

Generations

Landmarks that almost weren't landmarks

It's almost time for summer vacation and trip planning and for those that may be traveling to a city known for famous landmarks, some landmarks have colorful histories behind them.

For instance, the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor represents our basic principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but you may not have realized that the sculpture almost found a home in Egypt back in the mid-1800s.

Auguste Bartholdi, the French sculptor who designed Lady Liberty, set his plans on sculpting an incredible lighthouse for the Suez Canal. According to the National Park Service, Bartholdi had completed his creative vision of a robed woman holding a torch — which he called Egypt (or Progress) Brings Light to Asia, before the Egyptian government rebuffed its deal.

Fortunately for us, Bartholdi found a new home for the statue in America where it stands today to welcome all travelers. He named her "Liberty Enlightening the World," and she was unveiled by President Cleveland in 1886. Thank you, Auguste, for giving us one of our most endeared sights as we approach or leave the Big Apple.

Keeping in New York, the famed Guggenheim Museum, with its unique design, wasn't exactly a shoo-in when its plans were first presented to Mr. Guggenheim's art advisor by architect Frank Lloyd Wright.



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Wright wanted to use the color red, which he regarded as a sign of power or good luck, but when he laid out the plans, he was greeted with a thumbs down. According to sources, the advisor told Wright in a 1945 letter, "Red is a color which displeases S.R.G. as much as it does me."

It must have been a huge disappointment for Wright, but he finished designing the cylindrical building, wider at the top than the bottom, and conceived his vision as a "temple of the spirit." And although The Guggenheim has gone through a series of renovations and color refreshers, it has never been any shade of red.

Traveling to Washington, D.C., the magnificence of the Washington Monument is a landmark you can't miss.

In 1783, before Washington was elected our first president,

Congress already had plans to erect a statue of the war hero. After he went from army commander-in-chief to President, however, Washington stopped progress on the structure due to low public funds. Almost 100 years later and after a collection of private donations, architect Robert Mills won a design competition to construct and complete the Washington Monument.

His winning entry, however, looks nothing like what we see today. His original design featured a temple-like building, with 30 stone columns and statues of Declaration of Independence signers and Revolutionary War heroes. A statue of Washington driving a horse-drawn chariot would reside above the main entrance and a 600-foot-tall Egyptian obelisk would rise from the center.

However, the project went through another building phase and took a different direction, resulting in what you see today. It was Ulysses S. Grant, our 21st president, who raised federal funds and put the finishing touches on one of the world's tallest man-made structures at that time.

Nearly 100,000 people visit the White House on a monthly basis

and visitors must book tours at least three weeks in advance. Although 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is widely recognized as the president's home and office, if you asked for directions to the White House in the early 1800s colonists would ask, "Which white house?"

According to Whitehouse.gov, "At various times in history, the White House has been known as the 'President's Palace,' the 'President's House,' and the 'Executive Mansion.'" President Theodore Roosevelt officially gave the White House its current name in 1901.

San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge was almost a tunnel. A 1932 proposal called for the center of the structure to be submerged in the San Francisco Bay allowing ships to safely pass above. The "boat tunnel" idea belonged to inventor, Cleve F. Shaffer, but vehicle deceleration into the tunnel caused the idea to be rejected because gridlock would have occurred.

During construction, safety was a top concern and it was the first construction site that required workers to wear hard hats. As a safety precaution, a net costing \$130,000 was installed underneath the bridge. It saved the lives of 19 men; 11

people, however, perished during construction of the bridge.

Traveling to South Dakota, one of our most beloved landmarks is the Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Sculptor Gutzon Borglum created the sculpture's design and oversaw the project's execution from 1927 to 1941 with the help of his son, Lincoln Borglum. The sculpture features the 60-foot heads of Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

The four presidents were chosen, respectively, to represent the birth, the growth, the development and the preservation of the United States. However, our Founding Fathers' faces were not everyone's first choice to be carved into the memorial.

Historian Dove Robinson wanted to lure tourists to the region by attracting them with sculpted famous faces, including those of Buffalo Bill, Red Cloud and Lewis and Clark.

Thankfully, our former U.S. presidents ultimately won out to claim the rockfaces to be preserved forever.

Happy vacationing!

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