

Robert Mills

(12 Aug 1781 – 3 Mar 1855)

The Evening Star, May 24, 1853, p. 2

Mr. Robert Mills, the accomplished engineer and architect, has published an outline of his views on railroads, and their improvement for safe travel.



*Robert and Eliza Mills,
photographed circa 1850*

Mr. Mills suggests that before our railroad companies enter upon any new works, they should institute an inquiry whether there is any improved plan of railroads, which combines safety of travel with economy of construction -- any plan which would secure and insure the wheels from running off the rail under any degree of velocity given the train -- any plan which would be free from the common accidents, including collisions, which now occur on railroads -- that will do away with the necessity of road guards, signals, switches, and such like attendance -- and last, though not least, a plan which will not cost even a moiety of the sum now paid per mile on the present plan of railroads.

If such a plan as is here suggested can be faithfully carried out, the man who established it will be one of the greatest public benefactors this world ever knew. By all means let us have it.

Mills. At 7-1/2 o'clock, this morning, the 3d instant, Robert Mills, Architect of South Carolina. His funeral, to which the friends of the family are respectfully invited, will take place tomorrow (Sunday) at 3 o'clock p.m., from his late residence, No. 553 New Jersey avenue, corner of B street south.

The Evening Star, March 3, 1855

Distinguished Architect Dead

Robert Mills, generally known throughout the country as an architect of great merit, died this morning, at seven o'clock, at his residence on Capitol Hill. The Treasury Department, Post Office and Patent Office buildings are monuments of his skill and taste, as is also the Washington Monument.

The Washington Post, June 16, 1932, p. 22

Memorial Design Winner Selected

Philip G. Golden's Proposed Marker to Robert Mills Adjudged Best

As a lasting tribute to a pioneer in American architecture and to benefit local members of that profession who at present are unemployed, the results of a competition, sponsored by the Allied Architects of Washington, to obtain a suitable memorial to Robert Mills, were announced last night at the organization's headquarters, 726 Jackson place northwest.

The first prize of \$100 went to Phillip G. Golden. The monument of his design will soon be erected by the Allied Architects at the grave of a man famed for his work in early American architecture.

Robert Mills, designer of the Washington Monument, the United States Treasury Department, the Patent Office and the old Post Office Building on Pennsylvania avenue, now lies in an unmarked grave in Congressional Cemetery.

His work in Washington dates back to the administration of President Jackson. Mills was brought here by President Jackson, after his fame as an architect spread throughout the Eastern section of the country to design buildings for the Government

For a number of years Mills contributed toward the erection of Federal structures and, finally, at the age of 57 he designed the Washington Monument. He was born in Charleston, S.C. in 1781, and died here in March 1855.

The monument will cost \$1,500.

Other Washington architects awarded prizes in the competition included E.P. Schrier, second prize; Walter Frederick, third prize; Carl P. Dumbolten, fourth prize, and Hunter L. Virnelson, Alfred H. Minno, Charles Jumper and Henry G. Rieber, honorable mention.

The Washington Post, May 31, 1933, p. 16

Graveside Tribute Paid To Architects

Ceremonies Honor Five Who Contributed to Beauty of Washington

Tribute was paid to the memories of five architects who contributed to the architectural beauty of Washington by a delegation of members of the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects yesterday morning.

At Congressional Cemetery the delegation placed wreathes on the unmarked grave of Robert Mills, who designed the Treasury; the graves of Dr. William Thornton, designer of the Capitol, the Octagon House and the Tudor House in Georgetown, and the tomb of George Hadfield, who designed the courthouse.

Louis Simon, of the supervising architect's office of the Treasury, spoke at the Mills grave, while Waddy Wood and Alexander Trobridge spoke at the tombs of Thornton and Hadfield.

Horace W. Peaslee spoke at the Arlington National Cemetery ceremony during which a wreath was placed on the grave of L'Enfant, designer of Washington.

At Mount Olivet Cemetery the grave of James Hoban, designer of the White House, was honored. Francis Sullivan, president of the chapter, spoke.

The Sunday Star, May 31, 1936

Architects Pay Tribute to Mills

Monument at Grave Is Dedicated--Roosevelt Letter Read

Tribute to the memory of Robert Mills, first Federal architect, was paid at Congressional Cemetery yesterday when a monument, erected at his grave by a group of architects, was dedicated in the presence of Mills' descendants and many interested descendants and many interested architects and admirers of his work.

A message from President Roosevelt, lauding Mr. Mills' work was read.

"Every visitor who comes to Washington," wrote the President in a message to Edwin B. Morris of the Monument Committee, "is impressed with the classic beauty of the Treasury, the Patent Office and the Land Office, notable among the structures designed by Mills.

"Of all the monuments in our National Capital, the one outstanding in silent, solemn grandeur is that which Mills designed and which the Nation erected in memory of Washington. None but a very great genius could have evolved in his mind such a lofty conception of the greatness of a man and of a great Nation's love for that man. I am truly glad that belated tribute is to be paid to Mills' memory."

The message was read by Francis P. Sullivan, who presided.

The memorial was unveiled by Mrs. Robert Mills Evans of this city, great granddaughter of Mr. Miles. Other members of the family present included a great-grandson. Robert Mills Dimitry, of

Brooklyn, N.Y., with his wife, and a great-great-grandson, Richard X. Evans, of this city. A letter of appreciation was read from Mills' surviving grandson, Thomas Dabney Dimitry, of New Orleans, unable, on account of age, to be present.

Rear Admiral Christian Joy Peoples, director of procurement for the Government, was the principal speaker. He praised the work of Mills, declaring he was an "inspiration and example" to his successors.

Louis A. Simon, supervising architect of the Treasury's Procurement Division, said Mills' work "breathes the spirit of all that is universal and permanent in beauty, undimmed by the passing of years."

David Rankin Barbee, author and historian, reviewed the life and works of Mills comprehensively, declaring his buildings here "express the majesty, the dignity and the beauty of our country."

The grave of Mills had remained unmarked by monument for more than 80 years. The memorial was designed by P.G. Golden and Harry Cunningham.