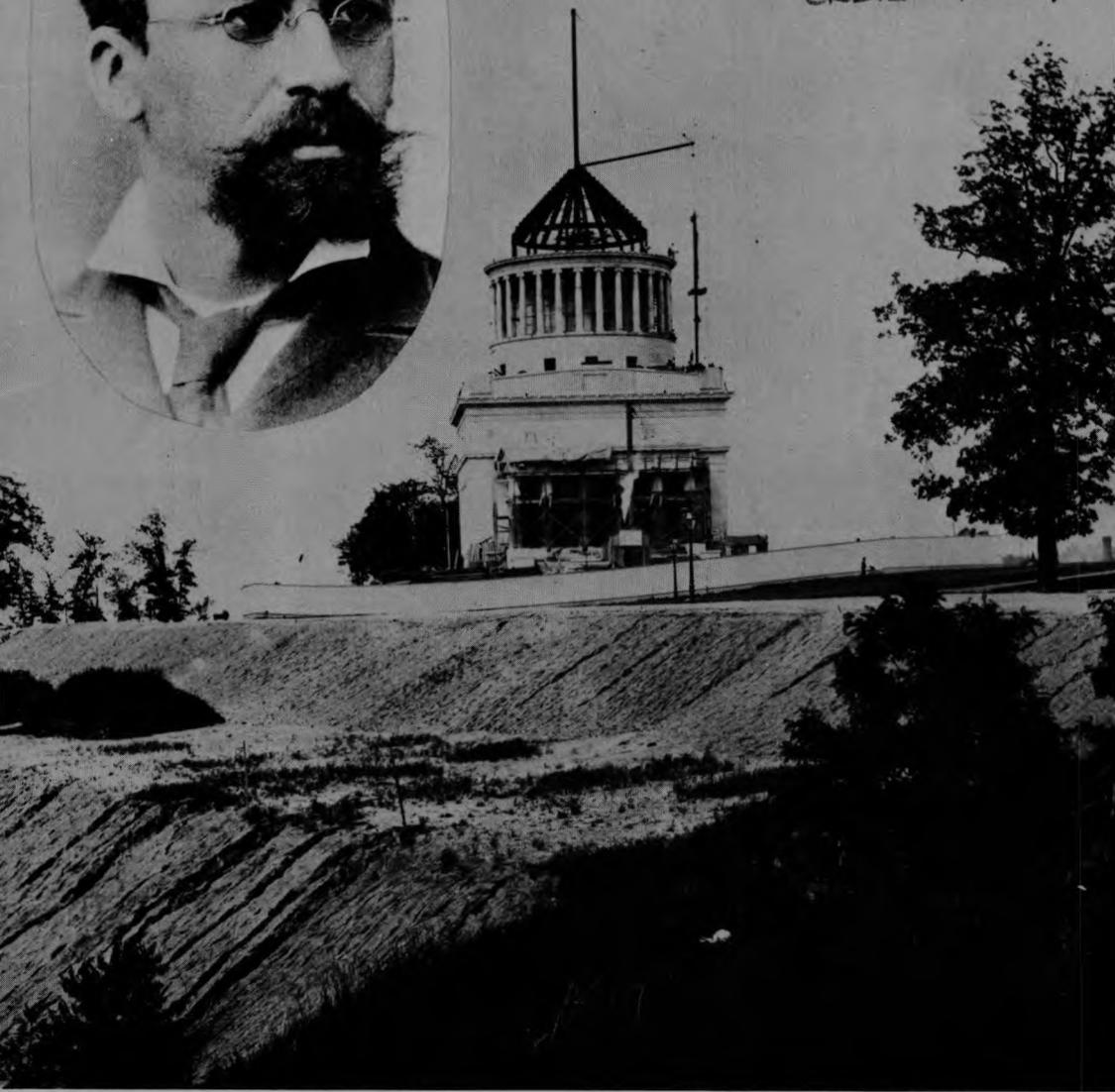


PROPERTY OF LIBRARY
DIVISION OF CULTURAL
RESOURCES, NARO

GEGR.006 C.1
CRBIB# 400159



RICHARD T. GREENER HIS LIFE AND WORK

476/137790

RICHARD T. GREENER HIS LIFE AND WORK

RUTH ANN STEWART, Guest Curator
DAVID M. KAHN, Curator, General Grant N.M.

AN EXHIBIT AND TRIBUTE
SPONSORED BY
THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
AND
THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

THE GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL MEMORIAL
RIVERSIDE DRIVE AT 122ND STREET
June 4, 1980—OCTOBER 31, 1980

Copyright 1980
National Park Service

Design: Charles F. Ryder

Preface

The National Park Service has administered the General Grant National Memorial, popularly known as Grant's Tomb, since 1959. But it was only recently that we became aware of the important role Richard T. Greener played in the monument's early history. In an effort to share what we have learned about this significant black leader of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation take great pleasure in presenting a special exhibit and tribute: "Richard T. Greener, His Life and Work". The exhibition will be on view at the General Grant National Memorial from June 4, 1980, through October 31, 1980, and this catalog will serve as a permanent record of its contents. It is our hope that both will help to reintroduce Greener to today's Americans, while shedding light on the active role blacks of Greener's period played in the building of Grant's Tomb.

Duane R. Pearson
Superintendent
General Grant National Memorial

Acknowledgements

Many individuals and organizations helped to make "Richard T. Greener, His Life and Work" a reality. Harley P. Holden and the staff of the Harvard University Archives and Esme E. Bhan of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center of Howard University assisted in assembling materials for the exhibition, as did Ruth Quattlebaum and Jennifer Ellis of Phillips Academy, Andover, Gertrude Jacob of Oberlin College, and the staffs of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the photographic Services Department of The New York Public Library. Charles F. Ryder designed the exhibition and the catalog, while providing help in ways too numerous to mention. John Robbins of the National Park Service designed the exhibition hardware. To all these we owe our sincere thanks. Finally, special recognition goes to the National Park Foundation in Washington D.C., John L Bryant, Jr, President, for a grant which made this catalog possible.

R.A.S.

D.M.K.



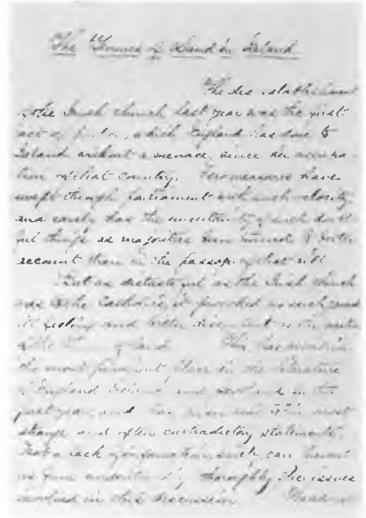
1 Richard T. Greener, age 21, as a senior at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, in 1865.

Richard T. Greener: Biography

On December 7, 1885, Richard Theodore Greener wrote to his longtime friend Isaiah Wears that, “Never have I felt more hopeful, and at no time have I done harder or more consecutive business work; and yet I seem to thrive on it. For the first time in my life, I seem to be about something big enough for me to handle.” Greener was writing from New York City where he had been appointed earlier that year Secretary of The Grant Monument Association. To his mind, it was the culminating honor of an active career in education, law and politics.

The Grant Monument Association was charged with selecting a design and raising the monies to construct a memorial to the much revered Civil War general and former president, Ulysses S. Grant. With the strong backing of Mayor William R. Grace and the city’s leading citizens, the memorial was planned as a grand undertaking with keen competition between America’s leading architects and a nationwide fund raising campaign. Key to this historic effort was Richard T. Greener whose background and experience made him eminently qualified for the task.

Richard T. Greener distinguished himself early in life as the first black graduate of Harvard College in 1870, less than a decade after the Emancipation Proclamation. Greener was born of free parents in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 30, 1844. His maternal grandfather was a “Spaniard from Puerto Rico” whose light complexion was inherited by his grandson. His paternal grandfather, Jacob Greener, was an educator who was well known in the black community of Baltimore. His father Richard Wesley Greener, was a seaman who freely roamed the oceans eventually migrating west to seek his fortunes in the California goldfields. When nine years old, Greener was taken by his mother, Mary Ann Greener (*nee* LeBrune), to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her young son had access to the public schools. At age twelve, Greener quit school to help support his mother by working at a variety of jobs around Boston and Cambridge. While employed as a porter at the Pavilion Hotel on Boston’s Tremont Street he became friendly with two men: a judge who gave him access to his personal library and



2 Greener's senior thesis which won the Harvard prize for meritorious research and writing.

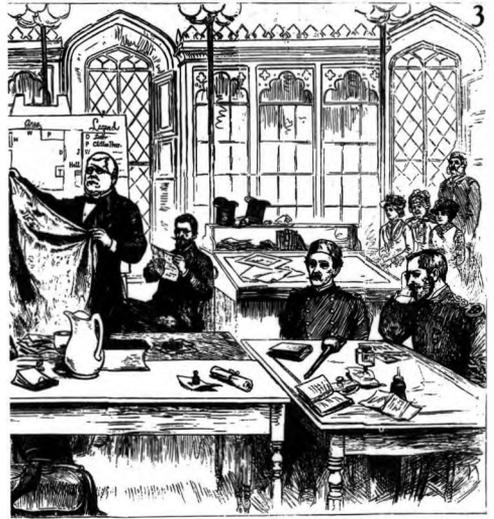
another hotel guest who instructed him in French. His next major job was as a porter and nightwatchman for Augustus E. Bachelder who was to become one of Greener's chief mentors. Bachelder financed two years of college preparation for Greener at Oberlin College in Ohio between 1862 and 1864. The following year Greener enrolled at the prestigious Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, because of what he perceived to be New England's better racial climate. He graduated in 1865 and remained active in Andover's Alumni Association throughout his life.

The entry of a black student at Harvard came at the end of a 229 year old debate that had seen blacks barred from the college since its founding. With the end of the Civil War, local public sentiment coalesced with liberal voices within the university to support the admission of a few select black students. While Greener was the first black to matriculate in the undergraduate college, Harvard's law, dental and medical schools were to graduate one black each during the same years.

The records indicate that Greener found immediate favor with his teachers and was popular with his fellow students. He was a member of the Pi Eta Club which was largely known for its dramatic productions. He also banded together with other undergraduates in the Thayer Club, a cooperative that provided inexpensive food and lodging. But a pre-college education that emphasized the Classics, rhetoric and the gospels had not prepared Greener sufficiently for the rigorous Harvard mathematics requirements. Harvard President Thomas Hill's suggestion that he drop out and study with a private tutor for six months was rejected by Greener as too costly to his long-time benefactor, Augustus E. Bachelder. Hill wrote to Bachelder that, "if a man of his race graduates here, I should like him to graduate with some honor, and in good health. . . be assured that we will cheerfully bear the additional expense of seeing the experiment fairly tried."

This "experiment" in the education of a black man at Harvard required Greener to repeat his freshman year. With a second start his academic career was to prove more successful. He won second prize in reading that year and took the Boylston Prize for Oratory as a sophomore. By his senior year Greener had developed an

3 The 1880 court martial of black West Point Cadet Whittaker at which Greener (center) served as defense counsel.



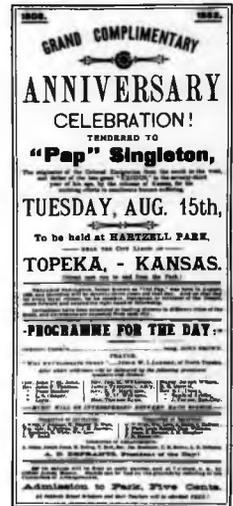
interest in land reform in Ireland. With a dissertation championing the rights of Irish peasants, he won the First Bowdoin Prize for meritorious research and writing.

What were the prospects for a Harvard College graduate in 1870 America? Had Greener been free to choose, he would have carved out a career in law, business or even politics, believing financial independence and political power essential to the success of his race and himself. But few such opportunities were open to blacks on a sufficiently high level to suit a man of Greener's ambition. Reconstruction was still in force, a fact that would benefit him later. But for now, Greener was a young man lacking the experience and political connections necessary to gain the high positions which lay in store for him.

Following the lead of other educated blacks caught in the same racial dilemma, Greener entered the field of black education. His first job after graduation was as principal of the Male Department of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Two years later, he was called to Washington, D.C., to head Sumner High School. While at Sumner, Greener worked part-time in the U.S. Attorney's office where he first began the study of law. His energies still not consumed, he took on the role of Associate Editor of the *New National Era and Citizen*, a black publication. His next move was a major one and would take him south for the first time.

Under Reconstruction, educated blacks were afforded high positions never before available to them. Though Reconstruction ended in 1877 with the withdrawal of federal troops from the south, Greener was to take full advantage of the period while it lasted to demonstrate his abilities and high intelligence.

In the fall of 1872, he was appointed professor of metaphysics and logic at the University of South Carolina at Columbia. He also assisted in the departments of Latin, Greek, international law and United States Constitutional history and served as university librarian. With a growing reputation as an intellectual Greener was called upon to serve on a statewide commission to revise the South Carolina school system, elected to the American Philological Association, and awarded an honorary degree by the College of Monrovia, Liberia in 1873. Politics



4 Broadside on the black westward migration movement debated by Greener and Frederick Douglass.

became an obsession and he traveled throughout the state making eloquent speeches on behalf of the Republican Party. Somehow he still found time to enter the University of South Carolina's Law School, complete a degree by 1876, and be admitted to the bar in both South Carolina and the District of Columbia. On the personal side, he married Genevieve Ida Fleet in 1875 and started a family that would eventually include four daughters and a son.

The South Carolina legislature closed the university in 1877, dismissing its black faculty and students in favor of a segregated educational system. Greener moved his family to Washington, D.C., to become an instructor in Howard University's Law School. He served as dean in 1879 but left Howard with the closing of the law school for lack of students the following year. Ever resourceful, Greener became a clerk in the United States Comptroller's Office where he served until 1882. Thereafter he entered into private law practice with another lawyer named Cook. It was during his Washington years that Greener first emerged as a national spokesman on black issues.

With the reassertion of white supremacy in the Post-Reconstruction south, blacks began to migrate north and west to escape oppression and economic exploitation. Under the leadership of such men as Benjamin "Pap" Singleton of Tennessee, thousands of blacks migrated to Kansas to homestead and establish new towns. Fearful of losing its cheap labor the south attempted to stem the tide, accusing republicans of enticing blacks away to add to their voting rolls. A federal investigation brought Singleton to Washington to testify before a congressional committee but to no avail. Blacks continued to be harassed as they left the south, yet despite the hardships encountered in their new homelands, the westward flow continued.

Serving in his capacity as Secretary of the Exodus Committee, Greener took a stand on the migration question that placed him in conflict with no less an historic figure than Frederick Douglass. Douglass had risen from the fugitive life of a run-away slave to become a distinguished abolitionist, orator and advocate of woman's rights. He opposed mass movement on the grounds that "it would make freedom and free institutions depend upon migration rather than protection; by



5 Greener maintained an office in this building, 146 Broadway, from 1885-1892 as Secretary of The Grant Monument Association, and later as an independent businessman.

flight, rather than right. . . It leaves the whole question of equal rights on the soil of the South open and still to be settled.” Greener presented his position in open forum at a Congress of the American Social Science Association held at Saratoga Springs, New York, in September 1877. He argued that, “No favorer of migration claims it as the sole, proper or only permanent remedy. . . It is approved as *one* remedy, thus far the most salutary, in stopping lawlessness and exaction.”

Greener also became involved during this period as assistant counsel in one of the most celebrated court cases of the century. The case involved a black West Point cadet named Whittaker whose court martial rocked the U.S. Military Academy to its foundation. Before it was over, the academy’s superintendent was removed, presidential and congressional investigations were undertaken, and the debate on black rights supposedly settled by the Civil War reopened to a storm of controversy in the nation’s press.

Johnson C. Whittaker was born a slave in 1858 in Camden, South Carolina. After careful tutoring, he was admitted to the University of South Carolina by competitive examination in 1874. Under the aegis of then Professor Richard T. Greener, he received in 1876 a congressional appointment to West Point. On the night of April 6, 1880, Whittaker was found bloodied and bound in his dormitory room, the apparent victim of an attack that left him with a mutilated ear. When West Point authorities refused to believe that his wounds were not self-inflicted as a way of embarrassing the academy, the black cadet demanded first a court of inquiry and then a formal court martial with his former professor in attendance. The chief defense counsel was Daniel H. Chamberlain, a former governor of South Carolina who counted Greener among his staunchest campaigners in the 1876 gubernatorial elections. The court records show that both he and Greener waged a vigorous defense, but the case was lost and Whittaker was dismissed from West Point and denied his army commission. Never outwardly bitter, Whittaker had a successful career as an educator and lived to see two sons attain the rank of lieutenant and captain in the army during World War I.

Greener’s career took a new turn when, after hard politicking for the Republican slate of 1884, he was appointed to The Grant Monument Association

6 Richard T. Greener
when American consul
to Vladivostok, Siberia,
1898-1902.

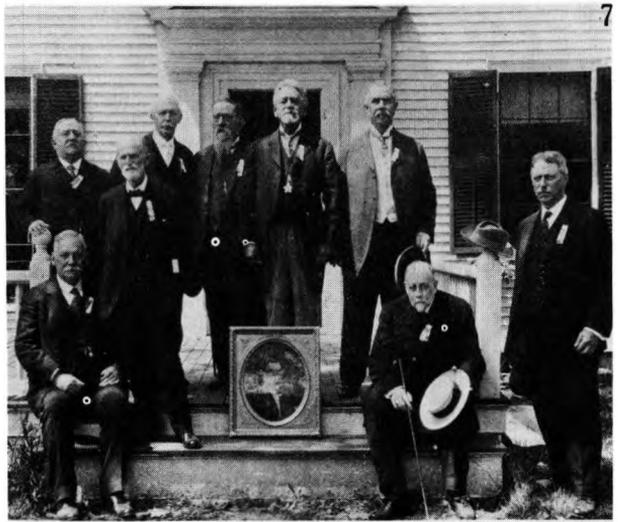


in New York City. He was specifically selected by the city's mayor because of Greener's friendship with Grant dating back to Harvard. Also, no better choice could have been made to represent the black community. At the first meeting of the Association, which included important figures from the financial and political worlds, Greener was elected Secretary and later a trustee. He held the latter honor throughout his life, but resigned as Secretary in 1892 when factional difficulties developed within the Association.

During his tenure with The Grant Monument Association, Greener was also Chief Examiner of the Municipal Civil Service Board of New York City. Residing in 1889 at 358 West 58th Street and 29 West 99th Street by 1894, he had a large family to support and was dependent on his civil service job. He managed to retain that position until 1889 despite constant shifts in local politics. After 1892 he continued to work out of an office at 146 Broadway (corner of Liberty Street) formerly used by The Grant Monument Association, undertaking various business ventures including a gold mining company based in Nova Scotia. While only moderately successful as a businessman, Greener still managed to send his son, Russell Lowell, and his two oldest daughters, Mary Louise and Belle Marion, to college.

But a man with Greener's energy and ambition could not stay in one place long. After the heady experience of overseeing the memorial project, Greener sought a new direction for his talents by applying to the foreign service for an overseas position. It was the practice of the Republican Party to appoint prominent blacks to certain consular posts in recognition of the importance of the black vote. According to Professor Allison Blakely of Howard University, over forty blacks were appointed consuls or vice consuls during Greener's lifetime. With his credentials and standing in Republican politics, Greener did not have to wait long. In January 1898, he was appointed consul to Bombay, India, but declined to go after learning of a bubonic plague epidemic then raging in the capital city. Several months later, he accepted a second appointment as consul to Vladivostok, Siberia. Taking leave of his last known New York address at the Hotel Endicott

7 Richard T. Greener
 presenting a portrait of
 Grant to Phillips
 Academy, Andover, at
 his 50th Class Reunion.



(81st Street and Columbus Avenue), he set sail for eastern Siberia and the last great adventure of his life.

Vladivostok was described in a guidebook published in 1919 as the “Mistress of the East,’ the chief Russian seaport on the Pacific Coast. . . one of the termini of the Siberian railway and a naval station. Its normal population of 120,000, including many Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, was very largely increased during (World War I) on account of the importance achieved by Vladivostok of being the only open-all-year port available in Russia.”

Greener’s friends questioned the advisability of his accepting an appointment in so remote a place as Vladivostok. But the completion of the Trans-Siberian railroad in 1903, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the strategic importance of the city as a warm water port, subsequently confirmed the wisdom of Greener’s decision. By being in Vladivostok Greener came to occupy a central role in the confluence of historical events that saw the beginning of the emergence of the United States and Russia as world powers.

Greener assessed Siberia as having great commercial potential for American business interests and actively promoted those interests through his persistent presence in Vladivostok and a steady stream of letters back to U.S. government officials. His enthusiastic performance was noted by a number of American newspapers and in letters of praise from businessmen he had assisted. The American consul found favor with both the Russians and the British. In fact, Greener became responsible for British affairs when they were forced out of Vladivostok as the result of a pact made between Japan and Great Britain. The Chinese government decorated Greener with the Order of the Double Dragon for his aid to war victims during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

Despite his well documented success at his post, Greener’s activities were viewed with less than enthusiasm at the State Department as the United States lumbered out of its isolationist foreign policy position and cast off the last vestiges of the federal commitment made to blacks under Reconstruction. Greener had been personally appointed by President William McKinley and, with McKinley’s

8 At age 72, Greener appears here wearing the Order of the Double Dragon awarded to him by the Chinese government while he was Siberian consul.



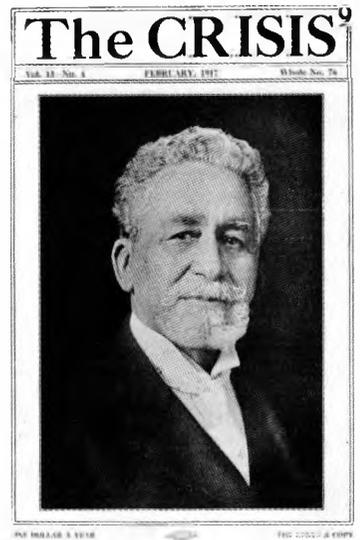
assassination in 1901, it was just a matter of time before politics would catch up with him. Greener's shrewdness and tenacity were attested to by his survival as consul for an additional four years. But late in 1905, he was recalled from Vladivostok and over protest retired from the consular service.

Greener returned to the United States to assume a role as elder statesman. He joined with W.E.B. DuBois and some one hundred others in attendance at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, for the second convention of the Niagara Movement in July 1906. DuBois had launched this movement to counter the power of Booker T. Washington whose accommodationist philosophy of civil rights was opposed by DuBois and the black and white men and women who eventually founded the N.A.A.C.P. (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Greener hoped to reconcile the opposing positions but was unsuccessful and soon after broke off a twenty-three year friendship with Washington.

By 1907, Greener was in semi-retirement and residing at 5237 Ellis Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. He served as a special agent and executive with an insurance firm for a while but devoted his real energies to writing and lecturing. He was the active president of a literary club and vice president of an anthropological society that he described as, "My Church". Howard University awarded him an honorary degree after which he set off on a lecture tour of southern black colleges. His many letters preserved in the archives of Howard University, Harvard University, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library reveal Greener's unflagging interest and predictably strong opinions on the status of blacks in America. He was particularly taken with the seminal research of the black book collector Arthur A. Schomburg and corresponded frequently with an old New York friend, the black inventor Louis Latimer.

By 1912 Greener's politics had come full circle and he was allowing himself to be courted by the Democratic Party. But his loyalty to Grant remained unchanged and while unable to attend the annual meetings of The Grant Monument Association he continued to cherish his role as a trustee. On the occasion of his fiftieth class reunion in 1915, Greener returned to Phillips Academy in Andover to

9 Greener's portrait was featured on the cover of the N. A. A. C. P.'s magazine, *Crisis*, in February 1917.

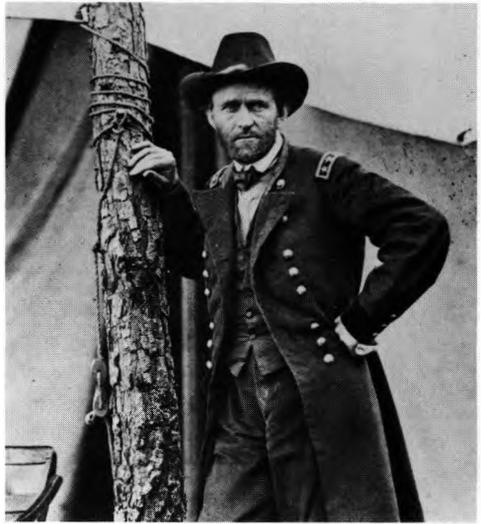


give a commencement speech. He brought with him a special gift that he presented to his alma mater on behalf of the Class of 1865. It was a portrait of Grant originally owned by the general that bore the motto, "If others could not find a way to Richmond he would either find it or make one".

Lawyer, educator, first black graduate of Harvard College, diplomat, businessman, and promoter of Grant's Tomb, Richard Theodore Greener died May 2, 1922.

Ruth Ann Stewart

10 Gen. U.S. Grant, shown here in 1864 towards the end of the Civil War, was America's greatest hero at the time of his death.



Greener And Grant's Tomb

On the morning of July 23, 1885, General Ulysses S. Grant died at Mt. McGregor, New York. The former Commander-in-Chief of the Union armies during the Civil War and two-term president of the United States had been tragically plagued by cancer for months. The entire nation had followed the details of his agonizing decline, and now that the end had come, Americans went into deep mourning.

Grant was unquestionably the nation's greatest hero at the time of his death. He had, in his contemporaries' view, almost single-handedly saved the Union and he was revered with what amounted to religious fervor. One group of admirers summed up the feelings of the nation by asserting, "Like Washington and Lincoln, Grant was raised up by God. . . to be the leader of the Nation in its supreme crisis. . . ."

It was a foregone conclusion that whatever site was selected as Grant's final resting place, a stupendous monument would be erected over his remains. Most Americans assumed the general would be buried in Washington, D.C., and they were greatly surprised to learn his family had instead chosen New York. But before he died, Grant indicated he would prefer to be buried in either Galena, Illinois, St. Louis, Missouri, or New York City. The mayor of New York offered the general's family a prominent site for his tomb and the day after Grant's death they accepted the offer.

Grant's funeral was held in New York on August 8, 1885. It was the greatest ceremonial procession ever mounted in America, and by far surpassed the pomp that surrounded Lincoln's funeral twenty years earlier. Some one million people crowded the streets of New York to watch the 60,000 marchers who accompanied Grant's coffin from City Hall to Riverside Drive and 122nd Street, where the general's remains were placed in a temporary brick vault.

Even before the funeral, the city's Mayor William R. Grace had called a meeting of prominent New Yorkers on July 28th to discuss the construction of a memorial to Grant. Former President Chester A. Arthur, millionaires J.P. Morgan

11 Grant's funeral procession was witnessed by one million spectators on August 8, 1885. Black parishioners from New York's Mt. Olivet Baptist Church volunteered to lead the horses drawing the funeral car.



and Cornelius Vanderbilt, II, as well as 82 other men attended—including Richard T. Greener. Greener had been a personal friend of Grant's. But he had been specially invited to attend the meeting because Mayor Grace was eager to have a representative of the black community involved in the discussions. Before the meeting adjourned, Greener was elected Secretary of the group, which immediately chose to call itself The Grant Monument Association. When the organization was later officially incorporated, Greener was named one of its thirty-three trustees along with the Governor of New York and other high officials.

In effect, Greener became The Grant Monument Association's key administrative official. He ran the office at 146 Broadway, conducted all correspondence and served as the Association's principal spokesman. Under his direction a nationwide fund raising campaign was launched to build the Grant Monument—later popularly called Grant's Tomb and today officially known as the General Grant National Memorial.

Greener appears to have made special efforts to raise money for the project in black communities. The first contribution from this source came to him from the Rev. Jesse S. Cowles' African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Greenwich Village. Blacks in such places as Eustig, Florida, Palmyra, New York, and Portsmouth, Virginia all sent in money too, and the residents of Monrovia, Liberia, forwarded the then substantial sum of \$39.00 to Greener. The black community's spirited interest in the Grant Monument fund was explained by one Edwin J. Dickerson, who took up a collection in Aiken, South Carolina, “. . . we are grateful to and appreciate General Grant for the valuable service which he rendered in the erection of that great and glorious monument of freedom. . . of the American Negro.” In return, blacks, were glad to help build a monument to Grant. This paralleled their earlier involvement in erecting a statue of Lincoln in Washington, D.C. Called “Emancipation”, that monument was largely paid for by blacks and unveiled in Lincoln Park in 1876.

Although money flowed into The Grant Monument Association's coffers in sums ranging from 5¢ to \$5000, it was nowhere near enough to begin construction

12 This photograph of Richard T. Greener was taken while he served as secretary of The Grant Monument Association, 1885-1892.

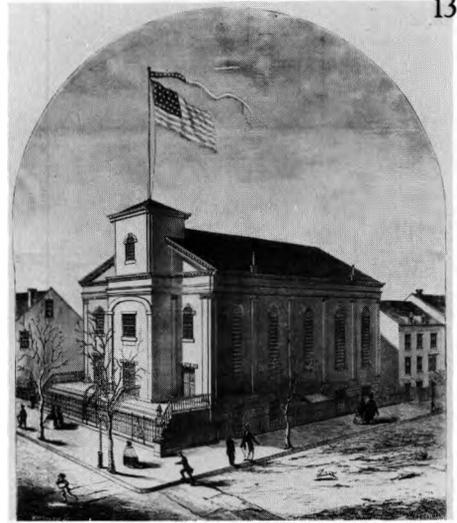


of the memorial. With the exception of black communities and a few other sources, cities and towns outside of New York were reluctant to contribute to the fund. In a sense General Grant had been too popular for his own good. Many municipalities planned to build their own Grant monuments, and even those that had no such plans were intensely jealous of New York and the high honor Grant's family had conferred on the city by selecting it as the general's final resting place. In the words of the editor of one newspaper, the *Clay County Enterprise* in Brazil, Indiana, ". . . we have not a cent for New York and would advise that not a dollar of help be sent to the millionaire city. . . If the billions of New York are not sufficient to embellish the city. . . let the remains (of Grant) be placed in Washington. . . ."

This hostility became so intense that several well organized efforts were mounted to actually wrench General Grant's remains from New York and transfer them to the nation's capital. But the permission of Grant's relatives was needed to effect such a move, and Greener saw to it that the permission was not obtained. As he later recalled, "When the intention was published to have the body removed from the temporary tomb. . . I personally drafted the letter, presented to Mrs. Grant and her son Frederick. . . which was signed without change, and settled the question whether or not the General's body should remain (in New York)." Nevertheless it was years before The Grant Monument Association's building fund was completed because of the anti-New York feeling that gripped the rest of the nation.

In the meantime, the Association turned its attention to the problem of selecting a design for the memorial. No one could have predicted in the years immediately following Grant's death that his monument would resemble the present building at Riverside Drive and 122nd Street. Members of the public and even architects suggested any number of wild schemes for the memorial and submitted many of them to the Association for its consideration. The plans ranged from gigantic equestrian statues to fortress-like structures. One man even recommended that the monument be built of enormous red, white and blue glass columns!

13 Parishioners of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church at the corner of Bleeker and West 10th Streets in New York were among the many blacks who contributed to the building fund for the Grant Monument.



In addition to his many other duties, Greener served as The Grant Monument Association's artistic adviser. Most of the other members of the organization were either politicians or businessmen and had not had the rigorous academic training he had received at Harvard. In Greener's own words, "My first love was art, and as a student at college, I went over everything in Monumental art in four large libraries. . . Hence, when the question of a design (for Grant's Tomb) came up, I was better posted (on the subject) than any member of (The Grant Monument Association), and did not hesitate to attack. . . unworthy designs. . . foisted on the committee."

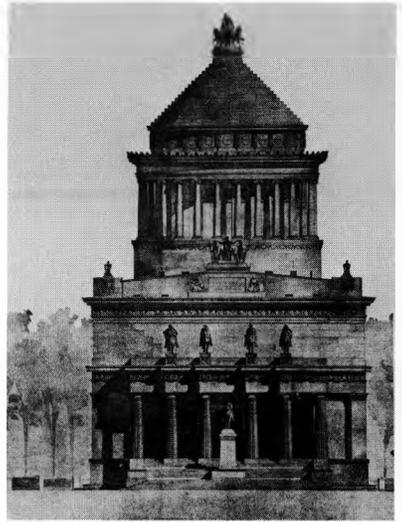
In early 1888, the Association opened a formal competition for the design of the Grant Monument. Artists, architects and sculptors were invited to submit plans, the best of which was to be built. Unfortunately, the sixty-five designs submitted in the competition were every bit as quixotic as the earlier suggestions to build the monument of colored glass. Weird towers, pyramids and other oddities were proposed, all of which the The Grant Monument Association felt compelled to reject in February 1890.

A few months later a second competition was held. Five specially selected architects were invited to draw up designs, and the proposal of one of them, John Hemenway Duncan, was unanimously selected by the Association. Duncan had carried a letter of introduction to Greener as early as the fall of 1888, and had discussed the Grant Monument with him intermittently until he received the commission in 1890. Greener noted later in life, "I was one of the first to point out the simplicity, dignity, and fitness of (Duncan's design), as presenting the characteristics of the Conqueror of the Rebellion."

Duncan's winning proposal called for a tomb with a massive, block-like lower section surmounted by a circular tower that was in turn crowned by a stepped pyramid. Rich ornamentation was to be provided in the form of colonnades, friezes and elaborate bronze statuary both inside and out. The overall design was based on a wide variety of sources, most of which were associated with great rulers of the past. Duncan's proposal included elements of one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the tomb of King Mausolus at Halicarnassus. It also resembled the

14 Architect John H.

Duncan's design for the memorial was selected at the urging of Greener and others in the fall of 1890.

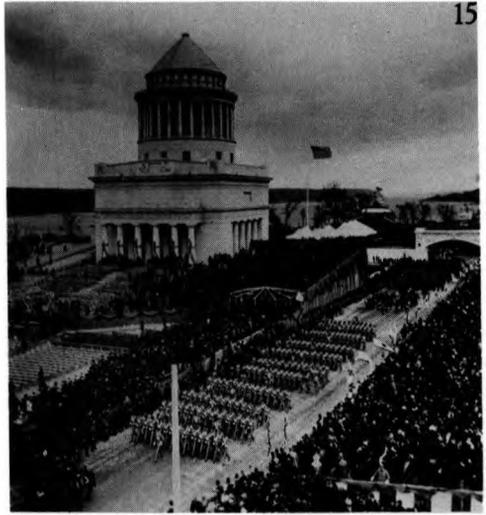


tomb of the Emperor Hadrian in Rome and its interior was patterned after the final resting place of the Emperor Napoleon in Paris. By including references to these various royal and imperial tombs in his own design for the Grant Monument, Duncan was clearly attempting to draw attention to Grant's august place among history's great men.

A crowd gathered at Riverside Drive on April 27, 1891, to witness the breaking of ground for the Grant Monument. Construction then began on the foundations. As cold weather approached, a serious conflict broke out within the ranks of The Grant Monument Association that directly affected Greener. Ostensively, it arose over the question of whether or not the officers of the Association should receive salaries in return for their services. But beneath this superficial problem was a seething battle between two factions for control of the organization. Greener sided with the President of the Association, former Mayor of New York William R. Grace. Unfortunately, Grace's opponents were able to neutralize his effectiveness, and in October 1891, Grace resigned. During the next few months Greener's other allies including Hamilton Fish, Seth Low and the Governor of New York, Roswell P. Flower, resigned from the Board of Trustees one by one, and a whole new slate of officers was elected and took control of The Grant Monument Association. Civil War General Horace Porter assumed the presidency. Under these circumstances, Greener stepped down as Secretary of the Association, but out of loyalty to Grant, he stayed on as a trustee until his death in 1922.

Having consolidated his authority over the Association, Horace Porter acted quickly to complete the languishing building fund. On April 27, 1892, President Benjamin Harrison made a pilgrimage to 122nd Street and Riverside Drive to lay the cornerstone for the Grant Monument before a cheering crowd of 40,000 people. Five years later the gleaming granite building was completed. Some \$600,000 had been raised by public subscription for the project from some 90,000 Americans. This was more money than had been raised years earlier for the Statue of Liberty. Great as the sum was, the completed Grant Monument was not quite as elaborate as architect John Duncan had hoped to make it. There simply was not

15 The \$600,000 memorial to Grant was unveiled on the 75th anniversary of the general's birth, April 27, 1897.



enough money available to adorn the building with bronze sculpture and to provide it with other classical embellishments.

Still, the 150 foot tall monument was most impressive and remains today the largest tomb ever built for an American president. It stands as a testimony to Greener and all the other individuals who had a hand in its construction. The tomb was officially dedicated on April 27, 1897, the 75th anniversary of General Grant's birth. President William McKinley presided over the ceremonies which rivaled in magnificence Grant's funeral of fifteen years earlier. Again, one million people took to the streets of New York to witness the parades and other festivities. And the *New York Times* proudly proclaimed, ". . . no edifice has ever been erected in the City of New York that has appealed so strongly and so generally to popular interest and sympathy as the Grant Monument. It is to be our one great memorial of the struggle for the union; a monument not only to the foremost of our generals, but to the cause of 'liberty and union' and, in a sense, to all who fought and died for that sentiment."

David M. Kahn

Selected Bibliography

- Blakely, Allison, "Richard T. Greener and the 'Talented Tenth's' Dilemma", in *The Journal of Negro History*, October, 1974.
- Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. VII, New York, Scribners, 1931.
- Greener, Richard T., Autobiographical sketch dated May 19, 1870, in Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Harvard College, *The Class of 1870, Seventh and Tenth Reports*, Cambridge, Riverside Press, 1900, 1920.
- Marszalek, John F., *Court-Martial: A Black Man in America*, New York, Scribners, 1972.
- Porter, Horace, "The Tomb of General Grant", in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, April 1897.
- Simmons, William J., *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising*, Cleveland, George M. Rewell & Co., 1887.
- West, Emory J., "Harvard's First Black Graduates: 1865-1890", in *Harvard Bulletin*, May 1972.
- Who's Who of the Colored Race*, Chicago, Frank Lincoln Mather, 1915.
- Woodson, Carter G., *Negro Orators*, Washington, D.C., Associated Publishers, 1925.

Photo Credits

Harvard University Archives	2 and 12
Moorland-Spingarn Research Center	
Howard University	6
Museum of the City of New York	13, 15
National Archives	10
National Park Service	5, 11, 14
The New York Public Library	
Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations	3, 9
Phillips Academy, Andover	1, 7
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture	
The New York Public Library	
Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations	4, 8