourth star making him the first “General of the Army of the United States.”

A grateful nation elected Grant twice to serve as president of the United States, in 1868 and 1872. Grant’s accomplishments include signing the Civil Rights Act of 1875 during the Reconstruction era, the creation of the Department of Justice to enforce civil rights, the creation of professional African American soldiers with peacetime integrated troops, passage of the 15th Amendment giving African American men the right to vote, stabilizing the financial system under the gold standard, creation of the treaty of Washington with the United Kingdom, and appointing the first American Indian to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs. On March 1, 1872, Grant established Yellowstone as America’s first national park.



After his presidency, Grant embarked on a two-and-a-half-year “around the world” tour, the first example of post-presidential diplomacy, before settling in New York City. Ulysses S. Grant died of throat cancer on July 23, 1885, in Mount McGregor, New York, and was laid to rest in New York City on August 8, 1885. During his final years, Grant wrote a two-volume memoir that would become a best-selling presidential memoir and a literary classic.

Many donations were made from around the world totaling more than \$600,000 toward the construction of the Grant Monument. This was the largest public fundraising effort at that time. Designed by architect John H. Duncan, the granite and marble structure was completed in 1897 and remains one of the largest mausoleums in the United States. On April 27, 1897, an estimated 1.5 million people attended the parade and dedication ceremony for the Grant Monument. In 1959, management was transferred to the National Park Service, and the site was renamed the General Grant National Memorial.

