

# NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

## AMES MONUMENT

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Ames Monument

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

### 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 2 miles south of the intersection of Interstate 80 and Albany  
County Road 234 (Monument Road) (NE ¼ NW ¼, Section 6, T. 13, N. R. 71, W. of 6<sup>th</sup> P.M.)

Not for publication:

City/Town: Laramie

Vicinity: X

State: Wyoming

County: Albany

Code: 001

Zip Code: 82052

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

#### Ownership of Property

Private:     

Public-Local:     

Public-State: X

Public-Federal:     

#### Category of Property

Building(s):     

District:     

Site:     

Structure: X

Object:     

#### Number of Resources within Property Contributing

1

1

#### Noncontributing

     buildings

     sites

2 structures

     objects

2 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

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Signature of Certifying Official

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Date

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State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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Signature of Commenting or Other Official

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Date

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State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_\_ Entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ Determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ Determined not eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ Removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Keeper

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Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: Recreation &amp; Culture

Sub: Monument/Marker

Current: Recreation &amp; Culture

Sub: Monument/Marker

**7. DESCRIPTION**

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late Victorian: Romanesque: Richardsonian Romanesque

**MATERIALS:**

Foundation: Granite

Walls: Granite

Roof: Granite

Other: Carved sandstone panels

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Built between 1881 and 1882 in southeastern Wyoming, the Ames Monument was built by the Union Pacific Railroad as a memorial to the brothers Oakes Ames (1804-1873) and Oliver Ames (1807-1877) and their role in building the Union Pacific Railroad. The Ames Monument is sited on what was at the time the high point of the Union Pacific, where it passed through the Laramie Mountains on its way west to meet the Central Pacific Railroad in northern Utah. The two lines met in 1869 at Promontory Summit, about eighty-five miles northwest of Salt Lake City, completing the nation's first transcontinental railroad.

In 1879, the Union Pacific directors commissioned the architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) to design a monument memorializing the Ames brothers, who had been principal financiers and directors of the corporation. The dramatic setting selected for the monument was a windswept knoll, three hundred feet away from the original railroad grade and thirty feet above it in elevation. Richardson designed a large pyramid, sixty-foot square at its base and rising to a sixty-foot height, constructed of rusticated granite blocks. The massive simplicity of its design created a powerful effect, in scale with the awesome expanse of the surrounding high plains and the striking rock outcrops nearby.<sup>1</sup> Site and monument were perfectly matched and mutually enhanced their combined aesthetic power. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted observed in 1887 that he "never saw a monument so well befitting its situation, or, a situation so well befitting the special character of a particular monument."<sup>2</sup>

Olmsted wrote this description in a letter to Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, the art critic who was then working on a biography of Olmsted's close friend, the architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Richardson had died the year before at the age of forty-seven, and Olmsted urged Van Rensselaer to take on the task of documenting the life and work of the architect who, despite his early death, had changed the course of American architecture. Olmsted had been a friend and collaborator of Richardson's since the 1860s. Their mutual influence, as the leading landscape and architectural designers of their day, had shaped each other's work at critical times. The Ames Monument, in particular, embodies that mutual influence and, as described later in this nomination's Statement of Significance, represents a pivotal and unique moment in the history of American design.

The monument is essentially hollow, with an internal masonry framework that helps support the structure of the massive, load-bearing walls. The design did not include an entrance, other aperture, or accessible interior space.<sup>3</sup> The basic construction material is large, red granite blocks, mostly quarried from a nearby rock formation known as Reed's Rock, and which were cut, dressed, and assembled on site. The masonry is laid in a random ashlar pattern with minimal mortared joints struck deeply into the courses. About eighty-five men worked on the site for two years, and the total cost was reported to be \$65,000.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The route of the Union Pacific was shifted about three miles to the south in 1901, so that only the graded earth marking the original route remains. H. R. Dieterich, Jr., "The Architecture of H. H. Richardson in Wyoming: A New Look at the Ames Monument," *Annals of Wyoming* 38, no. 1 (April 1966): 49-53.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted to Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, February 6, 1887, Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Library of Congress.

<sup>3</sup> Over the years openings at the base of the monument have allowed unofficial access to its interior. These have been sealed off by the site's current manager, Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the facts and figures regarding the construction of the Ames Monument ultimately derive from the press clippings and other documents in the "Ames Monument Folder" of the Hebard Collection at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie. Neither original design drawings nor other primary records confirming contemporary accounts and reporting have been found.

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The surface of the Ames Monument granite differs in appearance somewhat from the existing granite outcrops in the area, including the weathered surfaces of the remaining portions of Reed's Rock. This is presumably due to the cutting and finishing of the stone, which was given a heavily rusticated surface that exposed the stone beneath its patinated surface. The first course, at the base of the monument, forms a massive and even foundation of blocks measuring typically five feet by eight feet, with a sloping batter of about four inches to the foot. The following courses are more irregular, with somewhat smaller and still heavily rusticated blocks, rising on the same slope. Some of the stones protrude significantly from the surface. About halfway up the monument (at twenty-seven feet, according to the Historic American Buildings Survey documentation of 1973), there is a small setback. At this point, four smooth, rounded corner blocks mark the transition at the four corners of the pyramid. From these shoulders the courses of stone are in a regular ashlar pattern, still rusticated, but without the insertion of irregular, larger blocks. At approximately fifty-three feet in height, the pyramid is topped with a massive granite capstone that creates a second setback leading to a flattened apex.<sup>5</sup> The battering, setbacks, and subtle changes in masonry courses give the monument its distinctive proportions and enhance the impression of its height.

The monument also features two inset carved relief portraits and an inset inscription. All are carved in sandstone, in a number of panels fitted together and integrated into the courses of granite masonry. The portraits were sculpted by the artist Augustus Saint-Gaudens and carved by the architectural craftsman John Evans. The finished panels were brought by train from Massachusetts. On the north side of the monument, which originally faced the passing trains, the inscription reads, “·IN·MEMORY· /·OF·OAKES·AMES·/·AND·OLIVER·AMES·”. The first line is on one panel, the second line is on two panels fitted together, and the third is on three panels fitted together. Each line is separated by a masonry course. The lettering is a Roman inscription type in capital letters approximately one-foot high.

The portrait of Oakes Ames is on the east side of the pyramid, that of Oliver Ames on the west. Like the inscription, both are integrated into the masonry of the upper level of the monument. Both are made up of four carved sandstone panels fitted together to form a large square. The central panels feature the faces of the subjects in heavy relief. The base panels project out to a beveled edge, visible from below, and form the shoulders of the portraits. On either side of the central portrait, narrower panels continue the background decorative motif of oak leaves (for both Oakes and Oliver), the birth and death dates for both men, and the artist's monogram. The height of the square formed by the four panels together is nine feet, beginning thirty-nine feet from the ground.<sup>6</sup> The south face of the monument has no inset decorative features.

Today, the monument is in very good condition. The location—a windswept knoll at over 8,000 feet in elevation—experiences severe weather conditions, but far from deteriorating the monument, as Olmsted remarked in a letter to Frederick Lothrop Ames in 1887, the effects of weathering “in the next thousand years will, I should think, no more than improve it.”<sup>7</sup>

The most severe damage to the monument occurred not due to weather, but apparently as a result of vandalism. According to Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office records from the 1980s, the damage to the portrait reliefs was most likely done by rifle fire. Following a recent inspection by Wyoming State Parks, the overall structure of the monument is considered sound.

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<sup>5</sup> J. William Rudd, et al, “Ames Monument, Albany County, WY,” Historic American Buildings Survey Report (HABS. No. WYO-72), Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted to Mr. Ames, U.P. R.R. near Sherman, January 29, 1887, Ames Family Papers, Stonehill College.

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Maintenance is the most visible concern for the condition of the monument today. In the past, the masonry has been repointed in places with concrete of a color that contrasts with the stone. In stabilizing the base of the monument, the eroded surface of the ground around it has been replaced with broken stone (highway gravel) that, while it provides a solid base, again contrasts in color and texture with the original materials and conditions. The grading of the area immediately surrounding the base of the monument also indicates that, although the area has been repaired, the original contours of the ground have probably not been restored.

The National Historic Landmark nomination comprises 8.443 acres, the same acreage as the state park that has existed since the Union Pacific Railroad deeded the property to the State of Wyoming in 1983. There is one contributing structure, the monument itself. There are two non-contributing structures: the enclosing fence around the property and the graveled approach drive and parking lot, both added recently by Wyoming State Parks.

**Integrity**

The overall historic integrity of the Ames Monument is very high. The appearance and stability of the structure are almost unchanged since its 1881-1882 period of significance. The slight damage to the relief portraits and the minimal intrusion of the non-contributing structures described here do not detract in a significant way from the overall integrity of the location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association of the structure. Today, as one comes upon the Ames Monument after a short drive on an unpaved road from Interstate 80, the overall aesthetic experience of Richardson's masterpiece remains powerful.

Although the monument has not been moved, the Union Pacific railroad line was shifted about three miles to the south in 1901.<sup>8</sup> The original route is visible today in the graded topography of the original right-of-way. The station stop of Sherman also has all but disappeared. The town cemetery remains and is maintained as a state historic site; but the rest of the town exists only as an archeological site. While the immediate setting of the monument remains mostly unchanged—high, windswept plains—it is no longer seen from passengers in passing rail cars, and arrival today is by automobile.

The design of the Ames Monument today remains as Richardson proposed it. The main material, rusticated granite, has only improved with age. The sandstone panels have weathered, and both central panels of the portraits have been slightly damaged, but they continue to be fully readable as portraits of the Ames brothers. The overall feeling of the monument impresses visitors today much as it did in the 1880s. The aesthetic impact of the monument—only partially conveyed by the accompanying photographs—is as great as ever. Much of that impact is due to the structure's remarkable setting, in the treeless high plains. This setting is largely unchanged, although it has seen some scattered residential development in the vicinity. The topography, vegetation, and erratic granite outcrops constitute a surrounding landscape as evocative today as it has been for thousands of years.

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<sup>8</sup> H. R. Dieterich, Jr., "The Architecture of H. H. Richardson in Wyoming: A New Look at the Ames Monument," *Annals of Wyoming* 38, no. 1 (April 1966): 49-53.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide:    Locally:   

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A    B    C X D   

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A    B    C    D    E    F X G   

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Criteria Exceptions: 7

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values,  
5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1881-1882

Significant Dates: 1881, 1882

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: H. H. Richardson/Norcross Brothers

Historic Contexts: XVI. Architecture  
F. Romanesque Revival (1840-1900)  
2. Richardsonian

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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****SUMMARY**

The Ames Monument is nationally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 4 and NHL Theme III (Expressing Cultural Values), Subtheme 5 (Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design). The period of national significance extends from 1881, when construction of the monument began, through to its completion in 1882. The Ames Monument represents a pivotal moment in the career of Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886), the most influential American architect of his generation. Richardson developed the Richardsonian Romanesque, a style of building that broke away from European traditions to become the first “native” American architectural style. The monument is perhaps the purest expression of the new, distinctively American and modern approach to architectural design that Richardson developed at this time. The architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock judged the Ames Monument as “perhaps the finest memorial in America.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition, Richardson’s design was influenced by the work of his friend and colleague, the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, and also includes portraits sculpted by the artist Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Richardson and Olmsted shaped each other’s work at critical times in their respective careers. The Ames Monument embodies that mutual influence and represents a pivotal and unique moment in the history of American design. The evocation of natural processes, forms, and materials were an essential aspect of this moment and make the Ames Monument a powerful and unique record of the intellectual and design collaboration of Olmsted and Richardson.

Although a commemorative property, the Ames Monument meets National Historic Landmark Criterion Exception 7 because it is nationally significant for its own architectural, artistic, and design qualities, rather than as a memorialization of Oliver and Oakes Ames and the transcontinental railroad. The Ames Monument was commissioned by the Union Pacific Railroad as a tribute to the brothers Oakes Ames (1804-1873) and Oliver Ames (1807-1877), who were major financiers of America’s first transcontinental railroad, which was completed in 1869. In 1875, the board of the Union Pacific Railroad formally resolved to honor Oakes Ames’s “courage, fidelity and integrity unsurpassed in the history of railroad construction.” In 1879, the Union Pacific revised its monument dedication to also include Oliver Ames, who had died two years earlier. The high regard in which the railroad held Oakes and Oliver Ames is reflected in their selection of prominent architect Henry Hobson Richardson and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens to create the monument.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT***Oakes and Oliver Ames*

Significant as the Ames Monument is as a work of American design, to fully understand its historical context it must also be considered as a memorial to the two American industrialists who shouldered the responsibility of a massive project that transformed American life and society in the years immediately following the Civil War: construction of the first transcontinental railroad, specifically the Union Pacific portion. The story of the Ames Monument begins, therefore, not in Wyoming, but in Massachusetts, where the Ames brothers were born.

Oakes Ames was born January 10, 1804; his younger brother Oliver on November 5, 1807. They were the sons of Susanna Angier Ames and Oliver Ames Sr., a blacksmith who built a prosperous shovel-manufacturing

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<sup>9</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *The Architecture of H. H. Richardson and His Times*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936, reprint, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 197.



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business in North Easton, Massachusetts, twenty-five miles from Boston. In 1844, when the business was making nearly 140,000 shovels a year, the sixty-five-year-old patriarch, now known as Old Oliver, relinquished total control of the business and went into an equal partnership with his sons Oakes and Oliver to create the company Oliver Ames and Sons.

As railroad construction increased throughout the United States in the nineteenth century, the Ames family profited from the sale of shovels and other tools and from the development of more sophisticated means of shipping their goods. In 1855 the brothers and “their associates and successors,” the Easton Branch Railroad Company, built a private railroad line from Easton to Stoughton, Massachusetts, where it then connected with the Boston and Providence Line.<sup>10</sup> As the art historian William Pierson observes, the Ames family now found itself taking an “active and productive role in the development of the railroad, the scope of which established them as leading openers, as well as shapers, of the land.”<sup>11</sup>

*The Railroad Act of 1862 and the Credit Mobilier*

In the 1860s, the fate and fortune of the Ames family became forever linked to the history of the first transcontinental railroad and the later scandal associated with its construction. The Union Pacific Railroad was financed and built through the investment of the large fortune and considerable political influence of the Ames family. The first real legislative progress toward construction of the railroad was made in March 1853, when Congress passed the Pacific Railway Survey bill, giving the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ten months to survey possible transcontinental routes. The Corps presented its eleven volumes of reports in 1855, in which it determined that four routes—two northern and two southern—were practical. The surveys, coming at a time when the nation was embroiled in sectional politics, only exacerbated passions and did little to ease congressional decision-making. No progress on selecting a route could be made before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.<sup>12</sup>

President Abraham Lincoln supported a transcontinental railroad “not only as a military necessity, but as a means of holding the Pacific Coast to the Union.”<sup>13</sup> On July 1, 1862, promoted by a Congress composed mostly of Northerners, the first Pacific Railway Act became law, naming a northern route for the railroad and authorizing two companies to construct the lines. The Central Pacific, working east from Sacramento, California, was assigned the difficult task of crossing the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The Union Pacific, building west from the banks of the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, Iowa, would scale the Rocky Mountains near South Pass, Wyoming, and then rendezvous with the Central Pacific. Under the law, each railroad was to receive a four-hundred-foot right-of-way and ten alternate sections of land for each mile of track laid. The government also agreed to loan the railroads \$16,000 for each mile built over flat terrain, \$32,000 a mile in the foothills, and \$48,000 through the mountains.

From its inception, the development of the Union Pacific fell under the leadership of Thomas C. Durant (1820-1885), whom many historians have characterized as an unscrupulous entrepreneur eager to gain immediate

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<sup>10</sup> Gregory Galer, “Forging Ahead: the Ames Family of Easton, Massachusetts and Two Centuries of Industrial Enterprise, 1635-1861,” Ph.D. diss. (MIT, 2002), 237-249, 261, 291. In 1876 Ames incorporated as the Oliver Ames and Sons Corporation. Thirteen years later, the firm constructed a corporate office in Boston. In 1879 the Ames factory accounted for 3/5 of the world’s shovel production and in 1881 production was 1.5 million shovels made by 422 men. The company was reorganized as the Ames Shovel and Tool Company, Inc. in 1901.

<sup>11</sup> William H. Pierson, Jr., “The Beauty of a Belief: The Ames Family, Richardson, and Unitarianism,” in Maureen Meister, ed., *H. H. Richardson, the Architect, His Peers, and Their Era* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), xxi.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>13</sup> Grenville M. Dodge, *How We Built the Union Pacific Railroad* (Council Bluffs, Iowa: Monarch Printing Co., ca. 1911; reprint (Denver: Sage Books, 1965), 10.

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profits. Earlier, Durant worked as a fundraiser and construction manager of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad, which built the first railroad bridge over the Mississippi River.

Durant and the Union Pacific, from the outset, had difficulties attracting private capital to such an ambitious and potentially risky undertaking during wartime. Durant thought that investors would be more likely to come forward if a subsidiary construction company accepted responsibility (and payment) for all construction work, a method he had already used at the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad. For this purpose, Durant and George Francis Train (1829-1904) purchased the Pennsylvania Fiscal Agency, a corporation chartered in 1859 specifically to buy railroad bonds and other securities and to provide credit to railroad companies. The company's charter was particularly appealing to the two entrepreneurs because it contained a provision that limited the liability of each individual to the amount he had invested. Durant and Train renamed the company the Credit Mobilier of America and became its first directors in 1864. The name was inspired by one of the most powerful banking institutions of the era, the Credit Mobilier of France, a limited liability joint-stock company founded in 1852 that financed the building of major public works and other construction. The partners then arranged to have a private investor, H. M. Hoxie, take on the first construction contract for the Union Pacific, apparently with no intention of attempting to fulfill it, since the Credit Mobilier of America immediately purchased the contract.<sup>14</sup>

*The Ames Family and the Union Pacific*

By the time the Civil War began in 1861, Oakes and Oliver Ames were already major figures in American industry and finance. Oakes helped organize the Republican Party in Massachusetts and, in 1863, joined the U.S. House of Representatives, where he became a member of the committee that passed, after much discussion and several amendments, the Pacific Railway Act of 1864, signed by President Lincoln on July 2, 1864.

The new law doubled the land grant provisions for the railroad corporations and increased the number of \$100 shares it was authorized to sell from one hundred thousand to one million. The act, intended to stimulate investment in the transcontinental railroad, was successful, and money poured in. As prominent financiers and industrialists, Oakes and Oliver Ames, among others, were recruited to buy stock in the Credit Mobilier as both a sound investment and perhaps in fulfillment of a patriotic duty. The Ames brothers stood out among contemporary capitalists for several reasons. Their success had established their reputation as businessmen and had resulted in very significant wealth. They had already invested in railroads, were deeply involved in the Union cause, and their shovel manufacturing business could only benefit from the massive public works project of the transcontinental railroad. According to family historian Winthrop Ames, Lincoln called Oakes Ames to the White House for a private meeting in January 1865. It was at this moment, and in "later conferences," that Lincoln is supposed to have given a version of the following frequently quoted appeal: "Ames you take hold of this. If the subsidies provided are not enough to build the road ask double and you shall have it. The road must be built, and you are the man to do it. Take hold of it yourself. By building the Union Pacific, you will become the remembered man of your generation."<sup>15</sup> Oakes Ames subsequently became a major financial backer of the railroad, and his investment and involvement increased as further difficulties arose. When Durant demanded additional construction funds (payable to the Credit Mobilier corporation), Oakes Ames responded with additional support.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Jay Boyd Crawford, *The Credit Mobilier of America: Its Origin and History* (Boston: C. W. Calkins, 1880), 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> According to Winthrop Ames, his grandmother wrote about the meeting in her diary on January 20, 1865. The diary has since been lost. Winthrop Ames, *The Ames Family of Easton, Massachusetts* (Privately Printed, 1938), 145.

<sup>16</sup> Maury Klein, *Union Pacific*, vol. 1. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 79.

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As the Civil War ended, pressure to complete the transcontinental project increased. The Union Pacific rapidly completed its original “Hoxie” construction contract in the fall of 1866, which led to further change and intrigue within the Credit Mobilier corporation. Although Durant had created the corporation to benefit himself and his colleagues at the Union Pacific, he now denounced the arrangement as a conflict of interest—a position that put him at odds with other directors and stockholders.<sup>17</sup> Durant’s exact motivations and purposes cannot be determined, but clearly he was not satisfied with the changing situation.

That same year of 1866, Oliver Ames became the temporary president of the Union Pacific so had considerable administrative power. (He was formally elected to the position in the spring of 1868.) By March 1867, after much wrangling, the Ames brothers and those aligned with them were able to remove Durant from the Credit Mobilier board, although he remained vice president of the Union Pacific. According to historian Maury Klein, the “machinations” involved in the conflict between Durant and other directors and interested parties at the Union Pacific resulted in “years of strife and litigation that kept the company in constant turmoil and spawned the scandal that would forever taint the Union Pacific.”<sup>18</sup>

At about the time Durant was forced out at the Credit Mobilier, more capital for the construction company was needed. Oakes Ames, seeking additional investors, offered shares to fellow members of Congress. At this time, most of his offers were declined. That summer, the Union Pacific board agreed to a new construction contract—the Ames Contract—a 667-mile stretch of track. Shortly after, this contract, which would prove to be the company’s most profitable, was divided among seven trustees. The stage was set for both the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad, and what would later be described as the “scandal” of the Credit Mobilier of America.<sup>19</sup>

*The Union Pacific: Progress and Scandal*

In the spring of 1868, the railroad reached Cheyenne, Wyoming, where a few months earlier a Union Pacific agent had opened an office and began selling town lots for \$150 each. By that time, Union Pacific and Credit Mobilier stockholders, thanks in part to the completion of a bridge over the 600-foot-wide Dale Creek chasm in Wyoming, were receiving high returns on what now appeared to be lucrative investments. Oakes Ames was approached by certain members of Congress, some of whom had refused to invest earlier, who now were eager to buy into the Credit Mobilier. Ames offered the stock at the earlier (lower) price, either because he felt bound by the earlier offer or because of the increased influence the low price would help secure. Credit Mobilier stock was purchased by two senators and nine representatives, none of whom apparently saw a conflict of interest or other impropriety in the transactions. Oakes recorded each sale in a ledger, later also referred to as “a little black book.” He also dealt with H. S. McComb, one of the early promoters of the Union Pacific and a director of the corporation, who claimed that he was owed more than three hundred shares of Credit Mobilier stock. That winter, Oakes wrote to McComb in reference to this disagreement, suggesting that it was necessary for the shares to be “where they will do most good to us...we want more friends in this Congress....”<sup>20</sup>

During the summer of 1868, the directors of the Union Pacific had reason to feel optimistic, and they demonstrated their faith with a large payoff to shareholders.<sup>21</sup> Despite the challenge of moving forward under Durant’s leadership, work continued, and between July and October an average of two and one-third miles of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>19</sup> Trottman, *History of the Union Pacific*, 40.

<sup>20</sup> John P. Davis, *The Union Pacific Railway: A Study in Railway Politics, History and Economics* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Co., 1894), 143.

<sup>21</sup> Klein, *Union Pacific*, 157-8.

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track was laid every day, for a total of 181 miles.<sup>22</sup> As the Central Pacific laid tracks across the deserts of Nevada and the Union Pacific crossed the Rockies, the anticipated completion of the transcontinental road captivated the interest of the press and the general public.

By the end of the year, however, the financial climate of the company had changed. The railroad, after huge expenses, was suffering financially, and the directors worried about potential default. In addition, rumors of corruption in the building of the railroad had begun to circulate as early as the winter of 1868 when profits were finally being realized. The whispering increased as the railroad once again fell into financial difficulty.<sup>23</sup> In particular, the Credit Mobilier of America, considered a mysterious entity that had somehow taken over the Union Pacific, began to rouse suspicion. In January 1869, Charles Francis Adams, writing for the *North American Review*, described the inner workings of a “Pacific Railroad ring,” which was essentially a select group of members of Congress and other insiders who acted as directors, stockholders, and contractors of the railroad and reaped its profits. Horace Greeley publicized the accusations in the *New York Tribune*; but interest in the scandal apparently failed to attract much notice as the press anticipated the upcoming dramatic meeting of the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific in Utah.<sup>24</sup>

The winter of 1869 brought with it additional, seemingly endless requests for funds, and finally Oliver Ames and other Union Pacific directors raised money themselves, as stockholders of Credit Mobilier offered promises of support. But the corporation’s financial problems once again reached a crisis. In February, work on the Union Pacific came to a grinding halt in Utah as a severe blizzard left the crews in disarray. On April 9<sup>th</sup> a deal was made to connect the two roads within an eight-mile stretch west of Ogden, Utah. From this point, both railroads would lay down track to Promontory Summit. Finally, on May 10, 1869, the two railroads met to join tracks. At the moment the ceremonial golden spike was struck, the breaking news was telegraphed across the country.

### *The Scandal of the Gilded Age*

During the presidential campaign of 1872, the Republican incumbent, Ulysses S. Grant, was challenged by reformers from his own party who backed Horace Greeley, the Democratic nominee. Corruption in federal government during the Grant administration was a major issue in the campaign. One of the most famous scandals of the era began that summer, when Union Pacific director McComb, still aggrieved over missing his opportunity to profit from the Credit Mobilier, used the letters Oakes Ames had written to him on the subject years earlier as the basis for filing affidavits in a Pennsylvania court to strengthen his case for damages by claiming that Ames had misused Credit Mobilier stock.<sup>25</sup>

The incriminating letters were soon discovered by Charles Anderson Dana, the crusading editor of the *New York Sun*, who was eager to uncover further government corruption and so support Greeley’s floundering campaign against Grant. On September 4, 1872, as the November election approached, the *Sun*’s headlines read: “‘The King of Frauds’; How the Credit Mobilier Bought its Way Through Congress.” Among those charged with participating in the scheme were then Vice President Schuyler Colfax, Representative James A. Garfield, Speaker of the House James G. Blaine, and Senator Henry Wilson, who was on Grant’s ticket running for vice president. What was soon known as the “Credit Mobilier scandal” gave the Democrats, as well as Greeley’s Republican supporters, a chance to salvage their anticipated loss at the polls. The *Sun* and other

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>23</sup> Trottman, *History of the Union Pacific*, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Ames, *Pioneering the Union Pacific*, 437.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Junge, “The Ames Monument,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971), 4.

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newspapers picked up and repeated the accusation that members of Congress had been influenced by the profits they derived from Credit Mobilier stock. Congressional investigations were demanded.

The outcome of the election, however, was not affected. Grant was re-elected as were the other implicated officials. But the scandal associated with the name “Credit Mobilier” did not dissipate. The House of Representatives began its 42<sup>nd</sup> session with a closed door hearing on the Credit Mobilier affair. On January 6<sup>th</sup> the House voted to open the hearing to the public, and transcripts of the proceedings were published. A committee led by Jeremiah M. Wilson of Indiana explored the relationship between the Union Pacific and the Credit Mobilier, while a second committee, chaired by Luke P. Poland of Vermont, focused on the dealings of Credit Mobilier and the accused congressmen. In February the Wilson committee reported that the Union Pacific directors had defrauded both the government and the people by accruing an enormous corporate debt and leaving the Union Pacific on the edge of bankruptcy.<sup>26</sup> The Poland report declared Oakes Ames guilty of selling Credit Mobilier stock to congressmen at less than its true value, with the intent of influencing them.<sup>27</sup> In the end, the scandal “left Congress so wholly demoralized by apprehension of other exposures that neither house took definite action, Congress adjourned under a cloud and the entire country was overcast with doubt, shame and indignation.”<sup>28</sup> Critics of the committee reports wondered how Oakes Ames could be accused of giving bribes, when those who accepted them were not charged with accepting them.<sup>29</sup>

On February 27, 1873, the House inquiry absolved all from guilt except for Oakes Ames and James Brooks, the House Democratic leader and a Union Pacific director when he received his stocks.<sup>30</sup> Although expulsion had originally been recommended, the House of Representatives as a whole settled with passing a censure vote on both men. According to Jay Boyd Crawford, who in 1880 wrote a book to “clear away the misunderstanding” surrounding the Credit Mobilier, after the announcement of the decision, “men who had just voted against Mr. Ames, gathered around him to ask his pardon for having done so. They said to him, ‘we know that you are innocent; but we had to do it in order to satisfy our constituents.’”<sup>31</sup>

Although the details and circumstances of the Credit Mobilier affair are no longer widely known or understood—indeed the exact details of the relationship of the Credit Mobilier and the Union Pacific never have been—many historians have characterized it as one of the defining scandals of an era fraught with outright corruption in the federal government. At a time when corporate business practices were just beginning to take shape, when political graft was common and elections were unstable, the public had reason to fear the power of the new railroad corporations. In part because the scandal made headlines immediately before the 1872 presidential election and implicated major political figures, Credit Mobilier grew to become a catch phrase for the corruption of the era. This may have been the case, ironically, because there were so many obscure aspects of the affair that it was difficult to fully understand the facts and their relative seriousness. One early historian who took on the subject, William Chaffin, expresses this ambiguity:

As to the Credit Mobilier affair, it is noticeable that those were freest to condemn it who knew least about it. It is safe to assert that not one in a hundred of those who used that term as a symbol of business iniquity really understood what it meant. It was for this very reason a

<sup>26</sup> Trottman, *History of the Union Pacific*, 77.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> George Alfred Townsend quoted in Donald A. Ritchie, *Press Gallery, Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard University, 1992), 106.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Winslow Martin, *Behind the Scenes in Washington: Being a Complete and Graphic Account of the Credit Mobilier Investigation* (New York: The Continental Publishing Co., 1873), 280.

<sup>30</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Press Gallery, Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 102-106.

<sup>31</sup> Jay Boyd Crawford, *The Credit Mobilier of America: Its Origins and History* (Boston: C. W. Calkins, 1880), 216.

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convenient and powerful weapon to wield in a time of great political excitement, inasmuch as it suggested unknown horrors and depths of wickedness. In fact, however, it was merely a construction company. Roads had been built by the same method before; they are commonly built in the same way in the West to-day.<sup>32</sup>

Oakes Ames died on May 8, 1873, at home in North Easton. He appears to have suffered from a stroke that resulted in paralysis and left him unable to speak at the end. It was difficult not to assume that a man of his strong character had been severely affected by the events and publicity of his official censure. Upon his death, Ames was eulogized in newspapers throughout the country, and 3,000 mourners attended his funeral. At their June meeting in Boston, the directors of the Union Pacific bestowed upon him the title of “builder of the Union Pacific Railroad.”<sup>33</sup>

Almost two years later, on March 10, 1875, the directors of the Union Pacific, including Oliver Ames, held a meeting in Boston and resolved to erect “at some point on the line of the road...a suitable and permanent monument” to memorialize the life and accomplishments of Oakes Ames.<sup>34</sup> A short notice appeared in the *New York Evening Telegram* on September 27 announcing that “a sketch in plaster, together with large drawings for the Oakes Ames Monument, are now on exhibition in Boston. This is a queer country and things are wrinkled somehow. Oakes Ames will get his monument before Washington is thus fortunate.”<sup>35</sup> Although the directors had clearly launched the project, plans were delayed while the Wilson Committee’s bill, known as the Act of March 3, 1873, worked its way through the court system. The act was intended to reimburse the Union Pacific and the U. S. Government for any lost profits resulting from the Credit Mobilier scandal. Finally, on January 9, 1879, the Supreme Court issued a twenty-five page report explaining in detail that there would be no “judgment, no money due, and no sufficient allegation of insolvency.” This was because most of the Union Pacific stockholders were also holders of Credit Mobilier stock.<sup>36</sup> With the case now closed in a satisfactory fashion, the directors were free to move forward with their plan for the monument. Also in 1879, the Union Pacific revised its monument dedication to include Oliver Ames, who had died two years earlier. This probably was initiated by Oliver’s son Frederick Lothrop Ames, who was a member that year of the Union Pacific Executive Board.

Because of the patronage of the Ames family, the monument was designed by one of the foremost architects in the country, H. H. Richardson, who created a pure expression of an American architecture inspired by the imagery of western landscapes and geology. The Ames Monument, begun in 1881 at the high point of the Union Pacific line near Evans Pass, Wyoming, became a unique record of a turning point in the history of American art and architectural design. This was made possible because members of the Ames family already knew Richardson and had given him, and his friend and collaborator Frederick Law Olmsted, important commissions back in North Easton, Massachusetts.

### *The Ames Family as Patrons of American Architecture*

In 1877, before the court offered any resolution of the Credit Mobilier case, Oliver Ames died, leaving \$50,000 for the construction of “a private institution, not owned by the town, but held in trust for the public.”<sup>37</sup> The

<sup>32</sup> William L. Chaffin, *History of the Town of Easton, Massachusetts* (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1886), 648, 652-53.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Edgar Ames, *Pioneering the Union Pacific, a Reappraisal of the Builders of the Railroad* (New York: Meredith), 495-6.

<sup>34</sup> “The Union Pacific,” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 11, 1875, 5.

<sup>35</sup> The Washington Monument in Washington, DC, was still unfinished at this date. The plaster “sketch” must have been a portrait of Oakes. “Personal,” *The (New York) Evening Telegram*, September 27, 1875, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Edgar Ames, *Pioneering the Union Pacific*, 532-35.

<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, *H. H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 183.

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responsibility of fulfilling the bequest fell to Oliver's children, Frederick Lothrop (1835-1893) and Helen Angier (1836-1882), who wasted no time in finding an architect to carry out their father's wishes. The commission for the Ames Free Library (also known as the Ames Memorial Library) entered the office of architect H. H. Richardson in September of that same year, and is significant as the first of several commissions to be awarded to Richardson by the Ames family.

Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) was born at Priestly Plantation, St. James Parish, Louisiana, the son of a merchant and the descendent, on his mother's side, of the British-born scientist Joseph Priestley. As a youth, he attended the Classical Academy in New Orleans, and after spending a year at Tulane University, entered Harvard at age seventeen. This was a year after the death of his father, and a year before his mother, Catherine Priestly Richardson, married John Davey Bein, a family friend and business associate. The Priestly and Bein hardware business offered a typical range of items, including Oliver Ames shovels shipped from North Easton. At Harvard, Richardson set the stage for his future career by developing a network of friends, many of whom would become clients. After graduating in 1859, with the encouragement and financial support of his stepfather, Richardson left for Europe, where he pursued his architectural studies for the next six years. He returned to the states in 1865, the second practicing American architect to attend the architectural program of the prestigious École des Beaux Arts in Paris. On his return to the States, Richardson met the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, with whom he would become a friend and neighbor, as well as a significant collaborator on several influential projects over the next two decades.<sup>38</sup>

In 1866, Richardson received his first building commission, Unity Church in Springfield, Massachusetts, which came to him through his Harvard classmate James Augustus Rumrill. At about this time, Olmsted also recommended Richardson for the design of the Alexander Dallas Bache monument at the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. By 1869, both men had moved to the Clifton neighborhood of Staten Island, New York, where Richardson's first two children were born. Olmsted requested an appointment for Richardson on the Staten Island Improvement Commission and in 1871 the two collaborated, along with Olmsted's partner Calvert Vaux, on the design of the Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane. Richardson's career continued to prosper and in 1874 he won the prestigious commission for Trinity Church in Boston and moved to Brookline, a wealthy Boston suburb with a short commute to Copley Square. His new home on Cottage Street became both his professional office and an *atelier* for apprentices. Beginning in 1876, Olmsted and Richardson worked together once again, collaborating on the completion of the New York State Capitol in Albany. The two were in the midst of this project when Richardson accepted the commission for the Ames Free Library in North Easton, Massachusetts.

Although historians are uncertain as to whether Frederick Lothrop Ames and Richardson were acquainted at the time of the Ames Free Library commission, there is no doubt that the two traveled in overlapping social circles and would have had many opportunities to meet. F. L. Ames graduated a year before Richardson entered Harvard, in the same class as Richardson's future partner Charles Gambrill, which also gave them similar exposure to the influential professors Louis Agassiz and Asa Gray.<sup>39</sup> In any case, in the fall of 1877 Henry Hobson Richardson had only just completed Trinity Church (that February), a very visible and much discussed commission in Boston that established him as a premier architect in the nation. Trinity Church, now designated a National Historic Landmark, also embodied a new style and approach in American architecture—later described as Richardsonian Romanesque—which, according to architectural historian James F. O'Gorman,

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<sup>38</sup> James F. O'Gorman, *Living Architecture, A Biography of H. H. Richardson* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). Architect Richard Morris Hunt was the first American architect to attend the École des Beaux Arts.

<sup>39</sup> According to Ochsner, "F. L. Olmsted may have been another point of contact since F. L. Ames was deeply involved in horticulture." See Ochsner, *H. H. Richardson*, 183.

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“swept the country” and ultimately became “more commonly employed by followers than by its innovator.”<sup>40</sup> Examples of Richardsonian Romanesque spread from coast to coast during the 1880s and 1890s. Considering F. L. Ames’s prominence as a Boston businessman and his interests in horticulture and architectural design, it was hardly surprising that he chose Richardson as his architect in 1877. Richardson would go on to design five buildings in North Easton for the Ames family, four of them for F. L. Ames specifically.<sup>41</sup> (The five Richardson-designed buildings—Ames Free Library, Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, Old Colony Railroad Station, Ames Gate Lodge, and F.L. Ames Gardener’s Cottage—comprise the H. H. Richardson Historic District National Historic Landmark. The district was designated in 1987 for its significance in American architectural history.)

*The Ames Monument: A Collaboration*

About the time the Ames Monument commission entered the Richardson office in 1879, several other projects were beginning or under way, including the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, the rectory for Trinity Church and, in March 1880, the Ames Gate Lodge. All of these projects involved a group of artisans and artists chosen by Richardson.

Richardson often relied on one of the pioneering general contracting firms in the United States: Norcross Brothers of Worcester, Massachusetts, for assurance that his designs would become the buildings he envisioned. Orlando Whitney Norcross (1839-1920) and his older brother James Atkinson Norcross (1831-1903) were the principals of what was the nation’s first national construction firm. The brothers began in Swampscott, Massachusetts, in the early 1860s and then moved to Worcester. Their first commission with Richardson, the Worcester High School, appeared as the featured image of the firm’s advertisement in the 1872 Worcester Directory.<sup>42</sup> The Norcross firm would go on to construct hundreds of buildings throughout the country, not only for Richardson, but, after his death, for prominent architectural firms such as Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge; McKim, Mead and White; Bruce Price; Van Brunt and Howe; Peabody and Stearns; Henry Ives Cobb; and John Russell Pope. In the process of so much building, O. W. Norcross would become a personal friend of Richardson’s, as well as a major factor in the architect’s success, producing at least thirty-three of Richardson’s buildings. Norcross hired foremen to supervise all of the artisans and craftsmen, brought stone and slate from his own quarries, and fabricated millwork at his shops in Worcester.<sup>43</sup> The Trinity Church project carried the firm through the aftermath of the financial crash of 1873 and then resulted in more building contracts at a larger scale, as well as the opening of offices in Boston (1873), New York, Providence, Rhode Island, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Toronto, and Montreal. In order to supply stone for the church, the firm opened three new quarries in Dedham and East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, and Westerly, Rhode Island. Eventually, the firm operated quarries in New York, Connecticut, Georgia, Michigan, and Vermont.

Norcross was not a typical supervisor organizing subcontractors to perform specialized work. In 1880, he filed his first patent, a fastener to attach roofing slates to metal frames, and several years later patented three processes for cutting and finishing stone, a stone saw, and a stone planer capable of creating curved surfaces. He also invented a reinforced concrete “beamless flat slab” in order to reduce the need for supporting beams. The Norcross firm achieved national importance for its many contributions to the building industry, both in terms of ingenious new products and the oversight and execution of masterworks of nineteenth-century

<sup>40</sup> O’Gorman, *H. H. Richardson, Architectural Forms*, 67.

<sup>41</sup> Robert F. Brown, “The Architecture of Henry Hobson Richardson in North Easton Massachusetts,” The Oakes Ames Memorial Hall Association and the Easton Historical Society, 1969. In the spring of 1884, Ames commissioned Richardson to design two stores for him in Boston. See Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, 140.

<sup>42</sup> James F. O’Gorman, “O.W. Norcross, Richardson’s “Master Builder”: A Preliminary Report,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32 (May 1973), 106.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.



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American architecture. Upon his death in 1920, O. W. Norcross was called “as sound as the granite he had cut from the hills in several states, and as enduring, within human limitations.”<sup>44</sup> It was Norcross’s expertise in stone—its quarrying, fashioning and carving—that set him apart as the ideal contractor for the Ames Monument.

When the Ames Monument commission entered the Richardson office in 1879, the Norcross Brothers were sharing a building at Huntington Avenue with the firm of Evans and Tombs, which specialized in architectural sculpture. Their studio was near Copley Square and the adjacent Boston and Albany Railroad, an ideal location for receiving stone from the Norcross quarries in Longmeadow and building supplies from throughout the country. Stone could therefore be cut by the Norcross firm, and then moved along next door to John Evans’s firm for sculpting. This partnership also benefitted Richardson, who also saved time and money when Norcross contracted work out to Evans. The collaborative relationship appears to have been intense. In her biography of Richardson, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer mentions that during a European tour, “Mr. Richardson fairly raved over St. Trophime, and wanted to bring Norcross and Evans over to see ‘some really good work.’” In a footnote to this statement, she identified the two as “the builder and architectural sculptor to whom the execution of most of his work was entrusted.”<sup>45</sup>

Like Orlando Norcross, John Evans was no ordinary craftsman. Born to a working-class family in Caernarvon, North Wales, Evans immigrated to New York in September of 1872 and quickly found work in his specialty, architectural sculpture. He soon became a leader in providing elaborate and ornamental architectural carving, beginning with his work for Richardson at Trinity Church. By 1878, Evans was the director of the first school of Modelling and Carving at the new Museum of Fine Arts on Copley Square. Nineteen years later he would become vice president of the first Society of Arts and Crafts in America. Evans had high standards, a commitment to collaboration in the arts, and the ability to run a profitable business. By the 1890s, John Evans & Co. employed hundreds of assistants in a company that extended across the country and brought in commissions with major public sculptures. These included the New York Life Insurance Company in Kansas City by McKim, Mead and White (1888), Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, by Frederick Law Olmsted and Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge (1888), and the Fine Arts Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago by Charles Atwood (1893).<sup>46</sup>

During the creation of Trinity Church, Richardson also began working with another outstanding artistic figure of the era, the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907). In 1875, after six years of study in Paris, the young artist was hired to work under the painter John LaFarge on mural paintings for the church. A native of Ireland, Saint-Gaudens immigrated to New York with his parents as an infant. He apprenticed as a cameo cutter while taking art classes at the Cooper Union and the National Academy. At age nineteen, Saint-Gaudens enrolled in the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, and after three years, spent time in Rome, where he received his first commissions. Saint-Gaudens went on to work on many projects with Richardson, including a bronze portrait relief for Richardson’s Henry Eglinton Montgomery Memorial beginning in 1876. The sculptor created three relief portraits for the Ames family in North Easton from 1880 to 1882—the two profiles on the monument and that of Oliver in the library. For his statue of Admiral David G. Farragut in New York, Saint-Gaudens collaborated in 1881 for the first time with the architect Stanford White. His best-known works include the most important American public monuments of the era, including the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial

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<sup>44</sup> “Orlando W. Norcross is Dead,” *Worcester (Massachusetts) Telegram*, February 28, 1920, quoted in Diana Evelyn Prideaux-Brune, “Builder as Technical Innovator: Orlando Norcross and the Beamless Flat Slab” (master’s thesis, Cornell University, 1989), 157.

<sup>45</sup> Mariana Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1888; reprint (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 29.

<sup>46</sup> Ann Clifford, “John Evans (1847-1923) and Architectural Sculpture in Boston” (master’s thesis, Tufts University, 1992).

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on the Boston Common, the statue of William Tecumseh Sherman in Central Park, as well as the design for the United States twenty dollar “double eagle” gold piece, considered the finest American coin ever minted. Saint-Gaudens was the most famous American sculptor of his day and a leader of what became known as the “American Renaissance.”<sup>47</sup>

Richardson assembled and worked with this remarkable group of artists and artisans on many of the most important architectural works produced in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s. All would work together on the Ames Monument between 1879 and 1882. This would be the only work Richardson undertook west of St. Louis, and it was unique in other ways. For example, although it was much larger than the other memorials Saint-Gaudens collaborated on, it nevertheless was not really a building in the sense that there was no planned entry or public interior space. The Ames Monument became an opportunity for a pure architectural expression, at the scale of a building, but with the sole program of memorialization.

The Ames Monument was also unique because of its site—a high, windswept plain, covered only with short grass and interrupted by scattered and fabulous granite outcrops—which was completely unlike any other site Richardson and his collaborators had ever encountered. Richardson’s response to this western landscape (which he knew when he designed the monument only from written sources, photographs, and other visual sources) shaped his aesthetic impulse and formal strategy for the monument’s design. In this regard, Richardson was influenced by another collaborator from this period, one who apparently did not participate directly in the design of the monument, but who had a great indirect influence in the form of a longstanding intellectual and aesthetic collaboration with the architect. At the critical time Richardson was considering his approach for the Ames Monument, Frederick Law Olmsted had also asked him to work on a bridge design for the Back Bay Fens, a public park in Boston. They were also working on a series of commissions for the Ames family in North Easton. It would be Olmsted—his design theory and the response to natural systems and landscape features that characterized his design process—who would influence and catalyze the dramatic change in American architecture that Richardson realized, and which the Ames Monument, more than any other single work, most purely embodies.

*Richardson, Olmsted, and North Easton, Massachusetts*

During the period that Richardson designed the Ames Monument, he was also engaged in a series of projects in North Easton, Massachusetts for the same clients, the Ames family, and in particular Frederick Lothrop Ames. Olmsted was working on some of the same projects in North Easton, and the result was one of the most extensive collaborations between the two designers.

Richardson’s work in North Easton began when F. L. Ames selected him to design the Oliver Ames Free Library in 1877, the year of Oliver’s death. The building, although it did not open until 1883, was completed just before the architect accepted the Ames Monument commission. It is one of Richardson’s finest library designs. His biographer, the architectural critic Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, paid particular attention to his treatment of the library’s walls: “An interesting surface, and one of a kind to suit the character of the special building he had in hand, was always a chief concern with him. Scale was carefully considered in regulating the average size of the stone, and they were varied among themselves in size and shape with a keen feeling for that degree of difference which should mean animation without restlessness, breadth combined with vitality. The work of the mason was as important in Richardson’s eyes as the work of the sculptor ....”<sup>48</sup> Norcross Brothers

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<sup>47</sup> John H. Dryfhout, *The Work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens* (London: University Press of New England, 1982); Homer Saint-Gaudens, ed. *The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens*, vols. 1 & 2 (New York: Century Co., 1913; Burke Wilkinson, *The Life and Works of Augustus Saint-Gaudens* (Eastern National, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, 68.

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were the contractors for the building. The Ames Free Library commission, according to Van Rensselaer, “eventually led to a total of five North Easton buildings, as well as several designs for Boston and an important monument in Wyoming.”<sup>49</sup>

The year 1879 marked the resolution of both the Credit Mobilier court case and the completion of the library, allowing F. L. Ames to turn his attention to the erection of a monument to his uncle Oakes Ames, which the Union Pacific Corporation had committed to in 1875. As a member of the Union Pacific Executive Board, F. L. Ames was probably responsible both for renewing interest in the project and for revising its dedication to include his father, Oliver, as well as Oakes.<sup>50</sup> The commission entered H. H. Richardson’s office in 1879, with construction to begin the next year.

At the same time, the Ames family was also engaged in another major building, the construction of Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, sited next to the library in North Easton. A gift to the town from Oakes’s sons, Oakes Ames Memorial Hall was intended as a meeting place for the people of North Easton. The siting of the building, just west of the library at an awkward turning of Main Street, suggested an attempt to create a more defined town center. The hall was constructed of the same local granite trimmed with Longmeadow stone as in the library, with the addition of red brick in the upper story. The two new buildings in North Easton would define a new civic center for the town, and at this point Frederick Law Olmsted was brought in by the Ames family (perhaps at Richardson’s suggestion) to design appropriate landscapes for the two buildings. His recommendations would do more, however, leading to the design of an important Civil War memorial, and an overall plan for how the buildings and memorials together would define a new central public space for the town. More than in any other work Richardson and Olmsted collaborated on, the North Easton town center is an indication of how they both were advancing an understanding of how landscape and architectural design could be used together in an overall work of civic art, responsive to the site and especially to local geology.

In her critical assessment of Memorial Hall, Van Rensselaer focuses almost exclusively on how Richardson used the rocky site to his advantage, and how Olmsted extended and enhanced this approach. She describes the approach to the building as “a series of successive platforms and short flights of steps, kept duly inconspicuous and artistically adapted to the inequalities of the rocky surface.” Van Rensselaer is particularly enamored with how the depressions in the land and the natural granite rock formations jutting up into the site have been considered as design elements, and “the manner in which the tower of the hall rises out of the rock, almost like a natural development....”<sup>51</sup> It appeared as if the rock were part of the building and the building part of the rock.

As he did elsewhere, Olmsted designed the landscape setting for Richardson’s buildings in part by exposing and emphasizing the rock outcrops of the site. Directly opposite the Memorial Hall, for instance, he created a massive boulder terrace on which a flagstaff and a stone cairn were to serve as the Civil War memorial for the town. The joints of the boulder masonry of the terrace were filled with soil to support vines and other plants. An arched opening allowed passage through it, and steps were incorporated into the stones of the terrace. Nearby at the F. L. Ames estate, Richardson created a memorable gatehouse that also employed boulder masonry, and the building itself served as an arched entryway into the estate. The two projects indicate a strong continuity between Olmsted’s structured landscapes, and Richardson’s landscape-inspired structures during this period. In the case of the Memorial Hall and the adjacent Civil War memorial, Olmsted and Richardson suggested a complete vision of landscape and architecture together creating a new town center, joined to other public buildings and spaces nearby, and rooted in an enhanced geology of the site. In a very different natural context, the design of the Ames Memorial in Wyoming was to follow this same approach.

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<sup>49</sup> Ochsner, *H. H. Richardson*, 183.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>51</sup> Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, 71.

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In an article on “landscape gardening” published several years later in the *American Architect and Building News*, Van Rensselaer provides insight into the extent of the collaboration taking place at the site of the future Memorial Hall. Richardson “was constantly turning to Mr. Olmsted for advice, even in those cases where it seemed as though it could have little practical bearing upon his design. And where it could have more conspicuous bearing he worked with him as a brother-artist of equal rank of equal rights with himself. The Town Memorial Hall at North Easton may be cited as one example of the extraordinary success which can spring from such co-operation, and Mr. Richardson was never tired of explaining how invaluable in this case had been Mr. Olmsted’s assistance.”

While he was working in North Easton, Olmsted was simultaneously designing the Back Bay Fens in Boston, a landscape evoking the estuarine wetland that formerly existed there. In 1880, he asked Richardson to design the Boylston Street Bridge, another important example of how the two designers understood and influenced one another. Built in irregular granite ashlar (Olmsted originally wanted more rugged, boulder masonry), the undulating, unornamented mass of the bridge suggested a geological, organic form consistent with Olmsted’s landscape design, which also eschewed historical references. Like the Ames Monument, the bridge is what architectural historian James F. O’Gorman describes as a “complete collaboration between architect and landscape architect, between man and nature, between architecture and geology.” The same is true, the same author observes, “of the man-made mountain Richardson designed at this time in memory of Oakes and Oliver Ames out in Sherman, Wyoming, a monument conceived as a conventionalized outcropping and quarried from a real one.”<sup>52</sup> The design aesthetic of the bridge and the monument—highly engineered and articulated structures nevertheless evocative of natural features—would mark a turning point in Richardson’s career and—considering Richardson’s influence on Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in this regard—in the course of American design history.

*The Ames Monument and the American West*

During the congressional investigation of the Credit Mobilier scandal, Massachusetts Representative John B. Alley testified to the Poland Committee that “if the American people could know all the facts, instead of bestowing upon Oakes Ames one word of censure, they would far sooner erect a monument to his name in grateful recognition of his eminent services.”<sup>53</sup> At their March meeting in 1875, the Union Pacific board formally resolved to honor Oakes Ames with a monument “in recognition of his service in the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad, to which he devoted his best energies with a courage, fidelity and integrity unsurpassed in the history of railroad construction...”<sup>54</sup> For the Union Pacific directors, this was to be a personal tribute, a memorial to an honest man who had been used as a political scapegoat. The monument, like the North Easton projects the Ames family later commissioned, would memorialize his character and his efforts, and perhaps help rehabilitate his unfairly tainted image. When the commission entered Richardson’s office, in November 1879, the architect was certainly familiar with Oakes and Oliver Ames’s role in building the railroad and the Credit Mobilier scandal and its aftermath. The Ames Free Library commission was now two years past, and that February Richardson had accepted the Memorial Hall project, which would have necessitated a full briefing on its dedicatee, Oakes Ames.

A monument commission in Wyoming must have also conjured a wealth of imagery for Richardson, based on the photographs, engravings, and paintings that had recently become widely available, in part because of the building and completion of the transcontinental railroad. Richardson had never traveled to the West, but like

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<sup>52</sup> O’Gorman, *Living Architecture*, 133.

<sup>53</sup> Ames, “Pioneering the Union Pacific,” 537.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

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many Americans at the time, he was exposed to a plethora of western imagery in books and newspapers. In his office in Brookline, he had surrounded himself with collaborators, all experts in their fields. Perhaps most important in terms of his conceptions and approach to the design of Ames Monument was his friend Olmsted, who, unlike the rest, had spent a considerable amount of time in the West. In the 1860s, while managing the Mariposa Mine in California, Olmsted had given considerable time and thought to landscape design in semi-arid regions. In 1865, he wrote an influential report recommending management policies for the preservation of Yosemite Valley, where he met and employed the geologist Clarence King.

Although highly educated and the owner of a comprehensive library, Richardson was not known to be a studious person, but rather a man of action. He left behind no writings or treatises on design, and he derided theorists. One of his few articulated desires was to achieve “a quiet and massive treatment of the wall surfaces.”<sup>55</sup> In contrast, Olmsted generated a vast assortment of writings, both in the form of correspondence and written reports, which chart his quest for a national aesthetic.<sup>56</sup> Richardson became a major figure in this trajectory, an architect capable of putting Olmsted’s ideals into architectural form. Mariana Van Rensselaer quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson in the epigram to her biography of Richardson, and it was within the Emersonian tradition that Olmsted and Richardson looked for inspiration in their quest for an American architecture and landscape design. Emerson himself borrowed from European tradition in calling on nature to lead the way in developing original aesthetics, but in the New World, without historical precedent, the call was new, fresh, and relevant. Since Americans were inherently “self-reliant,” they would have to develop their own forms based on what the New World had to offer—an unprecedented range of natural forms. This focus on the land was political, scientific and artistic, as expressed by Manifest Destiny, the geological surveys, and the legacy of the Hudson River School painters, who forged a new artistic tradition out of the creative depiction of America’s distinctive natural scenery.

The visual explorations and discoveries brought on by the development of the transcontinental railroad could only further inspire American creativity, as strange and unusual landscapes and geological formations revealed themselves. In 1868 and again in 1869, photographer Andrew J. Russell accompanied the Union Pacific Railroad, documenting construction activity and highlighting the many natural marvels along its route. The railroad hoped that his photographs of these natural landmarks might attract future passengers. The June 5<sup>th</sup> edition of *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* featured three of Russell’s photographs, reproduced as wood engravings, depicting the meeting of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Promontory Summit. His photograph, “East and West Shaking Hands at the Laying of the Last Rail,” became the iconic image of what art historian Susan Danly describes as “the century’s greatest triumph of technology over nature.”<sup>57</sup>

In 1869, Russell published *The Great West Illustrated*, a set of fifty views taken from Cheyenne to Promontory Summit. Russell’s work opened up the eyes of his readers to the wonders of the American West, from the streets of the new towns that had grown up along the line to striking examples of natural features, such as Reed’s Rock near the high point of the Union Pacific’s route. Russell’s photographs were widely circulated. Thirty of his “photographic views” appeared in “Sun Pictures of Rocky Mountain Scenery” published by the geologist F.V. Hayden. These included “Skull Rock” near Sherman Station, and many other natural wonders that could now be seen by travelers on the Union Pacific railroad. But Russell was as interested in the engineering prowess represented by the railroad’s progress, as depicted in “Malloy’s Cut, Near Sherman (Wyoming),” ca. 1868, and other images of the built features of the railroad.<sup>58</sup> Images by Russell also appeared

<sup>55</sup> O’Gorman, *H. H. Richardson and His Office: Selected Drawings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College, 1974), 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> Susan Danly, “Andrew Joseph Russell’s *The Great West Illustrated*” in *The Railroad in American Art*, eds. Susan Danly and Leo Marx (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 98.

<sup>58</sup> Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture, American Landscape Painting 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980),

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in an illustrated course of lectures delivered by S. J. Sedgwick in the 1870s. In Sedgwick's Series No. 3, he describes Reed's Rock as "a pile of granite about a quarter of a mile west of the station [at Sherman] and within a stone's throw of the tracks, rising from the ground as clean and regular as though built by man."<sup>59</sup>

Russell's interest in the Western landscape, and his particular fascination with its geology, was not merely a personal passion. Since the 1820s, a wide variety of scholars and artists in different fields had made the study of geology a national interest. Scientists and explorers pursued and expanded the discipline more rigorously. The opening of the American West offered them all unprecedented opportunities to further their interests and studies. The federal government and business interests also were of course deeply interested in geological information. After the Civil War, Congress sponsored four major western surveys from 1867 to 1879, which would come to be known as the Great Surveys. The artists, scientists, surveyors and engineers who joined the surveys spent their days gathering data, collecting specimens, creating pictures, and measuring and mapping dimensions, all with the goal of documenting the American West for scientific, as well as commercial ends. In 1879, the four groups were consolidated into the United States Geological Survey directed by Clarence King. Images of the New West were popular and plentiful in the 1870s. These included not only the survey reports, painting and photographs, but widely circulated books, such as Thayer's *Marvels of the New West*, and the tremendous two-volume *Picturesque America*, edited by William Cullen Bryant (1872-4).

The many geographical and geological expeditions included painters as well as photographers, artists like Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran, who recorded in dramatic terms newly revealed images of the landscape of Manifest Destiny. The eye-opening discovery of the natural wonders of the "New West" revealed to Americans that their nation possessed a God-given natural architecture to outshine the man-made wonders of the Old World. Richardson, as a collaborator with the landscape architect Olmsted, seems to have been particularly susceptible to the influence of natural imagery on the design of rural architecture. The gate lodge he designed for Oliver Ames's estate at North Easton is the cousin to a New England glacial moraine. The photographs of A. J. Russell, the illustrations in Thayer's *Marvel's* or Bryant's *Picturesque America* provide ample suggestions for the creation of the western man-made mountain that is the Ames Monument.<sup>60</sup> At a time when America was searching for cultural identity, the newly traveled land offered such parallels to Old World architecture waiting to be explored.

The comparison of these buttes, spires, and plateaus to ancient ruins and European cathedrals was irresistible. Americans could further boast that their "monuments" existed through divine inspiration, were as old as time itself, and forever shifting according to nature's whims.<sup>61</sup> On a trip across the continent, Samuel Bowles, editor of the *Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican* (and a friend of Olmsted's) described "the Church Butte," a formation he considered known to all travelers by 1865:

The Milan or the Cologne cathedral, worn with centuries, ill-shapen with irregular decay, could not have looked more the things they are or would be than this did. Everything belonging to the idea was there in some degree of preservation. Porch, nave, transept, steeple, caryatides, monster animals, saints and apostles, with broken columns, tumbled roof, departed nose or foot, worn and crumbling features, were all in their places, or a little out, but recognizable and nameable. We

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184.

<sup>59</sup> James F. O'Gorman, "Man-Made Mountain: "Gathering and Governing" quoted in "H. H. Richardson's Design for the Ames Monument in Wyoming," in eds. Danly and Marx, *The Railroad in American Art*, 120.

<sup>60</sup> James F. O'Gorman, H. H. Richardson: *Architectural Forms for an American Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 94-100.

<sup>61</sup> James F. O'Gorman, *H. H. Richardson*, 94.

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walked around this vast natural cathedral of sandstone and clay—a full half mile—and greater grew our wonder, our enthusiasm.<sup>62</sup>

With such stimulating verbal and visual images readily at hand, Richardson focused his attention on the Ames Monument commission and its unique site. No drawings of the monument have been found (although Olmsted and Saint-Gaudens mention seeing a sketch) but this is hardly surprising considering the nature of the project and Richardson's individual design process. The architect approached projects by first developing sketches that focused on the simple mass and plan of a structure. This kind of approach derived from his École des Beaux-Arts training, in which students began work with an *esquisse*—or sketch—which was then worked up by his assistants into a scale drawing under his supervision. W.A. Langton, an associate of Richardson's, described this process in some detail: "A plan two or three inches square embodies his idea. The ultimate result of his study was inked in over the mass of soft pencil marks with a quill pen, and sometimes principal dimensions were figured. That was usually the end of his work on paper." At this point in his life, Richardson suffered from Bright's disease, or nephritis, and other illnesses that often kept him bedridden. Most likely, he produced a sketch of the future monument from his bed at home in Brookline, perhaps tacking it up on the cork-covered walls he had made for the purpose. The architect may only have created a basic sketch or two, drawn in the bold, thick lines that characterized his personal style. Such was his relationship with the Norcross Brothers, that little more would be required in order to construct the Ames Monument.<sup>63</sup>

Although Richardson took on the commission in November 1879, the monument was still not under construction on February 15, 1881, when the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported "the first definite statement" on the subject. According to Al Sutherland, the site foreman, the monument was to be built that summer at Sherman Station, a small town established a few hundred yards, on the other side of the railroad tracks, from the monument site. The tiny railroad town, with a population under two hundred, featured a round house where trains would stop for repairs or to load lumber. In the late 1870s there were about twenty-five houses, a store, two saloons, and two hotels (the "Sherman" and the "Summit") but by the next decade passengers would be disembarking to marvel at a magnificent pyramid, sixty feet high and sixty feet square. Since the monument was sited on Sherman Hill, a knoll about thirty feet above the railroad track, it would actually loom ninety feet above the roadbed. The Ames Monument would feature nine-foot-high profile medallions of Oakes Ames facing east and Oliver Ames facing west—elevated to a height of forty-five feet. The words "in memory of Oakes Ames and Oliver Ames" were to be inscribed on the north side of the monument, in one foot high block letters. *The Daily Leader* reporter enthusiastically proclaimed that "the foundation is the everlasting bed rock, itself, and as it is granite, it will defy the moldering hand of time."<sup>64</sup>

In a letter written to Augustus Saint-Gaudens later in the month, Richardson announced the Union Pacific's decision to give the sculptor the commission for the Oliver Ames and Oakes Ames portrait medallions.<sup>65</sup> The short, one-paragraph letter mentions several other projects Richardson and Saint-Gaudens were working on at the time—the Shaw Monument in Boston, the New York Capitol in Albany, and Trinity Church. Saint-Gaudens's terms for the commission, which he had outlined in a letter of September 3, 1880, were as follows: in addition to the two "portrait medallion profile heads," the sculptor would furnish a two- and one-half-foot plaster model of each and superintend "in Boston of both the enlargement to the full size in clay and the definite reproduction in stone."<sup>66</sup> His bill for the work would be \$800. In March, Richardson sent six small photographs

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent; A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1865), 76-7. Samuel Bowles was the brother of Benjamin F. Bowles, one of Richardson's early clients (Ochsner, 48).

<sup>63</sup> O'Gorman, *H. H. Richardson and His Office*, 19.

<sup>64</sup> *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, February 15, 1881, 4.

<sup>65</sup> H. H. Richardson to Augustus Saint-Gaudens, February 24, 1881. Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth.

<sup>66</sup> Augustus Saint-Gaudens to H. H. Richardson, September 3, 1880. Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth.

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of Oakes Ames to Saint-Gaudens for his use in designing the medallion on the west side of the monument. The architect also reminded Saint-Gaudens of a deadline related to the quarrying of the stone, which required that the sculptor determine the depth of the ten-foot slabs.<sup>67</sup> On March 30, Saint-Gaudens acknowledged the receipt of “the drawing for the Monument and the photos,” but requested some profiles because the “full face” images would result in only “approximate” profiles. He anticipated needing ten days to finish the projection of the head, but left the decision of whether the stone should be a single piece or several to the architect’s discretion.<sup>68</sup>

In the meantime, O. W. Norcross had traveled to the site by railroad, bringing a contingent of workmen, as well as derricks, engines, lumber, cement, and horses. A wood-frame building with sleeping quarters, dining room and kitchen was built nearby; workmen were provided with room and board, as well as “daily papers and current magazines and a recreation hall” for four dollars a week. Although Norcross brought “skilled mechanics” to perform specialized work, men “from the West” were hired for much of the labor; the project employed a total of about eighty-five workers. The Union Pacific Railroad paid for all transportation of men and materials from Omaha to Sherman, as well as return trips for the men and “time passes” for contractors between Omaha and Ogden, Utah. In addition, the railroad provided a “carload of ties for blocking” and unlimited free water.<sup>69</sup> In June the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* announced that work on the monument was “progressing rapidly” and predicted its completion in just one hundred days.<sup>70</sup>

The bulk of the stone used for the monument reportedly came from Reed’s Rock, a geological formation located about half a mile to the west that had attracted photographers since the railroad’s arrival.<sup>71</sup> Here the Norcross firm’s quarrying expertise was put to good use, as the stone was cut out and then dragged by horses to the site. A 103-foot-high derrick capable of lifting twelve tons was used.

By October local papers were beginning what would become periodic updates on the monument’s progress. The *Cheyenne Sun* criticized the appearance of the monument for achieving what the architect intended, calling it a “massive pile of rocks” and noting that “a massive pile of rocks was required to build it.” In fact, the monument gains contrast by being a man-made mountain, a reshaping of nature by means of conventionalization, a way of organizing form through geometrical means, which was common in the nineteenth century. Work on it had stopped by the end of the month, but quarrying was expected to continue as long as weather permitted.<sup>72</sup>

In late May 1882, Oliver Ames Jr. paid a visit, accompanied by his wife and a Mr. Dana. Ames pronounced himself “well pleased with the testimonial to his late father” even though the monument had not reached its full height and the portrait medallions had not yet arrived.<sup>73</sup> Just a few weeks earlier, Richardson had written to Ames after learning “in a roundabout way from third parties” that his patron was not satisfied with the profile.<sup>74</sup> Since Norcross intended to send the great stones out to Wyoming that week, this was serious concern. Ames responded on May 27<sup>th</sup>, very shortly after returning from his visit, and Richardson agreed to try to persuade Saint-Gaudens to alter the profile according to Ames’s desires.<sup>75</sup> Although he saw no reason the change could not be made, assuming it was paid for by his client, Richardson suggested that it could delay work on the monument. On June 29<sup>th</sup> the *Weekly Leader* announced that the monument, now fifty feet high, was expected to be completed by the first of August due to the delay in shipping the medallions. In addition, the Union Pacific

<sup>67</sup> H. H. Richardson to Augustus Saint-Gaudens, March 24, 1881. Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth.

<sup>68</sup> Augustus Saint-Gaudens to H. H. Richardson, March 30, 1881. Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth.

<sup>69</sup> Charles S. Fitz, “Tales From Old-Timers—No. 14,” *The Union Pacific Magazine* (May 1924), 30.

<sup>70</sup> *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, June 7, 1881, 4.

<sup>71</sup> The rock was named after Dr. Silas Reed (1807-1886), a surveyor general of the Wyoming Territory.

<sup>72</sup> *Cheyenne Sun*, October 12, 1881, 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Cheyenne Weekly Leader*, June 1, 1882, 5.

<sup>74</sup> H. H. Richardson to Oliver Ames, May 16, 1882, Easton Historical Society.

<sup>75</sup> H. H. Richardson to Oliver Ames, June 1, 1882, Easton Historical Society.



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was shipping “a large quantity of fine dressed stone... to be used in dressing the bulky pile.”<sup>76</sup> At this point, the monument was still lacking its seven-ton capstone, which would provide its full height. Over a month later, the materials had not yet arrived. According to site foreman Sutherland, craftsmen in Boston were “working night and day...after a new model lately designed.”<sup>77</sup> One of these hard-working men was certainly John Evans, who was responsible for actually cutting the new design into the stone.

Although living conditions at the building site must have been difficult, especially in bad weather, there is evidence of good relations between Sutherland and his co-workers. The July 27<sup>th</sup> *Cheyenne Daily Sun* reported that earlier in the month the workmen had presented their foreman with an elegant watch and chain. Sutherland had traveled to Cheyenne with “specimens of dark-mottled stone,” which were “susceptible to polish.” Evidently a block of the stone, most likely a chunk of potential Ames Monument material, was to be displayed in the Wyoming exhibit of the National Mining and Industrial Exposition opening in Denver on August 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>78</sup> Both portrait medallions were in place by late October, when the “great granite monument” was described as “nearly completed.”<sup>79</sup> It appears to have been finished a short time later, before winter set in, at a total cost of approximately \$65,000.

There is no evidence that Richardson visited the site of the monument before conceiving its design or during its construction, but in a brief letter F. L. Ames suggests that Richardson traveled in his client’s private car to Sherman, Wyoming, in September of 1883. No mention is made of the monument itself. Four years later, however, Frederick Law Olmsted was passing through and requested a five-minute stop at Sherman to assess the condition of the monument. On January 29, 1887, Olmsted wrote to F. L. Ames:

I had several times heard that our monument had been much injured by the dinting of pebbles thrown against it in heavy gusts of wind and having been told by one of the officials of the U. P. that he believed the reports were true with his assistance I obtained an order to have the train detained five minutes this morning so that I could have a look at it. The surface of the ground in the neighborhood, as you will remember, is largely composed of flakes of granite from half an inch to an inch in diameter; there was a high wind blowing and I could believe that if a little intensified, a man might get a very unpleasant pelting, but the granite fragments are thin, scaley and brittle and it seemed to me that it would take countless blows of them to make any notable impression on a firm granite wall. I could take but a moment’s passing glance at the monument and in this could not see that the slightest impression had been made upon it. And what is likely to be made in the next thousand years will, I should think, no more than improve it. As to the sand-stone medallions, they were partly obscured by flecks of snow, but neither my own nor the better eyes of the younger man I took with me, could discern any injury to them. They are at such an elevation that I doubt if any waft of stones is likely to reach them.

His reference to “our monument” suggests that Olmsted may have been involved in the design process in some way, perhaps through discussions with the architect (although he did not, as far as is known, create a site plan or any other landscape design for the project.) He goes on to say that he has “never seen a monument as appropriate and becoming to its situation. A gentle man tells me that he has often passed it but seeing it only from a distance it had never occurred to him that it was anything other than a natural object. Yet when it can be seen from the train at the Station, as it could not this morning, and I am afraid, seldom can, it has much more

<sup>76</sup> *Cheyenne Weekly Leader*, June 29, 1882, 10.

<sup>77</sup> *Cheyenne Weekly Leader*, August 17, 1882, 6.

<sup>78</sup> *Cheyenne Daily Sun*, July 27, 1882, 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Cheyenne Daily Sun*, October 21, 1882, 2.

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fine finished stateliness than was to have been readily imagined from Richardson's drawing."<sup>80</sup> One can imagine that Olmsted, who must have studied his friend's sketch carefully, conceived of the structure in a more rugged, unrefined state, perhaps due to the thick lines and bold form of the sketch. In looking over the granite structure, Olmsted was struck by its fine craftsmanship—the clean articulation of the stone courses, the mark of Norcross's expert stonemasons. Up close, the Ames Monument is an artist's artifice; from a distance, it is nature's creation; in that contradiction lies the work of a genius.

In his biography of the architect, *H. H. Richardson and His Times*, Henry-Russell Hitchcock celebrated the Ames Monument as a major achievement. It exuded the power of "a great glacial moraine roofed and made habitable." Writing at the height of the modern movement, Hitchcock claimed the Ames Monument as a work looking beyond its own time, for something timeless; in fact, he saw Richardson as "seeking his inspiration back in the time before architecture took form."<sup>81</sup> Historians since Hitchcock have not only agreed with this assessment, but also analyzed the monument in the context of Richardson's work as a key moment in his career. Mark Wright identifies the Ames Monument as "the fulcrum on which Richardson's work pivots—before and after" and suggests that the architect's "imaginative confrontation with the harsh landscapes of the Western United States" resulted in a "new primitivism" reflected in his successive buildings.<sup>82</sup> The timeless characteristics that identify a Richardsonian building—simplicity, mass, rich surface detail—were expressed more freely, and independent of any style, even his own Romanesque. After creating the Ames Monument, Richardson produced some of his greatest works—the Crane and Billings libraries, the Robert Treat Paine House, and the Marshall Field Wholesale Store—the success of which can be traced to the experience of designing the Ames Monument and his collaboration with Frederick Law Olmsted.

*The Ames Monument in the Twentieth Century*

In 1901, the railroad line over Evans Pass was moved to reduce the grade through the mountains west of Cheyenne, leaving the Ames Monument several miles north of the new line. No longer could the monument be seen from passing trains. In 1916 Union Pacific directors voted to relocate the monument closer to the new location of the tracks. Several board members, including Oliver Ames II, visited the site to assess the situation. R. L. Huntley, the Union Pacific's chief engineer, devised a plan for dismantling the monument and transporting it, about two and a half miles away where it could be re-constructed. This plan was described again in July of 1917, when the office of the chief engineer in Omaha issued a memorandum announcing the relocation of the monument. It was to be dismantled, the granite loaded onto trucks and hauled to the new site, where it was to be re-assembled at a cost of about \$16,000.<sup>83</sup> The project never transpired, however, leaving the monument forever at a distance from the relocated line.

After reading a newspaper article describing the plan to move the monument, W. O. Owen, the Albany County surveyor, wrote his own account of an incident that took place in 1886. "The Great Ames Monument Plot," explained how Billy Murphy of Laramie acquired the monument and planned to make a fortune by using its

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<sup>80</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted to Mr. Ames, U.P. R.R. near Sherman, January 29, 1887, Ames Family Papers, Stonehill College. Olmsted wrote a letter to Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer with a similar description of his examination of the monument. He adds that "Within a few miles there are several conical horns of the same granite projecting above the smooth surface of the hills. It is a most tempestuous place and I have no doubt that at time the monument is under a hot fire of little missiles, but they will only improve it, I think (I may be mistaken. I could only glance at it; there was some snow upon it and the wind and cold so horrible that my eyes were half drowned." Frederick Law Olmsted to Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, February 6, 1887. Van Rensselaer quotes a significant portion of this letter in her biography, *Henry Hobson Richardson*, 72.

<sup>81</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture of H. H. Richardson and His Times*, 202-3.

<sup>82</sup> Mark Wright, "H. H. Richardson's House for Reverend Browne, Rediscovered," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68 (March 2009): 80, 82.

<sup>83</sup> "Chief's File," Omaha, July 17, 1917, Union Pacific Railroad Museum Collection.

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surfaces for advertising. His “audacious scheme” began when he visited Owen and verified that the monument stood on one of the even-numbered sections (640-acre tracts of land) belonging to the government, not on one of the odd-numbered sections granted to the Union Pacific. Realizing the importance of the information, Owen wrote to his friend Bill Nye for advice. A well-known American humorist and former resident of Laramie, Nye was also a lawyer whose response soon became part of the lore surrounding the monument. He found the “novelty” of the situation appealing and saw “material in it for a write-up.” Although Nye realized that the monument would belong to Murphy if the U.S. land office accepted his filing and provided a receipt, he assumed that his claim would be denied. In fact, Murphy was able to file the claim in the Cheyenne land office and briefly become the legal owner of the Ames Monument. Inspired by advertisements painted on stones and cliffs along the Overland Trail, Murphy began soliciting bids for advertisements on the four faces of the monument, acquiring promises of as much as \$25,000 for the side viewed from railroad cars. His fortune seemed secure until he made the mistake of writing to the railroad and attempting to interest it in buying back the property. Sometime later a Union Pacific railroad representative and a lawyer carrying a black satchel appeared in the company of the ex-sheriff of Albany County. The men were able to intimidate Murphy into relinquishing his claim and settling for two lots in Laramie valued at three hundred dollars. Owen later learned that the satchel contained \$15,000 for use in bargaining with Murphy and that an additional \$15,000 was available if needed. The story of the “Great Ames Monument plot” was frequently retold by historians and became part of the lore surrounding the structure.<sup>84</sup>

The Union Pacific continued to own the monument but apparently it required little upkeep, considering the durability of its materials and construction. According to local historian Grace Hebard, writing in 1935, the American Legion fenced in the “old cemetery of Sherman” (located at the site of the old town of Sherman) and maintained its grounds.<sup>85</sup> The Ames Monument was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. Three years later, the Union Pacific spent about \$19,500 to repair stonework, joints and the base of the monument. The railroad also enclosed the site with a fence and erected a sign with a history and description of the structure.<sup>86</sup> In 1983, the Upland Industries Corporation, Union Pacific’s land development subsidiary, donated the Ames Monument and 8.44 acres to the state of Wyoming.<sup>87</sup>

*National Historic Landmark Buildings Designed by H. H. Richardson*

Based on Jeffrey Karl Ochsner’s *catalogue raisonné* of Richardson’s projects (*H. H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996), Richardson accepted 151 projects and designed at least fifty-five buildings that were constructed. At least forty-two of these still exist, although many of these are not eligible for NHL status due to lack of integrity (including his own residence on Staten Island and the Dorsheimer residence in Buffalo). Nineteen buildings designed by Richardson are National Historic Landmarks, including the Cheney Brothers Building (part of the Cheney Brothers Historic District in Hartford, CT) and the five buildings that comprise the NHL district in North Easton, MA. There are probably an additional twenty-three extant Richardson buildings which are not designated landmarks. Many of these may lack integrity, may be less significant in his overall *oeuvre*, or may have simply not yet received the critical attention which may be their due.

Richardson designed the Ames Monument mid-way through his career, after the completion of Trinity Church, Buffalo State Hospital, Winn Memorial Library, and the William Watts Sherman House (all NHLs). These were

<sup>84</sup> W. O. Owen, “The Great Ames Monument Plot,” *Railroad Man’s Magazine*, 37 (September 1918): 1-10.

<sup>85</sup> Grace Hebard to W. C. McCann, January 25, 1935, Box 1, folder 6, Hebard Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

<sup>86</sup> “The Ames Monument,” fact sheet, Union Pacific Railroad Museum Collection.

<sup>87</sup> “Monument Donated to State,” (*Cheyenne*) *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, September 18, 1983.

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commissions he took on in the 1870s that helped solidify his reputation as the most important architect of his day. Once the Ames Monument was completed, Richardson went on to design the F. L. Ames Gardener's Cottage, Converse Memorial Library, Allegheny County Courthouse, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Robert Treat Paine House and the Glessner House—all NHLs that display distinctive qualities related to the Ames Monument and the other NHL buildings designed between 1878 and 1882.

The Ames Monument falls at an important juncture in Richardson's career—a time when he had the confidence and ability to experiment with new forms and methods of expressing a truly American architectural style. Ochsner notes that the architect's "professional maturity was marked by a series of projects beginning in 1878 including Sever Hall, Cambridge...the Ames Monument, Wyoming; and the Crane Library, Quincy [all NHLs except the Ames Monument]. In these projects Richardson began to simplify form and to eliminate archeological detail. He turned instead to basic shapes, continuous surfaces, and the innate qualities of brick stone, and shingles to create the distinctive architectural quality of his buildings."<sup>88</sup> The Ames Monument is a crucial example of Richardson's evolution as a designer as it represents the bold, nature-inspired design—common to these projects—that would become the architect's greatest contribution to the history of American architecture. As a monument, it is a pure expression of this architectural design intent, unobscured by programmatic concerns. The design of the monument occurred at a highpoint of the intellectual and design collaboration between the architect and Frederick Law Olmsted. The Ames Monument today is arguably the most significant work of the architect that has not yet been designated a landmark.

The following buildings and districts are currently designated National Historic Landmarks:

Cheney Brothers Historic District, Hartford, CT  
New York State Capitol [Richardson/Olmsted/Eidlitz], Albany, NY  
Glessner House, Chicago, IL  
Trinity Church, Boston, MA  
Buffalo State Hospital [Richardson/Olmsted], Buffalo, NY  
Stoughton House, Cambridge, MA  
Winn Memorial Library, Woburn, MA  
William Watts Sherman House, Newport, RI  
H. H. Richardson District of North Easton, MA [Ames Free Library; Oakes Ames Memorial Hall; Old Colony Railroad Station; Ames Gate Lodge; F. L. Ames Gardener's Cottage]  
Crane Public Library, Quincy, MA  
Converse Memorial Building, Malden, MA  
Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail, Pittsburgh, PA  
Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, PA  
Sever Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
Robert Treat Paine House, Waltham, MA

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<sup>88</sup> Ochsner, *H. H. Richardson*, 3.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
☒ Previously Listed in the National Register. NR# 72001296, Listed July 24, 1972  
☐ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.  
☐ Designated a National Historic Landmark.  
☒ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # WYO-72  
☐ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State Agency  
☐ Federal Agency  
☐ Local Government  
☒ University  
☐ Other (Specify Repository):

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 8.443 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	13	466536	4553499
B	13	466721	4553497
C	13	466756	4553343
D	13	466533	4553345

Verbal Boundary Description: See "Sketch map of Ames Monument State Park," with UTM coordinates defining the boundary.

Boundary Justification: The boundary is the same as that of Ames Monument Historic Site, a Wyoming state park. The eight-acre state park encompasses the monument historically associated with Henry Hobson Richardson's design and which maintains integrity, including the surrounding open landscape historically associated with the monument.

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM

August 25, 2015

# AMES MONUMENT

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

## Photos and Figures

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Photo 1. Ames Monument, east elevation with entry road in foreground.  
Richard Collier, photographer, June 2014.

# AMES MONUMENT

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Photo 2. Ames Monument, east elevation.  
Richard Collier, photographer, June 2014



# AMES MONUMENT

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## Photos and Figures

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Photo 3. Ames Monument, east and north elevations.  
Richard Collier, photographer, June 2014

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**Photos and Figures**

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Photo 4. Ames Monument, detail showing inscription on north elevation and medallion on west elevation.  
Richard Collier, photographer, June 2014



Photo 5. Ames Monument, detail of medallion on west elevation.  
Richard Collier, photographer, June 2014



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## Photos and Figures

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Photo 6. Ames Monument, south and east elevations.  
Richard Collier, photographer, June 2014

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**Photos and Figures**

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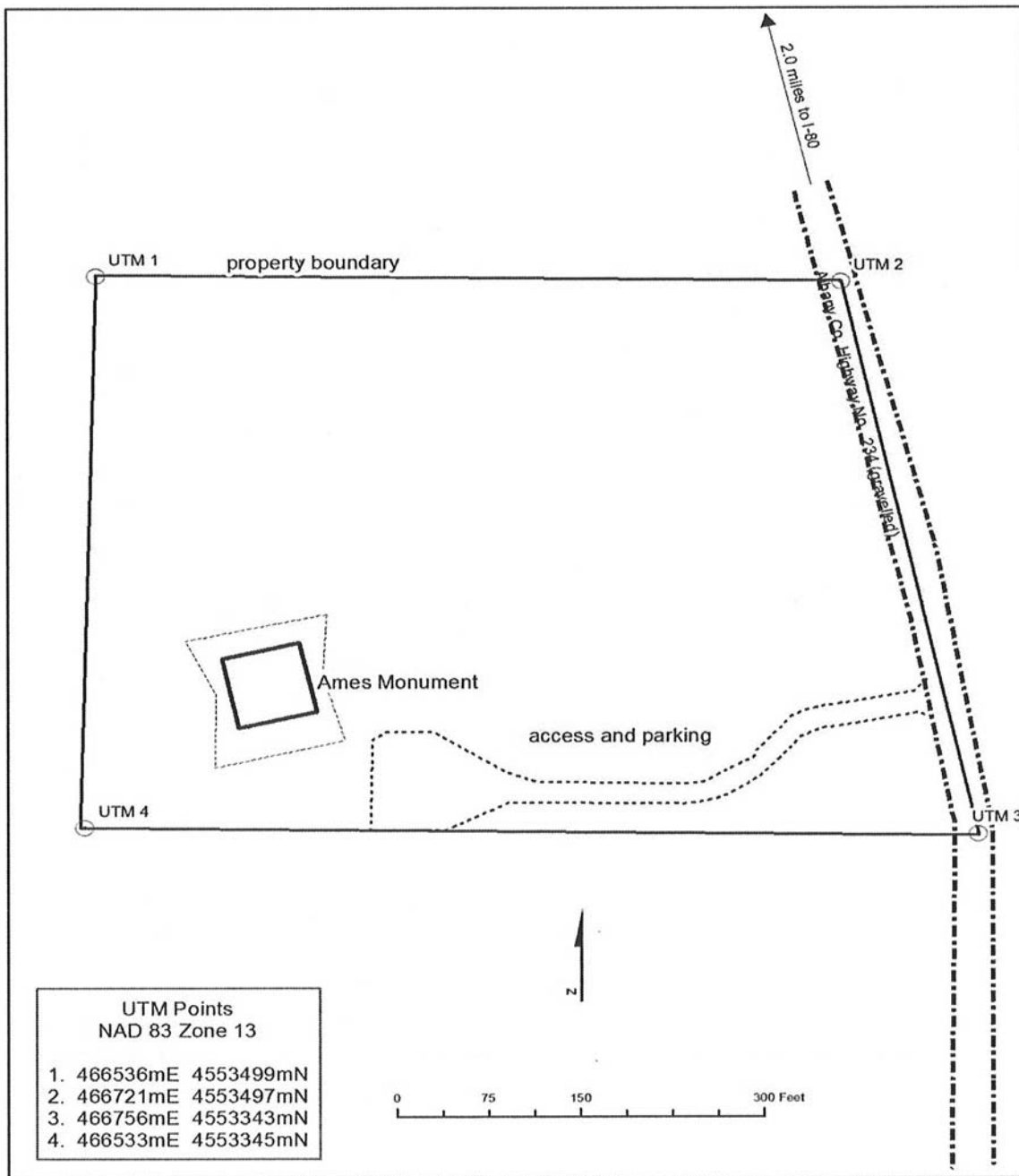


Figure 1. Sketch map of Ames Monument State Park.



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**USGS Map**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

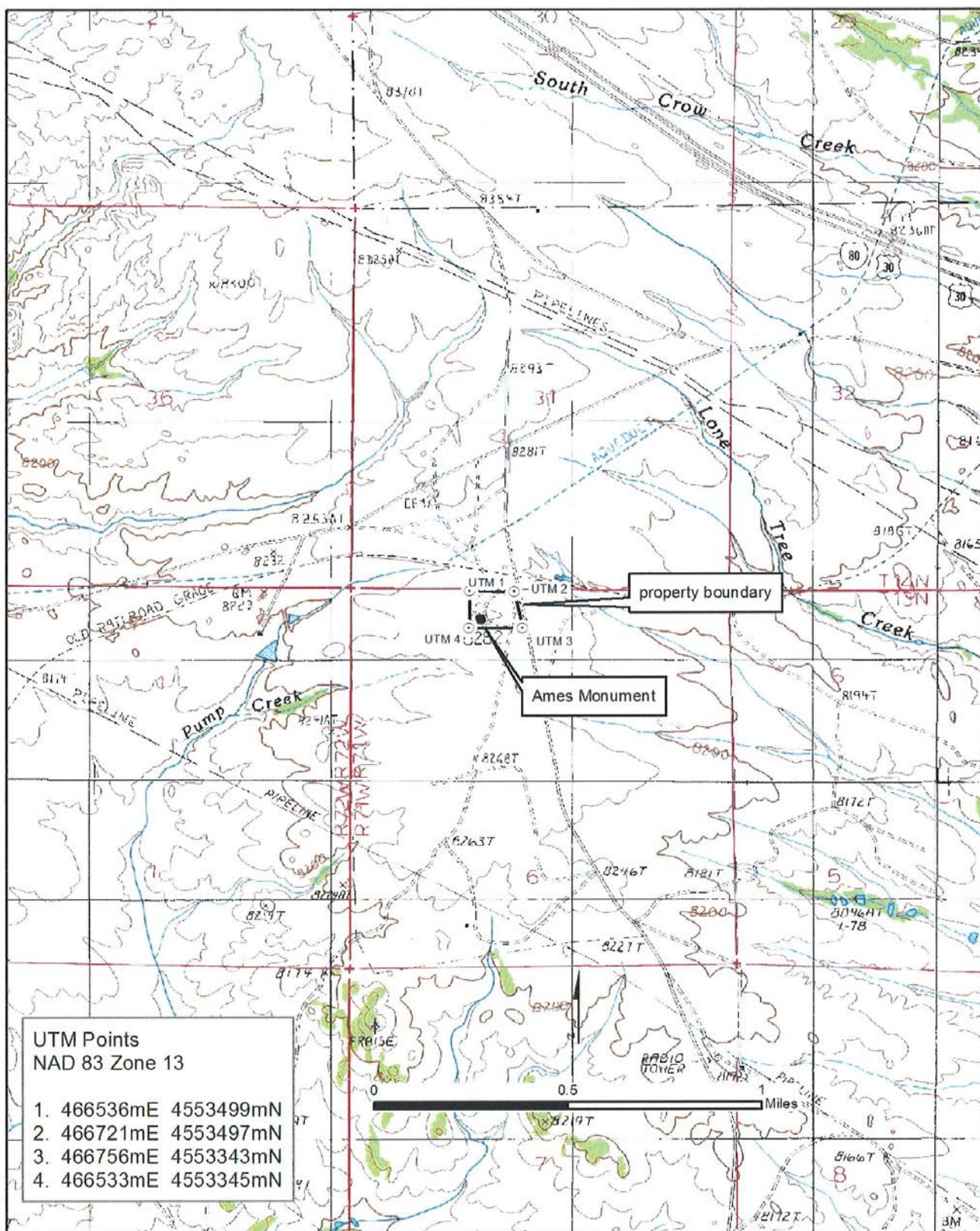


Figure 2. Portion of the USGS Sherman Mountains West topographical map showing the location of Ames Monument in Township 41 N, Range 71 W, Section 6, Albany County, Wyoming.