



Their Last Battle: The Fight For The National World War II Memorial

Nicolaus Mills

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On Memorial Day weekend in 2004, the National World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington will officially open to the public. What began as a casual conversation between a Congresswoman and one of her constituents in 1987 grew into a struggle that lasted more than four times longer than it took America to fight the war itself. Its rocky progress to completion is a compelling story about how America chooses to memorialize its past and how we view World War II. Nicolaus Mills recounts the development of the Washington Mall, from its time as swampland to Southern outrage over the Lincoln Memorial to Maya Lin's controversial Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. The World War II Memorial would prove just as controversial; it took the support of WW II vet Bob Dole and actor Tom Hanks to overrule the strong objections of interest groups, self-appointed art critics, and others. In *Their Last Battle*, a story vividly narrated through interviews with politicians and vets, architects and citizens, Mills discovers what a public monument can tell us about America and the values it honors.

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