THE GHOST OF SLAVERY EXORCISED ONCE AND FOR ALL:
ROMANTIC NATIONALISM AND WHITE BLINDNESS IN HERMON
ATKINS MACNEIL’S CIVIL WAR SOLIDERS AND SAILORS
MEMORIAL

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Abstract
The plethora of monuments produced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a phenomenon dubbed ‘statue mania’ by the scholar Erika Doss, continue to vex today. Removed from original time and context, they can provoke wildly variant readings or simply elude notice altogether, hidden in plain sight. Using various lenses, including urban planning, art history, and the dynamics of memory and history in the half century following the Civil War, this thesis seeks to demonstrate the value of analyzing these everyday monuments. This is done through close and thick examination of one case study: the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in Philadelphia, PA. The ensuing analysis argues that the monument, designed by the sculptor Hermon Atkins MacNeil, celebrates a glorious vision of American virtuousness and heroism by framing the conflict of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery as a moment when the nation truly emerged as its ideal self, worthy of the heroic status afforded to it after World War I. Through this case study, this thesis seeks to understand the ideology behind the commission and placement of the monuments of statue mania to aid both the public and municipalities in future decisions related to management and preservation with a more robust interpretive framework. It works upon strong pre-existing literature to do so but seeks to address a couple of major gaps. These include a lack of scholarship addressing Unionist monuments and scant coverage of the context of urban planning design principles as crucial context for monuments. After surveying nearly three decades of the monuments’ path from planning to fruition, the analytic core of the thesis begins with the latter gap by examining the monument as part of the broader City Beautiful Movement and the landscape of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, where the two pylons composing the monument operated as a frame for the great canvas of civilization, progress, and glory found in Philadelphia’s great urban planning experiment. Next, the thesis examines Hermon Atkins MacNeil’s past work as an artist, which sought to humanize his indigenous subjects while still vindicating American conquest as a result of the forces of destiny. This notion of an exceptional American destiny later finds voice in Soldiers and Sailors. Then the thesis contrasts Soldiers and Sailors with its primary inspiration, Paris’ Arc de Triomphe, and their shared theme of romantic nationalism. Finally, the issues of Civil War memory are further expounded upon, particularly regarding race and the broader trends of sectional reconciliation. In Soldiers and Sailors, the issue of slavery is central, but what is ignored is what is at stake for Black Americans both during and after the war, as these sordid histories are inconvenient to MacNeil’s triumphal narrative. The thesis concludes by examining the implications of the analysis, arguing that it reveals the central problem of monuments: they are intended for public consumption, yet historically have been utterly lacking in any avenue for meaningful public participation. While it is never clean or easy, increased democratic participation and a greater potential for the public to be actively involved with the creation of new monuments can create a richer culture of monuments, attending to the breadth and depth of history rather than the comforting narratives of the powerful.

Keywords
monuments, Civil War, Hermon Atkins MacNeil, sectional reconciliation, City Beautiful

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Introduction

It is no great insight to observe that the monuments that sprung up all over the American landscape like an invasive species from about the 1880s to the 1920s were products of the powerful, be they well-heeled citizens' groups or municipalities eager to beautify their cities and attract capital from the industrial boom of that period. As the art historian and monument scholar Kirk Savage puts it, monuments are the product of “those people in society who happen to have the power to erect them.”¹ Yet even with this fact recognized, it seems that both scholars and the public at large are still mystified by monuments whose meaning escapes modern tastes and sensibilities. Monuments to Christopher Columbus for instance remain fairly clear in their original intent, which was to celebrate European conquest of the Americas, because debates about Columbus remain well within the public eye and cultural zeitgeist.² Yet when eyes turn to monuments which commemorate figures, events, or symbols that are less blatantly controversial, confusion often arises because the values intrinsic in these monuments have become more remote as time has passed. Some monuments are difficult to discuss because they are politically polarizing; others are difficult to discuss simply because their meaning has not been sufficiently parsed.

A good example of this confusion is the city of Chicago’s 2021 monument review, which attempted to identify potentially contentious monuments and solicit feedback from a prestigious group of panelists and people in the city at large. Their shortlist of potentially problematic pieces included monuments to Benjamin Franklin, Ulysses Grant, and Abraham

² On the imperial meanings of Columbus monuments and ‘pioneer’ and ‘explorer’ monuments, see Erika Doss, Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 20-22.
Lincoln, apparently because of the checkered pasts of these figures with regard to race. By attempting to understand the monuments purely through the actions of the people they commemorate, the review misses the ideologies behind the commemoration itself. The monument review process drew ire from conservative commentators and little support from liberal ones; given the underwhelming results of New York City's previous monument review—where the highly controversial Columbus monument in Columbus Circle remained in place—it seems doubtful that anything meaningful will happen with regard to these monuments.

The confusion evidenced in Chicago's choices are a fairly natural reaction to the curious status of monuments in cities. The sheer volume of monuments built from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era leaves cities not just with monuments where interpretation is generally settled and political battle lines are drawn, but many more which are hardly interpreted at all. One example of such a monument is the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in Philadelphia. To a modern viewer, the work has a prosaic sheen to it: most people either barely register it or don't notice it at all. This is for good reason: the exorbitant production of war memorials throughout the nation, including thousands which were industrially manufactured, made them so overly ubiquitous that the monument even had its share of skeptics at the time of its design. Cities can simply choose to ignore

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4 For an adverse conservative reaction to the monument review process, see John O. McGinnis, "Chicago's Monumental Mistake," City Journal, March 2021, https://www.city-journal.org/committee-to-review-public-monuments-chicago. On the New York monument review process, see Tanay Warerkar, "NYC's Monuments Review Concludes, Columbus Statue Will Remain in Place," Curbed New York, Curbed, January 2018, https://ny.curbed.com/2018/1/12/16882718/columbus-statue-symbols-of-hate-review. In fairness, the commission did deal with one monument, of J. Marion Sims in Central Park, though even that work was not removed, but relocated to a less public space in Green-Wood Cemetery. The monuments commission also determined that a new monument should be built to honor indigenous people, a dubious form of compensation for retaining a monument to a person responsible for the deaths of countless indigenous people. As state assemblyman Dov Hikind quipped, "Why not fight for the right thing and rip the damn thing out?"
5 Doss 24.
monuments such as this one—that certainly seems to be Philadelphia’s current approach—but Chicago’s attempt to reach beyond the usual barriers of controversies that make headlines, however clumsy, demonstrates that cities are attempting to grapple with the fact that more innocuous monuments also have an agenda. Or, as monument historian Dell Upton puts it, “all monuments have a message.” When that message is 100 years old, like Soldiers and Sailors is, that message is unlikely to suit current standards. Pieces like the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial then present a particularly difficult problem for cities: how to grapple with potentially problematic elements in monuments which are barely even understood?

Closer investigation of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial shows that it cannot be dismissed out of hand as tepid and unworthy of consideration. Even the basic facts of the monument draw serious questions. Designed in 1921 and erected in 1927, one must wonder why the city would commemorate the Civil War more than a half century after the fact. Philadelphia was one of the most fervently patriotic cities in the nation during World War I, a war which resulted in America’s enrichment and granted the nation hero status in

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7 This is not to say that a monument cannot be controversial if it is 80, 50, or even 10 years old. In the summer of 2020 in Philadelphia, the most discussed monument for much of the protests was Zenos Frudakis’ Frank Rizzo monument from 1998—hardly 20 years old at the time. The point is more that as Civil War Soldiers and Sailors reaches the nice round number of 100 years of age, its expiration date is more likely at hand. Just as one would not generally expect a century-old work of literature, painting, or film to satisfy current standards, a monument is similarly unlikely to live up to today’s values. What a monument different from other mediums however is its public nature; no one is forced to see a film or read a book simply by walking on the street.
8 This also tends to be the issue when the discussion turns to monuments to the Founding Fathers: ought they be taken down too because they were enslavers? Perhaps the answer is yes, but the question cannot be boiled down to a simple assessment of the person being commemorated. Most have the intuitive recognition that Confederate monuments are in fact different from monuments to the Framers, a recognition that emerges from the fact that the message of the two types are very different, however one might judge the figures being commemorated.
Europe. Given that the Great War was far more recent and on people’s minds when *Soldiers and Sailors* was designed and built, why choose to honor a much older war? Further, the monument is at a central, critical location just north of Logan Circle, a civic center that serves as the central locus point of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, one of the most ambitious urban projects in the city’s history. The monument is of a massive scale with expensive materials—40 feet tall and cast out of Tennessee marble carved by the nationally renowned Piccirilli Brothers. As will be shown, none of these facts are an accident or a mistake, but a reflection of the monument’s significance to the city at the time. As monument scholar Kirk Savage has noted, monuments have a peculiar ability to come across as fixed and static objects, unimpeded by ideology or historic context. By analyzing the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, this thesis seeks to use this case study to better understand the ideology behind the commission and placement of the forgotten monuments of statue mania, in order to aid both the public at large and city governments in future decisions related to management and preservation with a more robust interpretive framework.

A good place to start with understanding quotidian-type monuments like *Soldiers and Sailors* is their context in city planning. Daniel Burnham, one of the leading ideologues of city planning at the time, described the role of monuments as follows:

[I]t is to be noted that throughout the civilized world there is a great forward movement in the direction of transforming cities to adapt them to the improved conditions of living which the people everywhere are demanding, and which, moreover, they feel that they have the power to enforce. As a part of this movement arises the impulse to express in concrete form the feeling of loyalty to and pride in the city; and this feeling finds expression in parks and pleasure grounds, in monuments

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12 Savage x.
and fine public buildings [...] and other means of alleviating the ills of mankind. (emphasis mine). Burnham makes deceptive use of democratic language here, but his notion of who is worthy of inclusion among the ‘people’ had severe limits. Burnham makes no secret of his disdain for working-class neighborhoods, praising Second Republic Paris for its clearance of “unwholesome rookeries” and himself calling for hundreds of acres of land clearance in the neighborhoods of Cleveland that he found unsavory. Burnham was also explicit that civic improvements were designed to work as a magnet for the refined upper classes who would enrich the city, people who he calls “those of means and taste.” The feelings being expressed in concrete form then are the feelings of such people. Having a direct line to the public and being largely unhindered by public concerns, monuments are perhaps the purest form of expression for those feelings.

How those feelings were characterized were deeply connected to the historical events of the time. A major theme of the era was imperial conquest, as the United States was in the process of expanding its territories in the western part of the continent and in the West Indies. Scholarship has come to a broad consensus about the nationalistic themes of this era expressed in monument form; Erika Doss writes that the monument sculptors of this era “saw themselves as cultural custodians of American taste and viewed their statues as ways to educate the public about ‘official’ and hence appropriate national histories,” histories which were “defined by manifest destiny, American exceptionalism, Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and heteronormative family values.” Upton similarly describes them as “reassertions of values that monument builders believed needed reinforcement during turmoil,” telling a nationalistic story of “‘civilization’ and settlement’ even as the last of the

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15 Burnham and Bennet 8.
16 Doss 20.
indigenous peoples of North America were being destroyed or subjugated.” 17 This sort of triumphal nationalism required a unified sense of nationhood, which was not a given considering that the nation had about a half century earlier been riven with the Civil War, the greatest internal conflict in its history. A reconciling of the two sides was required, which led to the historical phenomenon now called sectional reconciliation, the most central theme for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial.

Essentially, sectional reconciliation was the process by which national unity among whites was reaffirmed in America after the Civil War, with white supremacy operating as a uniting principle. As Kirk Savage observes, the Civil War was witness to a radical shift in battle lines: in a country that had always been defined in part by a notion of white supremacy, suddenly white men in the Union found themselves allied with Black men in fighting other white men. After the Civil War there were competing ideas about which direction to take next: either embrace newly emancipated African-Americans as political allies or reassert the old white supremacist order.18 Through studies like David Blight’s Race and Reunion, scholars generally agree that the latter option was taken, exemplified by statements from Northerners like President McKinley, who stated that all of those who fought in the Civil War embodied ‘American valor,’ or Charles Francis Adams Jr., who insisted to a crowd in Worcester, Massachusetts that “the bitterness of civil war is not so insurmountable as that of one involving a question of race dominance.” 19

The racism of men like Adams was tied to increased disenfranchisement of Black citizens, particularly as the Plessy v. Ferguson case provided legal backing for Jim Crow policy.20 Reconciliation had its holdouts—Union veterans and Black citizens often provided

17 Upton 20.
18 Savage 132.
20 Blight 346.
resistance to the narrative in the north, and south was often even more dedicated to maintaining a sectionalist memory of the War of Northern Aggression. Yet overall, the culture of reconciliation often sought concrete form in monuments, in large part an innovation of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, but by no means limited to the south.

These trends all leave their mark on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. A centerpiece of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, a civic improvement project directly in the vein of Burnham’s urban design philosophy, the work was rooted in the interests of men of means and taste; financiers and designers who sought a transcendent neoclassical framework which would catapult Philadelphia in esteem among American cities. The monument was designed from 1918 to 1921, a time in Philadelphia when the desire to celebrate the sublime victory of World War I contended with the ravages of the Spanish Flu pandemic and severe racial inequities which erupted in violence and riots. In the larger nation, memory of the Civil War was tied to either turning a blind towards, or even endorsing, a continuing tradition of white supremacy amidst a climate where disenfranchisement of Black people was increasingly accepted. 1918 to 1921 were years which saw the rising tides of Jim Crow culminate in severe racial violence, from the Red Summer riots in 1919 to the now-infamous Black Wall Street massacre in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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22 Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 49-72. Cox’s observations about the commemorative innovations of the UDC, such as recruiting prestigious Beaux-Arts sculptors to ‘depoliticize’ sculpture, seem to have generally established the pattern for reconciliatory monuments in the north. It’s possible however that further research may reveal that such traditions existed in the north at some point before the UDC.
23 Burnham in fact admired the Parkway project, see Burnham and Bennett 28. David Brownlee, *Building the City Beautiful: the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2017) is instructive for understanding the ideological framework of the Parkway, particularly chapter 1, 1-12. As Brownlee writes on page 12, “twentieth-century demands were sufficient to convert classicism into the language of a modern, democratic society.”
in 1921. By fusing notions of glory and triumph with the inevitable racial context of the Civil War, the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial recapitulates the nationalistic themes described by Doss and Upton in a novel way: by suggesting that through the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, the United States banished its demons. As such, its hegemonic position is justified. If it strikes the reader as strange that such a position requires utter ignorance of persistent racial problems, they have hit upon the precise point of the monument. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, “any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences.” That is to say, arguments about history rely on the unsaid, what is excluded from the narrative. The bundle of silences in a typical Columbus monument about the ravages of European settler-colonialism on indigenous people now have a particularly pronounced voice, but in the more quotidian monuments of our urban landscape, those silences are still mute.

What follows will be in large part an analysis of those silences in the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial. Though many of the details are context-specific to this particular monument, the hope is that it provokes and inspires further work on examining these quiet, neglected, and often compelling elements of the urban landscape. Further, as a thick, comprehensive description and interpretation, this analysis seeks to serve as a model which

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26 As Upton 21-22 notes, the entire model of the war monument shifted in 1982 following the unveiling of Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, D.C.
is equally applicable to both iconic and quotidian monuments. After a review of past literature, this will begin with an account of the gestation of the project, detailing the long, fraught process by which the monument was originally designed and built. Analysis will then proceed to historical and design concepts that informed the work, including its role within the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the artistic background of the monument’s designer, Hermon Atkins MacNeil, the theme of triumph with regard to the heroic national sentiments around World War One, and finally issues of race and Civil War memory. Finally, the thesis will conclude with thoughts about what lessons the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial might offer in the present, particularly the importance of inclusivity and democratic processes when silences are so integral to the message of any monument.

**Review of Existing Literature**

Though this study consults a handful of sources on subjects such as urban planning and art history, the unifying theme is the study of urban monuments, so the core of sources covered here will be direct prior studies of monuments. Though the study of monuments goes back as far as classic essays such as Lewis Mumford’s “The Imperial Façade” (1924) and Alois Riegl’s “The Modern Cult of Monuments” (1903), the modern studies began in the late 1980s with pieces like Kirk Savage’s “The Self-Made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial” (1987) and Michele Bogart’s *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (1989). These works sought to incorporate newer standards of academic history, namely thorough research of archival sources, to understand both the intended and received meanings of monuments. The focus became more on individual works and case studies, in contrast to Mumford and Riegl’s theoretical, sweeping analyses. These case studies tended to be from the City Beautiful era of urban planning. In Bogart’s essay “The Rise and Demise of Civic Virtue” (1992), a close reading of
Frederick MacMonnies’ *Civic Virtue*, Bogart largely through primary sources centers her argument around increasing public skepticism towards the authority of the artist and the project of urban monuments in general in the 1920s. Bogart’s martialing of archival material to cover public reception is impressive, but the intense focus on the specific circumstances around the monument sacrifices some of the broader theoretical insight of previous studies.\textsuperscript{28}

Also released in 1992 was the original edition of Françoise Choay’s *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, an abstract, sweeping study which is far closer to Riegl or Foucault than her American counterparts. Originally published in French, the book does not mention the United States at all, so it largely falls out of the scope of this study. Still, Choay’s work helps provide much of the theoretical backbone of modern writing on monuments, and this thesis is no exception. Choay contends that historic monuments are not so much meant to inform about historic facts as much as they meant to be an “antidote to entropy,” a way to perpetuate living memory of the past against the vicissitudes and impermanence of time.\textsuperscript{29} The insight that historic monuments tell us far more about the era in which they were built than the era they intend to represent is instrumental to later studies.

Kirk Savage’s *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* (1997), is perhaps the foundational text for contemporary monument scholarship, one which is cited in virtually every study on American urban monuments that has followed it. Savage takes Choay’s insight that historic monuments teach far more about the era in which they were created than their supposed subjects and extends it to an analysis of American monuments as a tool of the powerful to control historic narratives, “an impulse to mold history in its rightful pattern.” Savage’s


study extends from around the end of Reconstruction to the turn of the 20th century, and as such his study is largely focused on the nature of race and reconciliation in the memory of the Civil War. Building off of previous works on reconciliation like Nina Silber's *The Romance of Reunion: The Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (1993), a through line for Savage's book is how memory of the Civil War coalesced around reassertion of white supremacist values across sectional lines, with the recognition that "the losers in this process of reconciliation were of course, African-Americans." 30 As a synthesis of broad historical trends, abstract theoretical concepts, art history, and specific archivally grounded case studies, the work remains perhaps the most robust study on American urban monuments. However, a significant gap in the book is its minimal discussion of urban planning principles, which were crucial to the project of city and monument building in the late 19th century. Unfortunately, this gap was never filled by later studies.

Following the publication of *Standing Soldiers*, studies of monuments and sectional reconciliation began to overlap and converge. David Blight's *Race and Reunion* (2003) falls more into the latter category, but he uses monuments such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens' *Shaw Memorial* as touchstones for arguments about reconciliation. Blight's writing on reconciliation is essentially an expansion upon what writers like Savage and Silber had written prior, a further articulation of how the reconciliation process occurred. More than Savage, Blight ties sectional reconciliation to the graphic and horrific consequences it had for Black people, such as widespread lynching, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow, and the "separate but equal" *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision. 31 Perhaps the most oft-cited contribution of Blight's is his typology of sectional and reconciliatory memory, one which is frequently referenced either explicitly or obliquely in this study. Continuing the

30 Savage 132.
31 Blight 337-344.
trend of fusing monument and reconciliation studies is Karen Cox’s *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (2003), a study of the UDC’s instrumental role in promoting the ’Lost Cause’ narrative of the Civil War. Cox’s study uses the lens of gender to argue that Lost Cause monuments relied on an iconography of the Confederacy as noble, beautiful losers, a group of proud souls fighting for states’ rights who lost with grace and valor. The role of slavery in this calculus was sandblasted away.

Turning away from the late 19th and early 20th centuries somewhat, Erika Doss’ book *Memorial Mania* (2010) and Dell Upton’s essay “Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk so Much?” (2013) address the gap on literature on the second great period of monument building in the late 20th to early 21st century. Still, Doss and Upton have valuable insights about monument building during the turn of the century in the context of reactionary nationalism which followed waves of incoming immigrants and the increasingly untenable Anglo-Saxon values of the previous century, as detailed in the introduction above.

Doss also developed a useful way of thinking about the overwhelming preponderance of monuments built in this period by coining the term “statue mania.” Adapted from French scholar Maurice Agulhon’s term “statueomania,” which referred to a similar preponderance of monuments in Third Republic France, “statue mania” describes the feverish construction of monuments across the American landscape. Finally, Katherine Poole-Jones’ essay “Historical Memory, Reconciliation, and the Shaping of the Postbellum Landscape: The Civil War Monuments of Forest Park, St. Louis” (2020) follows Bogart and Savage in examining monuments through site-specific case studies. Through four studies of monuments in Forest Park, St. Louis, Poole-Jones traces the lines of the history of reconciliation with monuments

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32 Cox 1-20, 49-57.
33 Doss 20.
all dedicated about a decade apart, beginning in 1877. St. Louis was a city with divided sympathies, and two of the monuments she covers are Union monuments, addressing a clear gap in the literature which is rich in studies of Confederate monuments but poor in studies of their Union counterparts. 34

Overall, two major gaps emerge: a lack of coverage of monuments in the context of urban planning, and a lack of coverage of Union monuments. It may also be said that of the above studies, Poole-Jones' is the only one which extensively covers quotidian monuments which are not of the stock 'common soldier' design, which Savage covers extensively. 35 A minor but telling mistake made in the scholarship on planning is Doss and Poole-Jones’ reference to the City Beautiful as an ‘aesthetic,’ which is true in a specific sense, yet lacking in a broader sense. 36 Aesthetics were certainly a central concern for City Beautiful thinkers, but they played a role in a larger program of urban design which incorporated issues like social reform, sanitation, and power. This thesis attempts to address the gaps in scholarship on planning and Union monuments, but as a site-specific study rooted in the history of sectional reconciliation, it is deeply indebted to earlier studies, Savage’s in particular.

Further, this thesis attempts to pivot somewhat in tone from earlier studies, which tend to have a negative valence on monuments. For instance, Savage writes in his 2017 preface to the second edition of Standing Soldiers that “the long history of the public monument, as I argue in this book, confirms their fundamental conservatism.” 37 This attitude towards monuments was partly informed by an appropriate reaction to horrors such as the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville and the terroristic massacre of members of a

35 For Savage’s in-depth coverage of the mass-produced common soldier monument, see Standing Soldiers 166-79.
36 Poole-Jones, “Historical Memory.” Doss 27, 211.
37 Savage xiii.
Black church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015, events which in their own ways were tied to monuments. Scholars like Savage were pushing back against ill-informed or bad faith arguments that Confederate monuments had no relationship to these acts of white supremacy. Yet following the 2020 summer of protests, monuments find themselves with more detractors than ever, and at least anecdotally this writer can confirm that intelligent, well-informed people are openly wondering if it would be easier if every monument were simply removed.  

While this analysis is in no way an explicitly positive evaluation of the monument under study or of monuments in general, it attempts to strike a balance in tone. Indeed, even the more critical appraisals in this analysis would not be possible if MacNeil's work were not visually arresting, communicating powerful emotions which lend to its reconciliatory message. MacNeil's monument contains messages that are misleading, perhaps even dangerous, but these messages are potentially instructive for an informed public about the history of reconciliation and Civil War memory. What can make monuments compelling is the same thing that can make them detestable: the fact that they offer a glimpse into the ideals and values of a bygone era. Many monuments still standing today need to go, but this thesis leaves it up to the individual reader as to where they land on Soldiers and Sailors.

The Evolution of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial

On June 21st, 1900, Philadelphia Mayor Samuel Ashbridge commissioned a competition for "a Monument to be erected in the City of Philadelphia in Honor of the

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38 This idea was suggested by a couple of different people in classes at Penn.
Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines who served in the War for the Suppression of the Rebellion.”

By the turn of the 20th century the reconciliation process had reached its zenith: Memorial Day speeches almost always paid tribute to both Union and Confederate veterans and Lost Cause monuments were sprouting up across southern states, and occasionally making their way into northern and western states as well. David Blight reflected that “By 1900 the flame of emancipationist memory still burned, but it lit isolated enclaves in a darkening age of racial antagonism.” Notably, the commission from the city suggested a more sectional understanding of the conflict by describing it as “a suppression of the rebellion.” The art world however had moved on from such concerns: the Jury, made up of architects Charles Howard Walker, Charles Grafly, and John M. Carrère made no mention of the original name, and the design submissions did not include the original name despite a direct requirement from the commission to do so.

The prizewinning design (Figure 1), by New York architects Austin Lord and James Hewlett was an obelisk monument, a clear reference to both the Washington Monument on the National Mall and Cleopatra’s Needle. The latter was an ancient relic gifted to the United States in 1881 as a totem of Europe’s colonization of Africa. As Doss notes, its placement in Central Park, soon followed by Robert Mills’ obelisk design for the Washington Monument, “tapped a vein of martial imperialism.” Indeed, Lord and Hewlett’s design would have likely been created soon after the definitive design for the National Mall which

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41 Blight 343-44.
43 Philadelphia Common Council 1902, 751-758.
44 Doss 210.
emerged out of the MacMillan Commission, which positioned the Washington Monument at the center of a plaza at a midway point between the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol. As it happened, Lord and Hewlett’s design would have applied this exact same concept to the Parkway, evoking this same imperial vein. This shift from sectional to imperial commemoration was one which would prove to be crucial for the future design of the monument.

The Lord and Hewlett obelisk was from the outset a problematic proposition. City Council had authorized $500,000 for the project—more than $15.5 million in today’s—when the plans for the Parkway were not yet determined. Such a steep expenditure must have seemed questionable at best; Andrew Wright Crawford of the City Parks Association wrote that the Parks Association “strenuously protests against the expenditure of such a great sum of $500,000” and argued that the money would be better spent by distributing smaller sums for more humble park improvements. Albert Kelsey, a member of the Art Committee in the Fairmount Park Art Association, drew an alternate design for a triumphal gateway that would frame a view of city hall and a planned cathedral on Logan Square (Figure 2). Kelsey, unlike Crawford, agreed with the Council’s notion of placing the monument in Logan Square, but insisted that the monument should enhance rather than obstruct views of the architectural landmarks on the Parkway like City Hall. Likely due to a mix of these design disagreements, discord within city government, and the slow progress

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45 Philadelphia Common Council, 752. Though Logan Square had already existed as a park, it was well understood at this point that the monument would serve as part of a larger parkway design; see Herbert Welsh, “Volume 13,” City and State, 1902, 410-11 https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=1owtAQAAAMAAJ&rdid=book·1owtAQAAAMAAJ&rdot=1. Albert Kelsey here associates the monument with the Parkway, which was already well on the minds of Philadelphians at the time.
of the Parkway itself, the project was largely absent from the public record for about a
decade.

Much like the larger Parkway, the monument was the subject of extensive debate
and fits and starts in the next decade. In 1910, City Council approved a more modest
disbursement of $100,000 for the monument, but later increased that amount to $250,000 in
1914.49 Lord and Hewlett revised their design that year (Figure 3) to a more modest one;
the high imperial ideals of the City Beautiful were already finding themselves in decline.50

Even with these changes, the monument project met with two enemies: Rudolph
Blankenburg, Philadelphia's reformist, anti-corruption mayor from 1911 to 1915, and the
Military Order of the Loyal Legion, represented by Union veteran John Page Nicholson.51
Both advocated for a building to serve as a memorial to the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors,
which could house memorabilia from the war and host speakers and commemorative
events. The Committee on Comprehensive Plans, attempting to agitate for the issue,
suggested that the money be split for both a monument and a building.52 The Committee
arranged a meeting with Blankenburg, Nicholson, and other Loyal Legion members, but it
proved to be unsuccessful: after the meeting, Nicholson told the Philadelphia Inquirer that
none of the $90,000 raised by the Loyal Legion would be spent on a monument, reinforcing
his earlier comment that the group "would not favor any monument." The Committee
decided to once again delay action on the monument, hoping that the replacement of the

49 Philadelphia Common Council, Journal of the Common Council, 1912, 69,
https://books.google.com/books?id=QuROAAAYAAJ&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.
50 William C. Stanton, "Permanent Committee on Comprehensive Plans," Annual Report of the Mayor of
Historical Newspapers.
52 “Action Demanded on City Projects.”
honest Blankenburg administration with the less honest new mayor Thomas Smith, would bring better fortune to the project.53

In February 1918, as the city was ensconced in a patriotic fervor following the nation's entry into World War I, the corrupt political machine seemed to be working in full order.54 Smith's Public Works Director George Eastman announced that all $250,000 of the appropriated funds were to be spent on the monument, and as compensation space would be made in Independence Hall for Civil War memorabilia. Eastman claimed that the veterans were agreeable to these terms, a dubious claim considering the views of the veterans both before and after Smith's administration.55 Still, the next year the Art Commission approved a preliminary design concept from Hermon Atkins MacNeil, and the project seemed to be finally nearing completion.56 Yet when Mayor Smith was replaced by J. Hampton Moore, an honest reformer in the Blankenburg mold, with the support of the Loyal Legion and the Grand Army of the Revolution immediately moved to reallocate all $250,000 back to the memorial-as-building concept.57 This project would come to be known as Victory Hall. In 1921 Philadelphia's citizens approved an $8.5 million expenditure for the building, and entrants in the design competition included such luminaries as Paul Cret, Frank Furness, and Wilson Eyre.58 That same year, the Art Jury somehow approved MacNeil’s final design, likely biding their time in hopes that would later be realized.59

54 Downs, “World War One.”
55 “Councils to Act on Monument Bill,” Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA), February 7, 1918, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
57 “Hall as Civil War Memorial Likely.”
The mayorality seesawed back to the corrupt machine with the election of W. Freeland Kendrick, who drew outrage from veterans and the local press by attempting to create a "vest-pocketed" Victory Hall at the expense of $4 million for only 2000 seats, a plan which drew accusations of corruption and embezzlement. Kendrick’s maneuvering tainted the Victory Hall project, and it was null by 1925. With funds again free for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, by 1927 the Art Commission proudly announced that "the Army and Navy Pylons, by Hermon A. MacNeil, which mark the entrance to the Parkway Gardens, were completed." Apparently quite pleased with the monument, the Jury praised the final product as "admirable in scale and excellent in execution." After nearly 30 years delay and deliberation, the city finally had the Arc de Triomphe for its Champs-Élysées.

More research is needed to pinpoint precisely why veterans’ groups and honest, reformist mayors were consistently allied against the Soldiers and Sailors monument. However, considering that the former party was concerned with opposing the oligarchic circulation of money in the city, and the latter with commemorating soldiers’ valor and heroism, it is probable that both sides shared a concern about commerce muddying commemoration. The Art Jury’s 1918 report lamented the use of war memorials by "scheming salesmen to secure commercial profit," while the FPAA dubbed war memorials "senseless commercialized effigies" which "disgrace the memory of the brave men who fell in the Civil War." Such concerns were built off of decades of debate around war

60 Zurier 55-56.
62 In "Action Demanded on City Projects, the Inquirer reports that Nicholson stated that the Loyal Legion’s 90,000 in funds for a memorial had been allocated for a building, not a monument. This cannot fully account for the opposition—Nicholson was certainly someone with the power and prestige among veterans to reallocate funds. Even if one supposes that those funds were genuinely immovable, the city could have easily built the monument with the $250,000 in appropriated funds if the approval of the veterans were merely limited to financial concerns. Further, a simple matter of finances cannot explain why other veterans’ groups like the GAR were aligned with the Loyal Legion.
monuments, and was likely in the minds of people like John Nicholson and Rudolph Blankenburg when considering monument proposals like Lord and Hewlett’s. Concerns would have been particularly warranted considering the culture of Philadelphia at the time; reformer Lincoln Steffens declared that the “City Beautiful clubs” had aligned themselves with the “corrupt and contented” culture of Philadelphia.64

As Robert Cook notes, the terms of reconciliation were often an economic overture to southern clients on behalf of northern industrialists.65 Lord and Hewlett’s initial design (Figure 1) with its attendant imperial imagery suggests a version of reconciliation which avoids the conflict altogether, seeking instead to use the conflict as a way of announcing that the city is open for business to the whole nation. The revised 1914 design (Figure 3) tamped down the bombast of the original but did nothing to sway the veterans—even the Comprehensive Plans Committee, who originally forwarded the revised design, effectively abandoned it a mere year later.66 It’s not hard to see why from the design: the exuberant winged angel is simply a reiteration of the transcendent imperialism of the earlier design at a cheaper price, failing to engage substantively with the Civil War in any way.

At this point, one can understand why Nicholson would have simply rejected the monument idea entirely—a building with a museum dedicated to the Civil War would have

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65 Cook 416, 426. Cook cites Gaines Foster’s *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, which argues that the reconciliatory commemorative culture in the south in the late 19th century facilitated the “emergence of a ‘New South’ open to business enterprise and reconciliation with the capital-rich North.” Cook also refers to an essay by Patrick J. Kelly on “the Restructuring of Civil War Memory” which connects the reconciliatory message of McKinley’s campaign to its backers: “northern capitalists keen to integrate the South into an expanding national market.”
66 William C. Stanton, “Permanent Committee on Comprehensive Plans,” *Annual Report of the Mayor of Philadelphia*, January 1, 1916, 417-8. The revised Lord and Hewlett design was included in the Committee’s 1914 report. The 1915 report acknowledges this, but the committee seemed to be ready to discard it in favor of a compromise proposal, where the monument would adopt Kelsey’s proposed form of an arch. Oddly, the committee’s notion was to house military artifacts within the memorial arch’s upper portion—Stanton’s report tries to convey a sense of optimism for compromise with the Loyal Legion, but Nicholson’s comments from December 1915 suggests that this was likely wishful thinking of the part of the Committee.
allowed the veterans to tell the story of the conflict on their own terms. As the long serving chairman of the Gettysburg National Park Committee, Nicholson had the privilege of controlling the commemoration process of perhaps the most significant monument to the Civil War in the nation.\(^\text{67}\) Such agency is difficult to surrender.

The Art Commission chose wisely when requisitioning MacNeil for the project—through his *Soldiers and Sailors Memorial* in Albany, NY (Figure 4), deemed by fellow sculptor Lorado Taft as “perhaps [MacNeil’s] finest work,” MacNeil proved that he could balance allegory, literal depiction, and technical excellence simultaneously.\(^\text{68}\) More importantly, what MacNeil was especially adept at was treatment of fraught subject matter in a way that could appease diverse audiences. Considering the aforementioned skepticism towards war memorials even from the art world, it is a testament to how appropriate the Art Jury found MacNeil’s design to be that it approved a finalized design in 1921 when it was generally accepted that Victory Hall would push out the Soldiers and Sailors monument entirely.\(^\text{69}\) An artist of slippery texts throughout his career, MacNeil had a special ability to tell stories with a balance of perspectives that makes it easy to miss his vindications of empire.

**The City Beautiful Movement and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway: The Didactic Role of Monuments in Urban Design**

When viewed from a distance on the northwest side of Logan Square (Figure 5), the high-bas reliefs at the base of the monument (Figures 6-7) appear more as plays of light and


\(^\text{69}\) The *Inquirer* at least generally reported that Mayor Moore’s plans to divert money from the monument towards Victory Hall was probably going to work, with headlines like “Hall as Civil War Memorial Likely.”
shadow, and the low reliefs above them become nearly invisible, appearing more as a sheer face of marble. Framed neatly behind them is the ‘Philadelphian Acropolis’ of the Art Museum.\(^70\) This view from a distance highlights the monument’s function in the broader aesthetics of the Parkway. The more austere decoration on the pylons, particularly above the base, allows the monument to highlight the shrine to Philadelphia’s early 20\(^{th}\) century civic advancements.

By contrast, the relief sculptures on the Arc de Triomphe occupy far more space on the façade of the arch, a choice that makes sense given that the monument is located at the northwest terminus point of the Champs-Élysées (Figure 8). While the Arc de Triomphe is designed to stand alone as a central landscape feature, the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial is designed to highlight the Art Museum in addition to serving as its own individual work. The subtle tapered slopes along the sides of the piece invite the viewer to gaze towards the space in between the pylons, into different sort of space which lies beyond them. The working title of the monument was “Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Gateway to the Parkway Gardens,” a reference to Parkway planner Jacques Gréber’s planned but never realized series of gardens which were meant to open up just beyond the monument (Figure 9).\(^71\) The monument’s role as a gateway between the two sections of the parkway demonstrates how inextricable the work is from the larger designed space around it. Understanding the work then requires understanding to some extent the Parkway that surrounds it.

The plan for the Fairmount Parkway, now known as the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, dated back as far as the consolidation of Fairmount Park in 1858, but the concept of a straight boulevard did not emerge until the 1880s with proposals from James Windrim

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\(^70\) See Brownlee, Chapter 3.
and Charles Landis. At this point the Parkway was included on city maps but still not close to on the ground reality; a 1902 proposal by Albert Kelsey and Wilson Eyre was the first which began to resemble the Parkway as it would actually be built.\textsuperscript{72} As it stands today, the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial flanks the middle lane of the Parkway.\textsuperscript{73} Although 25 years passed between Kelsey and Eyre’s plan and the placement of Soldiers and Sailors, the function of the pylons is strikingly similar to Kelsey and Eyre’s original design (Figure 10), though in the 1902 plan they frame City Hall rather than the Art Museum.\textsuperscript{74} Though it was four Philadelphians who laid out the original conception of the Parkway, it would soon take on a national, and indeed transatlantic, character. In 1907, the designers Paul Cret, Horace Trumbauer, and Clarence Zantzinger drafted the plan of the Parkway that would prove definitive for its future (Figure 11).\textsuperscript{75}

As David Brownlee lays out in \textit{Building the City Beautiful}, the Cret-Zantzinger-Trumbauer plan was dominated by the two prevailing tastes of the era: the “American Classic” associated with the office of McKim, Mead, and White along with the general character of New York and Chicago neoclassical architecture, and the French neoclassicism associated with the École des Beaux-Arts design school. This principle would hold true when the Beaux-Arts trained designer Jacques Gréber finalized the design in 1917. Though there are important distinctions to be made between these two versions of neoclassicism, both tended to assert aesthetics which transcended local tastes. In the era of world’s fairs, the designers of the City Beautiful era had the eyes of the world as their intended audience.

\textsuperscript{72} Brownlee 15-20.
\textsuperscript{73} Bach, “Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Memorial (1921).”
\textsuperscript{74} The ‘framing’ effect is significantly diminished today by the additional two lanes to the left and right of the central lane. These two extra lanes did not exist in the original Cret-Zantzinger-Trumbauer plan, and even when Gréber added these two lanes, his plan shows them as far more modest side roads separated from the central lane by wide swaths of park land. The outer lanes today are of comparable width to the central lane and are only separated from the main artery with token strips of tree-lined sidewalk. This is a major reason why the parkway today is bemoaned as auto centric.
\textsuperscript{75} Brownlee 24.
Indeed, when addressing the Mayor of Philadelphia in 1911, leading City Beautiful planner Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., remarked, “Your city is the farthest advanced in the country... in city planning.” Consequently, the context of the Soldiers and Sailors monument is national, and at times even global.

Most accounts of the Parkway today will note the inspiration of the Parisian boulevard the Champs-Élysées, a point of reference noted in the records of the Fairmount Park Art Association—Gréber himself even tacitly acknowledged the association. Up to the point that MacNeil created the final design for the monument as it stands today, the work was intended to be the first newly constructed work of outdoor sculpture along the Parkway, and as such was often tied to the Champs-Élysées’ signature monument, the Arc de Triomphe, dating as far back as Albert Kelsey’s 1902 design (Figure 2). MacNeil’s final product, though it did not take on the form of an arch, displayed its influences quite clearly, particularly in its high bas-reliefs (Figures 6, 7). This connection with the Parisian landmark provides the first major insight into the central subject of this monument-- triumph, more specifically a national sort of triumph.

As a design concept, the placement of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway bestows upon it an elevated status. The monument is

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76 Brownlee 1-12, 30-31. The term “American Classic” was coined by the Philadelphia art historian Fiske Kimball. “Mayor is Chairman of City Plan Committee,” Public Ledger, February 28th, 1911. Cited in Brownlee 27, fn 49.
77 Brownlee 33. Brownlee writes: “Gréber was, of course, conscious of this reference to Paris and of the entire project’s resemblance to the Champs-Élysées, to which he alluded to gracefully: ‘I am glad to say that, if by this work the city of Paris may be enabled to bring to its sister in America the inspiration of what makes Paris so attractive to visitors, it will be the first opportunity of Paris to pay a little of the great debt of thankfulness for what Philadelphia and its citizens have done for France during the last three years.” [I’ll deal with the FPAA stuff later]
78 The Washington Memorial by Rudolph Siemmering, which stands on Eakins Oval in front of the Art Museum, was relocated from its original location at the Green Street entrance of Fairmount Park in 1928; see Penny Balkin Bach, “Washington Monument (1897),” Association for Public Art online, accessed June 6 2021, https://www.associationforpublicart.org/artwork/washington-monument/#. One example of the monument being tied to the Arc de Triomphe can be found in “Hall as Civil War Memorial Likely,” Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA), April 16, 1920, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
positioned in front of Logan Circle looking towards the northwestern terminus point of the Parkway, where the Art Museum was already planned. The openness of space serves to emphasize the monument in a way Burnham would have certainly approved of, and the uninterrupted view towards the art museum which the monument frames creates a sense of grandeur which signals to the viewer the importance of the monument. Walter Benjamin wrote of Second Empire Paris, a major model for the City Beautiful movement, that "[t]he perspectives, prior to their inauguration, were screened with canvas draperies and unveiled like monuments; the view would then disclose a ... symbol of civilization." Benjamin argued that in this way cities vaunted a mythical image of progress and modernity which he dubbed the "phantasmagoria," which through these perspectives found their concrete expression. 79

This sense of perspective was crucial to the Parkway even from its earlier design stages: the 1902 proposal from Kelsey and Eyre was rejected by the city due to its placement of a cathedral in Logan Square, interrupting an unbroken perspective from City Hall to the Art Museum. 80 On the ground however it eventually became clear that an ideal perspective view of the planned museum from City Hall would be unattainable. 81 In his final plan for the Parkway, Gréber tacitly acknowledged this by setting up tree plantings around Logan Square, which would over time obscure the view as they grew (Figures 12 and 13). Additionally, Gréber’s 1918 perspective drawing shows that the headlining act would be the view looking at the Art Museum from Logan Square (Figures 14 and 15). Along with the

80 Brownlee 19.
81 Google image searches for views of the Parkway renders two types of views: a view of the art museum looking northwest from Logan Square or closer and a view of the Parkway looking southeast towards City Hall, often taken from a high vantage point atop the Art Museum steps. Looking towards the art museum from City Hall is not all that inspiring whether done in person or in Google street view. There are a few reasons for this, but it largely just amounts to the fact that the architecture of the art museum never emphasized massive scale or verticality in the same way City Hall’s architecture does, even before it was built.
perspective itself, the two primary subjects are clearly the Art Museum and the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial: Rudolph Siemmering’s Washington Monument in front of the museum is an unarticulated dot in the distance.

Confirming the framing design choice, in 1921 the Art Jury wrote that MacNeil’s pylons would “form, as it were, a frame for the Museum of Art, as seen from Logan Square [emphasis mine].”82 The romantic City Beautiful symbolism of progress found expression in the Logan Square perspective, and to understand the Soldiers and Sailors monument it is crucial to consider how it participated in what Upton called the “civic mythology” of progress by promoting a vision of the Civil War as the triumph of an emergent enlightened nation.83 As Benjamin wrote of perspectives: “[t]he temples of the bourgeoisie’s spiritual and secular power were to find their apotheosis within the framework of these long streets.”84 Similarly, in an analysis of a postcard displaying Richmond’s Monument Avenue (Figure 16) and Antonin Mercie and Paul Pujol’s iconic Robert E. Lee monument, Kirk Savage describes the landscape, lined with trees and telephone wires, as a “full-fledged embrace of modernity” which was “clearly intended to showcase civic progress.”85 The numerous postcard treatments of Soldiers and Sailors as well as Gréber’s perspective use the monument to disclose Philadelphia’s vision of modernity and progress—this is why the pylons are explicitly designed to frame the Art Museum and the Parisian-style boulevard that leads up to it (Figure 15). These features both symbolize Philadelphia’s emergence into a modern, triumphal age, particularly the Acropolis-inspired Art Museum, crowning a summit of a Parkway that Brownlee describes as “a grand diagonal boulevard that bespoke the energy of the twentieth century.”86 The image of a monument to the Civil War giving

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83 Upton 20.
84 Benjamin 24.
85 Savage 149.
86 Brownlee viii.
way to a resplendent future suggests a progression from past to present, supporting the notion that it was through this conflict that the nation emerged into a modern titan. It is a perfect encapsulation of the civic mythology of progress.

Paul Cret, who subscribed to the Beaux-Arts notion that all architecture is fundamentally a product of its broader culture and society, wrote in 1922 that “Our architecture is concerned primarily with satisfying the needs of its new master, the democracy,” and that modern architecture is an “art of democracy.” Cret’s notion of democracy was tied to the decline of regionalism and a growing universality of architectural forms. What Cret saw as universality could be easily reframed as hegemony: a breakdown of local regional styles in favor of the neoclassical forms favored by the wealthiest citizens in the nation’s largest metropoles is an odd definition of democracy indeed. Just two years later in 1924, Lewis Mumford, lamenting the subordination of architecture to New York and Chicago styles and the standardization of materials brought on by railways, wrote:

The underlying policy of imperialism is to exploit the life and resources of separate regions for the benefit of the holders of privilege in the capital city. Under this rule, all roads lead literally to Rome. Mumford’s comment recalls Andrew Crawford’s 1902 complaint that the competition for the Soldiers and Sailors Monument was dominated by New Yorkers, both in its jurors and entrants. This did not change when the city arrived at MacNeil as the designer, himself a purveyor of Chicago and Beaux-Arts styles. Like the larger Parkway, the monument was a product of tastes which Cret described as universal, and Mumford described as imperial. Either way, the subordination of local interests to national ones meant that the tastes of the Art Jury and artists like MacNeil was not suited to a narrative that spoke to a local group like

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Philadelphia’s Union veterans, but to a larger national dialogue, where a rhetoric of progress dominated.

**A Ritual of Blindness- the Artistic Background of Hermon Atkins MacNeil**

In the low relief panels above the more eye-catching images of the soldiers and sailors, MacNeil depicts images of the Greek goddesses Athena on the soldiers’ side and Nike on the sailors’ side, figures almost certainly drawn from the Parthenon, one of the signature emblems of civilization in the western world from the 19th century onward (Figures 17-19). Athena is the operative figure here—Nike lacked her own mythos and was generally assimilated into other cults, including the cult of Athena at Athens. The role of Athena, and by extension Nike, is to serve as figures which preside over the quest of these warriors and elevate their mission to a sense of holiness. As the classicist Christopher Townley Parker observes, in addition to her love of combat and warfare, Athena is “closely associated with the masculine world in her mythological role as a helper of male heroes” such as Heracles and Odysseus, and that “her intervention in battle often takes the form of ‘standing beside’ a favorite.” MacNeil here has made the heroes of his monument the recipient of the favor of the goddesses on the battlefield, granting them divine providence while also connecting them with symbols of victory and democracy in Nike and Athena respectively. As a result, the distinctly American look of the soldiers has been given a prestigious classical significance. On top of this, MacNeil embellishes the goddesses to have more of an American appearance. Athena’s shield has been stripped of its signature

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gorgoneion, and her helmet has been stylized to appear almost like a stovepipe hat. The winged figure of Nike meanwhile bears a distinct resemblance to an angel. Most significantly, their positioning under quotes referencing key points in American history, as well as heraldic bald eagles, collapses them into American iconography.

All of these artistic choices are signature to the artist, Hermon Atkins MacNeil. An artist who moved between the classicism of the Beaux-Arts and Chicago art worlds and the American iconography of western art, MacNeil was the sort of artist whose study in Rome was preceded by anguish about losing his ‘Americanness.’ The Soldiers and Sailors monument’s classical elements highlight a characteristic fusion of American iconography with the Beaux-Arts classicism in vogue at the turn of the century. Usually for MacNeil these classical symbols helped to obscure the particular bundle of silences in a certain work, and lend the piece’s argument an air of inevitability. In Soldiers and Sailors, the presence of symbols of valor and justice, as personified by Nike and Athena, suggests that through the conflict of the Civil War America has exorcised the ghoulish elements of its own history, and is ready to be a sublime symbol of these values on the world’s stage. MacNeil’s particular ability to justify America’s behavior through implicit symbolism is best illustrated by tracing the arc of his career, particularly with regard to his depictions of indigenous people in what is perhaps his most celebrated work: The Sun Vow.

MacNeil was a product of his time and reflected the spirit and contradictions of his age. His training was typical for artists and sculptors of the time: born in Everett, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston, MacNeil studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris before moving to Chicago to aid in the 1893 Colombian Exposition, the enshrinement of City

93 Judith Barter, Window On the West: Chicago and the Art of the New Frontier, 1890-1940, (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2003), Chapter 1, https://www-aeportal-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/?id=-15740
Beautiful as the prevailing civic design ideology in the United States. However, the Colombian Exposition for MacNeil was not a path to grand civic centerpieces as it was for peers such as sculptor Daniel Chester French. Instead, MacNeil’s time in Chicago led to an interest in American Indian iconography and culture.94

As MacNeil continued to portray indigenous people in sculpture, he found a patron in Edward E. Ayer, a veteran of the US cavalry who had participated in Manifest Destiny directly and had come to turn against his own nation’s genocidal aims. Notably, MacNeil developed an interest in indigenous subjects soon after the events that had solidified Manifest Destiny. As Judith Barter notes in *Window on the West: Chicago and the Art of the New Frontier*, the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 created a sense among many Americans that the genocide of the indigenous nations would soon be complete, leaving a lost race. In an unpublished essay, Ayer wrote “We have simply destroyed a great race of human beings, in many virtues our superiors.” Ayer and other patrons like him commissioned artists like MacNeil to capture the last remnants of an ostensibly disappearing race.95 *Arts for America* wrote that MacNeil’s portrayals of indigenous people were “so strong and full of vigor that they command at once one’s admiration and respect.”96 MacNeil’s work was able to lend dignity to the image of indigenous people, and in a way even a basic humanization of his subjects could lend to a critique of Manifest Destiny, which was built on an ideological bedrock of portraying indigenous people as inhuman savages.

Yet beneath this glossy sentiment lay an undercurrent of condescension towards American Indians that would develop the trope of the noble savage. Indeed, this same *Arts for America* critic wrote in a tone that seems ironic now, but was surely entirely sincere at

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95 Barter, Chapter 1. MacNeil himself found the project incredibly inspiring: he described his first sojourn west as follows: “I was in heaven and flared to a high pitch, working from sunrise to dark.”
96 Barter, Chapter 1.
the time, that MacNeil’s style "surely marks the Indian as Nature’s nobleman." The novelist Hamlin Garland, a friend of MacNeil’s and one his two companions in their tour of the Southwest, wrote “the red people were to me human beings who had come up along another line of civilization from ours. Although in some ways our inferiors, they possessed certain singularly noble habits” [emphasis mine]. MacNeil for his part in his writings and works expressed far more interest in exoticized customs like the Snake Dance than he did in culture and sociology beneath titillating surfaces. One of MacNeil’s most celebrated works of the period, The Sun Vow (1898), focuses on one of these apocryphal rituals MacNeil claims to have witnessed, where a boy ritually graduates into manhood by shooting an arrow at the sun (Figure 20). Noble savage tropes color the composition: the figures are almost entirely naked, a classical reference that also puts the figures’ bodies on display. The central object of the sculpture is a wooden bow and arrow, a weapon whose obsolescence might invite the audience to judge the figure as savage or primitive but may also invite a sense of poignancy to see this boy nobly clinging to old ways. Here we see a reification of the noble savage ideal.

MacNeil described his intention with The Sun Vow as follows: “Primarily, my interest was in the contrast of closing age and opening youth and that I believe is what (unconsciously) interests most people.” The subject is generational change, but MacNeil’s conception of what those changes entail is embedded in reductive assumptions about indigenous people. The younger figure, all smooth lines and vitality, stands in stark

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97 Barter Chapter 1. Emphasis mine. In the same breath however, Garland also notes that hatred of indigenous people is a convenient device for those with imperial aims, writing that when considering American Indians, one should not be “confused by the hate of those who desired the lands he occupied.” Men like Garland and MacNeil in their travels out west could not help but notice the humanity of the indigenous people they met, but their perceptions were fundamentally limited by the white supremacist notions of their time.
98 Barter Chapter 1. Jackson Polys (see fn 99) writes that MacNeil later admitted that this ritual may have been invented.
99 Quoted in Barter Chapter 1. The letter is dated to 1937, about 40 years after creating the piece. One could maybe question whether we can trust MacNeil’s words from so many years later, but on the other hand the fact that he still remembered his goal with the piece 4 decades later could be seen as proof that this was indeed his
contrast against the older, all wrinkles and decay. The arches of their backs form a visual rhyme, the strong concave back of the younger against the faltering convex back of the older (Figure 21). The effect is to evoke the notion, contemporary to the era, that Native Americans may indeed assimilate and become white as the United States consolidated their control over the western territories. Contemporary artist Jackson Polys observes that “[The Sun Vow’s] representation of the futility of Indian action fosters a belief in their aimlessness,” a representation which “participates in a ritual of blindness to a civilizing violence understood as necessary.” The older generation is afforded dignity and humanity, but his disappearance is not the result of violent conquest, but the inevitable tides of history. The humanization of the subjects injects ambiguity into the piece, but the fatalism at its heart ultimately serves to vindicate the nation’s imperial and criminal actions in the west. The Sun Vow defangs the sins of the nation’s past while imagining a future that is more just, yet where whites still retain hegemony. These themes help to clarify how the same ideas operate in MacNeil’s Soldiers and Sailors monument.

Aside from raising his reputation considerably in the American art world, The Sun Vow established MacNeil’s ability to navigate thorny issues in the nation’s recent history in a highly contested era as the Gilded Age gave way to the Progressive period. In the opening intention. After the Colombian Exposition, MacNeil began sculpting studies from indigenous members of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show troupe. MacNeil created a cast titled The Vow of Vengeance in 1894 soon after the exposition, which he revised and expanded as The Sun Vow in 1898. The model from life and the idealized Beaux-Arts figure are almost like a microcosm of the tension between the two poles of MacNeil’s career: anthropological studies of a dying race on one end, grand City Beautiful sculptor on the other.

100 Joe Baker, Ned Blackhawk, Jackson Polys, et al, “Native Perspectives,” metmuseum.org, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018, https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/the-american-wing/native-perspectives#Polys. Polys’ commentary was part of a project connected to a First Nations art exhibit put on by the Met—in conjunction with this exhibit they invited First Nations artists to comment on pieces in their American wing. This quote is taken from Polys’ commentary on The Sun Vow. Polys himself hails from Tlingit territory.

101 Barter Chapter 1. Ayer was thrilled with MacNeil’s works, such as The Moqui Runner, which had a similar inclination towards the exoticized ritual and idealized physical forms. Ayer continued to patronize him into the 20th century, even elevating him to the realm of fine art where he kept other clients confined to the space of ethnographic record. The Sun Vow won praise from Taft (see fn 151) and none other than Daniel Chester French, who called it “one of the finest things ever done by an American sculptor.”
decades of the 20th century when MacNeil created the critical mass of his work, imperial expansion, racial terror, and economic inequality all factored into intensely contested memories while cities sought to erect monuments at a furious pace. With The Sun Vow, MacNeil created a work which was no doubt pleasing to the liberally inclined Ayer, who was effusive about his happiness with MacNeil's overall work. Yet it also drew admiration in elite corners: Daniel Chester French, sculptor of such proudly imperial works as The Republic, also gave gushing praise to the work. The Sun Vow showed that MacNeil was highly adept at navigating such concerns without sacrificing the mainstream imperial narratives of the City Beautiful era, and MacNeil spent much of the next two decades of his career applying similar principles to urban monuments.

**World War I and the Aesthetics of Victory**

As one can likely deduce from this analysis, a major theme of the monument is a sense of romantic nationalism. The argument of the monument rests on the idea that the Civil War constituted a moment of national becoming which has afforded the United States its status as the world's biblical city on a hill, so it must establish that the United States is this city on a hill, a moral exemplar for the world. It accomplishes this in part through straightforward decoration in national imagery. Nested atop both towers is the classic symbol of America, the bald eagle, bearing a shield, a heraldic image referencing the Great

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102 One example of a monument from the same period whose erection was complicated by Progressive ideas, see Bogart, Rise and Demise. *Content, Context, and Controversy*, eds Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (New York, NY: Icon Editions, 1992) 175-188, where the reaction of first wave feminists to the implicit sexism of the monument overrode protestations from the sculptor that the piece was merely symbolic of civic virtues and vices.

103 Barter Chapter 1, fn 55. French called The Sun Vow “one of the very finest things ever done by an American sculptor.”

104 His monument Coming of the White Man in Portland, Oregon’s Washington Park for instance recognizes the understandable skepticism that indigenous people would have towards white explorers, but their tattered clothing suggests that the arrival of white men brought a civilizing force with it.
Seal of the United States (Figures 22-24). As mentioned above, the proximity of the eagles to goddesses of victory and wisdom helps to add a spiritual weight to these national symbols. Just as *The Sun Vow* presents the movement of Native American progression into whiteness as the mere result of the passage of time rather than particular choices and actions by historical actors, this appeal to nationhood suggests that Union victory was similarly inevitable through divine providence rather than a result of specific choices by conscious historic actors.

MacNeil however could not limit himself only to such symbols and phrases to convey a nationalistic theme; too many in the city at the time were skeptical of the project and of war memorials in general. When MacNeil had taken on the *Soldiers and Sailors* monument project in 1918, the forestalling of the monument by Civil War veterans and anti-corruption politicians had proven the importance of a monument’s ability to appease instead of antagonize various stakeholders. Certainly not to be forgotten was the Black community in Philadelphia, who hosted an Emancipation Exposition in 1913 that presented a radically different interpretation of the Civil War’s history from the Lord and Hewlett designs. Further complicating matters was the art world in the city, which seemed to be turning its back on war memorials altogether. When the city hired MacNeil, he was able to take a concept that the *Inquirer* deemed all but doomed by 1920 and created a work of art which the Art Jury received enthusiastically and apparently excited little to no controversy upon its erection on the Parkway. The ability of MacNeil to win the approval of the Art Jury was his ability to diverge from the monuments of the time, which Frederick MacMonnies in 1919 described as “very literal in treatment in full equipment without a

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105 For an account of the 1913 Emancipation Exposition see Charles Mires, “Race, Place, and the Pennsylvania Emancipation Exposition of 1913,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 128, no.3 (Jul 2004), 257-278.
button missing... this type has finally become ‘standardized’ and can be bought very reasonably from any firm of stone cutters.” MacMonnies’ suggestion, echoed in the same article by sculptor Paul Bartlett and MacNeil himself, is that sculptors can experiment with forms like commemorative columns and triumphal arches, and draw inspiration from the great war memorials of the current age. Among the memorials suggested is naturally the Arc de Triomphe, with the sculptor François Rude’s “fine relief.”

The Arc de Triomphe, completed in 1836, commemorated the French Revolution of 1792 as a moment of becoming for the nation nearly 40 years after the fact. Though the nation was far older than the revolution, it was the revolution that defined France as it was in that moment, as a nation striving for some sense of post-monarchical identity. Of the four high bas reliefs on the Arc de Triomphe, MacNeil most consciously references the one largely considered the definitive Arc sculpture: François Rude’s Le Départ de 1792 (Figure 25). Rude’s sculpture became “the source to which [French] artists inevitably turned when they tried their hand at nationalist themes” and gained the popular name of Le Marseillaise, also the name of the French national anthem written in 1792.

Rude’s sculpture and the event it portrays have effectively become synonymous with popular French national identity. What is peculiar about the event portrayed in the sculpture, the Battle of Valmy, is that although the Volunteers depicted by Rude technically repelled invading Austro-Prussian forces, the Austro-Prussian armies were leading an effort backed by French Royalists to restore the monarchy. By contrast, Jean Pierre-Cortot’s

sculptural group opposite Rude’s, *The Apotheosis of Napoleon*, celebrates unambiguous victory over foreign opponents. Yet Rude’s sculpture had far more staying power, even though historically speaking there’s no reason to believe that the French monarchy was any more or less ‘French’ than the revolutionaries. In carving out nationalist myth and identity, particularly in nations like France and the United States which aspire to democracy, it can be far more effective to distinguish from *within* than without—as the title of DW Griffith’s infamous 1915 film suggests, the history of the Civil War was perhaps the “Birth of a Nation.”

MacNeil’s sculpture follows Rude’s in locating a nation’s moment of becoming in an internal conflict which would result in an exorcism of old demons, be they monarchy or slavery. MacNeil understood that what he was portraying was not a mere moment in history, but a moment of becoming for a nation attempting to craft a new sense of identity nearly a half century after a foundational shift, making Rude’s sculpture a near-exact match in theme. By adopting the Rude relief, MacNeil supplements the more literal nationalistic imagery of the eagles with something more symbolic.

The figures in both pieces have a mythic air, less literal soldiers and more emblems of the spirit of a nation. The Lady Liberty in Rude’s work which lends this sense of transcendence is replicated in MacNeil’s sculpture by the goddesses; Nike even holds a sword in her hands as a nod to the sword-wielding Lady Liberty. Both of MacNeil’s reliefs, like Rude’s, feature a wizened bearded figure at the center with a forward-leaning posture, gesturing the other soldiers onward, every bit the archetype of masculine valor (see Figures 17, 23). The figures around them are more human: on the Sailors’ side the soldier to the

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111 Politt, “Rude, Le Marseilles.”
112 Rude’s sculpture was a landmark work for American sculptors as well as French ones— in MacMonnies et al 255 MacMonnies and Bartlett both note their admiration for Rude’s sculpture, with Bartlett calling it “the best modern war group.” MacNeil’s note is ironically the only one that does not discuss Rude, though there is no doubt he was highly aware of it, particularly because he had studied in Paris at the École.
central figure’s left looks to him expectantly, as does the soldier to the right of the central figure in Rude’s sculpture (Figure 7, 23). The warriors also suffer; in Rude’s piece one figure stumbles forward to a seeming doom, while MacNeil is far more unsparing about the violence of war, showing soldiers who seem to be in horrible pain in the lower left of the sailors’ side and to the right of the central figure on the soldiers’ side (Figure 6, 7). The mix of powerful emotions adds to the romance of the works, while suggesting adversity which accentuates the sublimity of the warriors’ perseverance and triumph through suffering and uncertainty. The composition of Soldiers and Sailors embodies the passion within the “passionate and consensual understanding of nationhood,” and while it is not a physical embodiment of a national anthem like Le Départ is, it certainly carries a similar valence.  

As it happened, MacNeil’s depiction of sublime national victory came off the heels of a moment of national triumph far more recent than the Civil War. The Art Jury, which was composed partly of genuine titans in the art world and genuine masters of their craft such as Paul Cret and Hugh Breckenridge, deemed MacNeil’s design to be so appropriate that they approved it even as the mayor was attempting to divert funds away from the project. To understand why they took such a measure, it helps to understand how the Great War would have made nationalistic sentiments resonate strongly. World War I rapidly turned the US into a military, industrial, and even spiritual leader in the Euro-American world, with Woodrow Wilson acquiring a status of international celebrity, receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, and being greeted all throughout Europe as a mythic hero after the war. The United States’ military power expanded from a middling force by European standards to possibly

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113 Doss 20.
114 Lewis, “Eleventh Annual Report,” 6. Mayor Moore’s attempts to reallocate the $250,000 designated for the monument to Victory Hall was likely successful, considering that the Victory Hall plan was widely seen as displacing the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial—Moore was eventually able to raise 8.5 million in funds, and more likely than not the 250,000 was in that pool.
the world’s most fearsome. 115 Philadelphia was one of the foremost cities in the nation at supporting the patriotic cause: the Liberty Loan campaign, which sought out war bonds, was oversubscribed in the city. 116

MacNeil’s comparisons to such lofty works of triumphal art as the Arc de Triomphe and Parthenon may strike one as absurd today, but the national climate of the Great War perfectly lent itself to such hyperbole. Aided by Wilsonian propaganda machinery, the nation enjoyed both the economic spoils of war and an elevation to cultural prestige as a “biblical city on a hill.” “We saved the world,” Wilson remarked near the end of the war, “and I do not intend to let those Europeans forget it.” 117 As the United States ascended to the peak of the World’s stage, it was likely with the realization that with a Europe decimated by war, the moment was near-perfect to draw a commemorative line between the United States and the previous great democracies of history—something which the Art Jury and Mayor Smith likely realized as they revived the monument concept during the War years.

It is through the lucid emotionality of the high bas-relief figures that MacNeil most vividly conveys the enthusiastic nationalistic sentiments which emerged out of the United States’ ascendancy following World War I. Returning to the central figure on the sailors’ side, his individual features help illustrate this point (Figure 7 and 26). Though time has worn away some of the details of the sailor’s face, one can still make out his hard-set eyes and his and the swirling locks of his beard, striking an image recalling Poseidon or Moses. His posture, with a forward lean of his left shoulder and an arm across his body ready to

115 Hoyng, “WWI and America’s Rise as a Superpower.” Germany had estimated the United States’ military capabilities prior to entry in WWI as “between Belgium and Portugal.” According to Hoyng this estimation “wasn’t incorrect, but it failed to account for the speed with which the rising industrial power could unleash additional forces.”
116 Downs, “World War One.”
move into action, emphasizes dynamism and movement, a tide rolling forward. Like the central figure of *Le Départ*, he stands front and center, leading the suffering and uncertain ensemble around him to a certain victory. Like *Le Départ*, his triumph is the nation’s triumph: he represents no distinct individual, but the essence of a nation at its spiritual peak.

**All of the heroes of the war were Americans: Reconciliation, Representation, and Gettysburg**

A peculiar tension of *Soldiers and Sailors* is that while the base on the sailors side commemorates the Union cause (Figure 27), no other element of the monument explicitly locates the figures as Union soldiers. The significant pushback from Union veterans on the previous iterations of the monument likely pressured MacNeil to inject a certain degree of Unionist sympathy into the work which was absent from Lord and Hewlett’s designs, most explicitly seen in this inscription. Much like how MacNeil was able to please both Ayer and French with his earlier work, *Soldiers and Sailors* could placate Union sympathies while ultimately upholding the same basic reconciliatory narratives of Lord and Hewlett’s designs and much monumental work of the era. Indeed, MacNeil would go on to create *The Confederate Defenders of Charleston* (Figure 28) in 1936—clearly the artist was lacking in sectional sympathies himself, and nothing about this ostensibly Unionist monument made the commissioners in Charleston shy away from recruiting him to commemorate the other side.

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118 The ‘One Nation, One Constitution, One Destiny’ inscription and the quote from Lincoln perhaps do this implicitly. The Lincoln quote is discussed farther down, while the former is likely drawn from a Daniel Webster 1837 speech in which he declares “One Country, One Constitution, One Destiny” to agitate against southern secessionism. Perhaps this pleased the Union veterans who would have remembered the original context of such a statement, but 50 years after the war it simply comes across as a paean to patriotism. Indeed, Webster supported the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act as part of the Compromise of 1850—his words against secession could be reinterpreted as an argument against northern sectionalism after the end of the war.
As Katherine Poole-Jones writes, reconciliatory monuments told "a Civil War history that is one of shared sacrifice, bravery, and patriotic devotion on both sides of the conflict." Likewise, *Soldiers and Sailors* aims to collapse the fundamental Union-Confederacy conflict of the Civil War into one where the *entire* nation banished darkness from its soul. This is achieved partly through the nationalistic imagery and portrayals of heroic soldiers as described above—martial valor was the virtue the two sections could most easily share in, and American symbols like bald eagles help communicate the sense that these men are more American than Union soldiers. Just as important however is the question of representation—the issue of who is and is not present in the story MacNeil is telling.

Unionist monument of the era usually relied on representation to convey their messages. The form lacked the sorts of allegorical motifs that Lost Cause monuments relied on, and the lack of polychromy in American sculpture meant that the artist could not decorate their subject in Union bluecoats or a similar distinguishing feature. For example, if one were unaware that Augustus Saint-Gaudens’ *Sherman* monument in New York City (Figure 29) represented General Sherman it may not be clear if there is any Unionist meaning to the sculpture. However, the knowledge that it *is* Sherman, a primary Yankee villain for many white Southerners, who is the subject of Saint-Gaudens’ heroic gilded piece, the Unionist sympathies of the work become clear. If one disagrees with this analysis and reads *Soldiers and Sailors* as a Unionist work, then MacNeil’s choice to portray anonymous soldiers constitutes an artistic sacrifice, as it leaves him with less tools to communicate a Unionist message. In a reading of the monument as a reconciliationist work however, it becomes an asset for the very same reason. There is however one explicitly Unionist form of

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119 Poole-Jones, "Historical Memory."
120 For more on the allegorical motifs of Lost Cause monuments, see Cox, 49-72.
representation which was still available to MacNeil at the time, which was the portrayal of Black soldiers. MacNeil’s choice not to do so is critical to understanding the work, but before this issue is more fully explored it is important to note how Civil War commemoration of the period laid the groundwork for MacNeil’s erasure of sectional conflict.

MacNeil’s design was in large part a reiteration of the ideals expressed in the past decade of the reconciliation process. The early part of the 1910s featured a series of nationwide Civil War semicentennial commemorations which may have contributed to the attempt on the part of city officials to revive the monument from 1910-15. The events were characterized by the same sort of doublethink found in MacNeil’s monument: the Civil War, despite being at the time a bitter and horribly violent conflict, was reimagined as a moment of shared national valor. The New York Times declared in 1911 that “All of the heroes of the [Civil War] were Americans,” meaning that any sectional distinctions were less important than the Americanness of all soldiers involved.121 Prima facie it may seem ridiculous to suggest that MacNeil was depicting war, which is conflict by definition, in a way that negated conflict, but prestigious authorities in the country were stating this idea outright. Perhaps the most auspicious reunion event was one which both MacNeil and Philadelphia at large would have certainly been aware of, one which Nicholson himself presided over as the Chairman of the Gettysburg National Park Commission.122 This was the 1913 reunion at Gettysburg, where officers from both sides of the conflict spoke of the glory of “one common Flag,” a sectional peace “which shall never recede while Americans love liberty and the Union.” Historian D. Scott Hartwig describes the spirit of the event as a celebration of “sublime American courage in which both North and South could share.”123 The clearest

121 Blight 381-3. Quoted in Blight 381.
122 “John Page Nicholson.”
articulation of this ideal came from Woodrow Wilson, who declared that the veterans came together as

Enemies no longer, generous friends rather, our battles long past, the quarrel forgotten – except that we shall not forget the splendid valor, the manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another, now grasping hands and smiling into each other’s eyes.\footnote{Quoted in Hartwig 48.}

If the doublethink necessary to both celebrate both the unity of the nation and the Confederate cause which sought to rip it asunder at once seems difficult to express artistically, MacNeil had the good fortune of an intellectual groundwork already well-laid.

\section*{A Bundle of Silences\textemdash the Missing Elements of Race in the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial}

The spirit of the Gettysburg reunion-- which David Blight described as “a national ritual in which the ghost of slavery[...] might be exorcised once and for all,” where “an epic conflict among whites [was] elevated into national mythology” -- finds sculptural expression in MacNeil’s work.\footnote{Blight 390.} His arresting, swirling bas-relief compositions set against the stark marble of the pylons creates an enthusiastic scene, enhanced by the strident, dramatic postures of the figures such as the drummer on the lower left or the dying man on the lower right of the soldiers’ side (Figures 30, 31). Set with horses, ropes, drums, the larger piece thrums with life (Figures 6, 7). The enthusiasm of the composition evokes the “sublime American courage” and “epic national conflict” which Hartwig and Blight discuss\textemdash in a modernist era the work was old-fashioned: pure, Rudian romanticism.\footnote{Hartwig 48. Blight 390.}
The romanticism conveys an epic conflict raised to the levels of national mythology, but what cannot be missed is that like the Gettysburg reunion, MacNeil imagines this conflict as existing solely between white men. What especially emphasizes the intentional nature of this choice is the fact that MacNeil believed that the two greatest war memorials in the country were the Shaw Memorial in Boston and the aforementioned Sherman Memorial in Manhattan, both by Augustus Saint-Gaudens.\textsuperscript{127} Both are, in their own way, works of sectional memory, but the Shaw Memorial (Figure 32) particularly stands out as a point of contrast with MacNeil’s work. Like MacNeil’s memorial the Shaw memorial is a high bas-relief which portrays war in a way that emphasizes movement and emotional lucidity--it was almost certainly an inspiration and a point of reference for MacNeil. Yet while both share a sense of epic conflict and national mythology, Saint-Gaudens’ monument differs from MacNeil in its inclusion of Black soldiers in the conflict, a choice which radically changes the meaning of the piece. It would inspire decades of poetry and literary tributes from Black intellectuals, such that Blight describes the monument as a ‘masterpiece’ of emancipationist memory.\textsuperscript{128} That MacNeil does not make the choice to include Black soldiers is crucial to indicating who exactly is included in the participation of the grand victory MacNeil celebrates.

1918, the year when the city appropriated $250,000 for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, would prove to be a troubled one for Philadelphia. These events, rather than obviating the notion of a triumphal monument, only made it more essential to create a totem to optimistic and patriotic spirits.\textsuperscript{129} As the first Great Migration increased the Black population in the city by nearly 60% in the 1910s, Black families began moving into white

\textsuperscript{127}MacNeil, “Typical Memorials,” 255.
\textsuperscript{128}Blight 344. Also see Savage’s analysis of Shaw in Standing Soldiers, 192-208.
\textsuperscript{129}“Councils to Act on Monument Bill.” Even the alternative proposal, Victory Hall, was by its very name an ode to triumph.
neighborhoods, creating tensions which culminated in the race riots of the summer of 1918. The chief instigating incident involved a white mob terrorizing the home of Adella Bond, a Black woman who had recently moved onto the largely white 2900 block of Ellsworth Street—the ensuing violence was usually instigated by white mobs, terrorizing Black families on the street and ransacking homes. The white mobs were usually abetted by law enforcement, as only about 3 white people were arrested during the course of the rioting, as opposed to about 60 Black people. A Black Methodist minister, William H. Wilson, wrote to the Mayor: “We put the entire blame on your incompetent police force.” This was not an isolated incident: Wilson also wrote to the Mayor that “Your police have for a long time winked at disorder, such as the beating up of negroes, stoning of their homes and the attacking of their churches.”\footnote{Vincent P. Franklin, “The Philadelphia Race Riot of 1918,” \textit{The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography} 99, no. 3 (July 1975): 336-350.} While \textit{Soldiers and Sailors} suggests that the issue of race had become insignificant at this time, actual events in the city told a very different story.

Later that year, the city would become a victim of its own fervent patriotism in the fall of 1918, when a Liberty Loan march attended by 200,000 people led to a devastating outbreak of Spanish Flu which filled the city’s hospitals and left 12,000 dead in six weeks. Due to segregation of hospitals, lack of access to healthcare for the city’s Black citizens exacerbated race relations in a city where the events of the summer earlier that year had already rendered them disastrous.\footnote{Meier, “The 1918 Parade That Spread Death in Philadelphia.”} As MacNeil drafted and completed his design for the \textit{Soldiers and Sailors} monument, the rise in racial violence in both city and nation were unmistakable: according to the Tuskegee Institute, lynchings of Black people in the US rose from 36 to 60 total from 1917 to 1918, and rose again to 76 in 1919.\footnote{“Lynchings by Year and Race,” University of Missouri-Kansas City Law School, University of Missouri-Kansas City, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/shipp/lynchingyear.html. Statistics provided by the Tuskegee Institute. Also see Charles Seguin and David Rigby, ”National Crimes: A New National Data Set of}
infamous Black Wall Street massacre in Tulsa, Oklahoma alone saw the murder of as many of 300 Black people by a white mob.\textsuperscript{133} As was the pattern for more than 50 years after the Civil War, Black citizens in the country were left out of the victory which the Soldiers and Sailors Monument exalts over. Perhaps this is because to even acknowledge the existence of Black people, much less their critical role in the Civil War, is to tacitly admit to the hollowness of this supposed victory.

In a video put together by the Association for Public Art, the Civil War historian Allen C. Guelzo muses, “Curiously enough, the issue which the war was fought over, slavery, is almost entirely absent.”\textsuperscript{134} Guelzo is echoing what has become almost a universal refrain among monument scholars: Civil War monuments largely ignore the history of slavery, because to acknowledge slavery would be to acknowledge that the South fought the war to protect the genocidal institution, which would undercut the project of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{135} The narrative is a bit too easy, with regards to this monument at least. This monument’s subject matter, taken at face value at least, is about honoring those who fought for the preservation of the Union in the Civil War. Perhaps it would have been a better or more honest monument if slavery had somehow been depicted explicitly, but such standards lack what art historians call period eye, analysis of a cultural text within the framework of its time. A


\textsuperscript{135} Poole-Jones for instance writes that the Lost Cause, which promoted a history in which “slavery was systematically erased as a cause of the conflict” is “preserved today... through the monuments that dot the landscape of both Southern and Northern states—even free states that abolished slavery decades before the Civil War.” This observation is valuable and often true, but as a universal principle about Civil War monuments it can risk missing the point in cases like Soldiers and Sailors, where slavery is a central part of the story.
historic monument is constrained by its form in conveying the complexities of the historic moment it portrays. For instance, Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Veterans Memorial does not depict the United States’ illegal entry into the war or the TET offensive. What Lin’s monument, MacNeil’s monument, and just about any historic monument worth the materials it was built out of attempt to do is simply point in the direction of a historic moment.

The presence, or lack thereof, of slavery in the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, may be a useful starting point, but as a main point of critique for Civil War monuments it cannot really address the larger ideas and themes at play. In fact, part of the story that the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial wishes to tell is that the abolition of slavery was crucial to larger national triumph. On the sailors’ side, an inscription reads “In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free” (Figure 23). There are two aspects of this inscription that are quite remarkable. For one, the inscription is in no way obscured or hidden: by placing it above the head of Nike slavery seems to be placed front and center in the composition. It is a central feature of the great victory that the noble men in the composition achieved. The other fascinating aspect is the choice of quote: taken from Abraham Lincoln’s 1862 State of the Union speech, given at a desperate time for the Union and as a result one of Lincoln’s most vehement oratories on the justness of the Union cause.136 The contrast between this quote and other Civil War monuments is striking: the Soldiers and Sailors monument in Yonkers, NY, designed by MacNeil’s mentor Lorado Taft, instead delivers a limp and passive statement of “slavery abolished.”137 Any such statement is entirely absent from either of Lord and Hewlett’s designs, and even MacNeil’s previous Albany Soldiers and Sailors

136 Abraham Lincoln, “State of the Union 1862,” December 1, 1862, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/abraham-lincoln/state-of-the-union-1862.php. The line is a slight misquote, though the meaning isn’t really altered; the correct quote is “In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free.”
137 Savage 180.
monument includes nothing of the sort. The profound implication of Lincoln's statement is that by ridding the nation of the pox of slavery, all of its citizens then become truly free.

Placed in a triumphal monument, MacNeil's implication here is unmistakable: the conflict of the Civil War created one of the great victories of American history, the one that has led to the nation's privileged status a half century later, was the abolition of slavery.

A somewhat plausible argument could then be made for the Soldiers and Sailors monument as an emancipationist work—the moment of triumph MacNeil is commemorating here is the end of slavery, and what Lincoln called the "new birth of freedom."  

This argument is in some ways true, but only in a superficial sense. Much like the humanized indigenous people in The Sun Vow, however much it may be a genuine expression of the artist's feelings, it also helps the work appeal to a more left-leaning audience, in this case Black Philadelphians and Union veterans. An emancipationist reading of the work would have to contend with contextual issues— for instance, if the monument is making a substantive argument for racial justice, why does it tell a triumphal story about the United States at a time when the sitting President had just a few years earlier fervently worked to racially segregate federal services? Such context points to the main question at hand—if abolition of slavery is the central national 'victory' of the work, how does that square with the modern reality of Jim Crow? More to the point, who exactly does the victory belong to in the story MacNeil is telling?

What lies beneath the humanizing surface of The Sun Vow is a vindication of the crimes of Manifest Destiny and a condescending hope that indigenous people may become

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138 A quote from the Gettysburg Address, meaning a country that can be truly free following the actualizing conflict of the Civil War. Scholars often use the concept to refer to the possibility that the nation retreated from following Reconstruction in favor of reconciliation among whites—see for instance Hartwig 47, 49.

139 Rothstein, 43.
white. In much the same fashion, when the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial celebrates the abolition of slavery, it is less about the emancipation of Black people than it is about the idea that abolition had solidified the notion of freedom for all in the young nation. The most telling absence in MacNeil’s composition is not slavery, but Black soldiers. If the story MacNeil wants to tell here is about the sublime courage and valor by which America conquered the demons of slavery, one could hardly find a better subject for wartime valor than black soldiers. Here were people who faced hatred and discrimination on their own side and unspeakable consequences if they were taken as prisoners of war by the Confederacy. They also fought for something more fundamental than their peers: as Savage writes: "unlike their white counterparts, black soldiers were fighting for the most elemental cause of all, the right simply to be treated as human beings." As was remarked earlier, the composition essentially collapses any distinctions between Union and Confederate soldiers; the most explicit choice that erases sectional conflict is a lack of Black soldiers in the monument.

If MacNeil’s story were intended to be about the sectional triumph of the Union, the presence of Black soldiers would distinguish the Union from the Confederacy in a powerful way with an undeniable ring of truth. Racial animus did exist in the Union army, but by putting nation over racial divisions, the Union beat back a likely Confederate victory by arming and empowering the very people whose lives the southern states had treated as property. It is important to recognize that the monument could have taken this tack, since it helps to emphasize the story it declined to tell to better understand the one that it did in

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140 As Barter writes: "Books like John R. Commons’s Races and Immigrants in America (New York, 1907) presented the argument that assimilation into Euro-American culture would produce physiognomic changes—that Indians would actually look more white as they adapted to white values. MacNeil subconsciously represented this trajectory in The Sun Vow.”


142 Savage x.
The exclusion of Black soldiers from the monument reveals that the triumph of the monument is one which belongs primarily to the white majority. The Shaw Memorial reminds the audience of the sacrifice Black soldiers made in the Civil War and invites the viewer to imagine a place for Black citizens in the new birth of freedom—the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, by removing Black soldiers from the picture, encourages its audience to forget the indignities faced by African-Americans across the nation and simply rejoice in the glories that its white citizens can enjoy following the nation’s postwar ascent. 143

Reexamined, the Lincoln quote, robbed of its context and defanged, reveals another meaning: the chief virtue of the abolition of slavery was not the freedom of Black people, but the fact that it guaranteed a more perfect union for the nation’s white citizens. Like Le Départ, the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial is about internal national triumph over the demons of its nature, monarchy for France, slavery for the United States. MacNeil’s design insists on portraying this victory as absolute, associating the nation’s current hegemony with the supposed exorcism of its demons in the Civil War. An emancipationist understanding of the Civil War would indeed recognize the victory of abolition—as celebrations like Juneteenth festivals did, but also emphasize that true freedom for Black citizens of America is far from realized. As the AME Bishop Revardy Ransom told a Boston crowd in 1905: “we would have the bitter memories of the war effaced, but they cannot fade while the spirit of slavery walks before the nation in a new guise.” 144 The effect of the Soldiers and Sailors monument by comparison is nearly identical to how Blight described the 1913 Gettysburg reunion—a “ritual in which the ghost of slavery, the very question of cause and consequence, might be exorcised once and for all.” 145

143 As Savage notes on page 167: “The figure of the black soldier, inextricably linked to the memory of slavery, became unrepresentable.”
144 Quoted in Blight 364-5.
145 Blight 390.
In 1919, WEB DuBois’ reflections on the experience in Black soldiers in World War I illustrated the real lived conditions of African Americans beyond sentimental notions of progress. For Black soldiers during the Great War, DuBois wrote, seeing the possibility of “real democracy” in France had brought into even shaper focus what DuBois described as a flat, frank realization that however high the ideals of America or however noble her tasks, her great duty as conceived by an astonishing number of able men, brave and good, as well as of other sorts of men, is to hate ‘niggers.’

The Soldiers and Sailors monument delivers high ideals and brave, good men, but carefully avoids the great evil behind them that DuBois articulates. It invites viewers to instead imagine that the abolition of slavery was a national achievement, one which vindicates the great status that America had achieved militarily, industrially, and culturally by the end of World War I. The forces which fought for the perpetuation of slavery and continue to perpetuate injustice in the early 20th century are nowhere to be seen, obscured under the illusion of triumph. The great white men of MacNeil’s image retell the story of Union victory as American victory, one where the abolition of slavery becomes neutralized as a sectional achievement and instead becomes an American one. Race is essentially reduced to a problem America solved, the end of slavery as another victory, with continuing problems ignored, or perhaps assumed to be passively fading, in the nation’s continued and inevitable strides towards progress and greatness. In his 1963 letter from Birmingham jail, Martin Luther King, Jr. described the “white moderate” as one “who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice.”

147 The airbrushing of slavery from the Confederate cause was a familiar one to Lost Cause propaganda—state sovereignty had been claimed as the Confederate cause, and antislavery views had been invented for Confederate figures like Robert E. Lee, see Savage 131 and Adam Serwer, “The Myth of the Kindly General Lee,” The Atlantic [online], June 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/06/the-myth-of-the-kindly-general-lee/529038/. This myth was repeated during the Progressive Era by liberal and progressive newspapers, see Blight 381-3, 387-9.
*Soldiers and Sailors Memorial*, negative peace prevails and positive peace is shunted aside in favor of a soothing, congratulatory narrative for a hegemonic nation.

There is something quintessentially American about the notion that history is a march towards ever-increasing progress; that though there are horrors in the past and even perhaps in the present, it is all part of a larger act of becoming in which the United States will eventually realize the ideal version of itself set out by its founding principles. This ideal can even be traced back to founding figures like Thomas Jefferson, who hoped that the eventual glory of the democratic experiment would provide justification for the sins of the nation’s founding.149 James Baldwin, writing in 1949, found this notion, though well-intentioned, ultimately limiting and regressive:

> Our good will, from which we yet expect such power to transform us, is thin, passionless, strident: its roots, examined, lead us back to our forebears, whose assumption it was that the black man, to become truly human and acceptable, must first become like us.150

At the turn of the century, the same year in which the *Soldiers and Sailors Memorial* was originally commissioned, the 1900 Paris Exposition displayed two acclaimed American works: MacNeil’s *The Sun Vow* and Frances Benjamin Johnston’s *The Hampton Album*, a series of photographs depicting a school for Black youths. Johnston’s work echoed MacNeil’s *Sun Vow* in the mix of poignancy and sentiment it draws from the viewer in its portrayal of subjects of the ethnic underclass in the US and its validation of American greatness. One of Johnston’s photographs positioned students next to images of George Washington to evoke a sense of racially transcendent greatness, and like *The Sun Vow* played with a rhetoric of

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Fundamental ambivalence about the role of slavery and theft of land from indigenous nations characterized the nation’s founding generally, but Jefferson as a figure who always maintained that slavery was evil while being an overt white supremacist and a monstrous enslaver is a particularly keen example of this ambivalence. It should be specified that Jefferson’s vision for America was not necessarily triumphal; he did not see the nation’s greatness as inevitable, and in fact had grave fears that slavery would prove to destroy the great experiment in democracy. Yet Jefferson was nonetheless one of the leading champions of the new nation and its grand experiment, blights and all.

passage of time (Figure 33). Both works received acclaim at the Paris Exposition and were celebrated by critics for their poignancy in a portrayal of a romantic and primitive past giving way to a brave assimilated future.\(^{151}\) Twenty-one years later neither of these romantic images reached much fruition, but that did not stop MacNeil’s design from declaring victory for an entire nation for its defeat of its own demons. If problems still exist with regard to race, the audience can simply think of the nation’s singular destiny and see the spirit of determination in the posture and faces of the sailor in figure 26 and the drummer in figure 31, knowing that the inevitable destiny of the nation is progress and victory—all of these problems will be solved in due time. If there is one lesson that MacNeil’s monument offers today, it is that such ‘good will,’ which assumes the end of injustice through some invisible hand of divine providence, will only ensure that nothing is truly solved.

**Conclusion- The Present and Future of Historic Monuments**

The components of the above analysis have sought to create an overall picture of how Hermon A. MacNeil’s *Soldiers and Sailors* monument celebrates a glorious vision of

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\(^{151}\) A. Laura Wexler, “Black and White and Color: The Hampton Album,” in *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*, ed. Alan Trachtenburg, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 131-34. Barter ??: Exhibited in the “Contemporary American Negro Life” exhibit, the Hampton album won the Grand Prix at the Exposition, while the Sun Vow won a silver medal. The sentimental nature of these works were understood by critics. One wrote of the Hampton Album that the photos “radiate such innocence and good hope that they make me want to cry”; Lorado Taft responded to The Sun Vow by commenting on “the old man’s earnest squinting” and the youth: “[his pose], savage though he be, has in it something very winning.” Both comments betray an air of condescension (and overt racism on Taft’s part) towards the subjects but also a particular, even deep, sympathy with the subjects activated by sentimentality. Were it more pertinent to this thesis much more could be made out of the parallels between The Sun Vow and the Hampton album; Wexler notes a comment from Hampton’s journal on the album that nearly echoes MacNeil’s remarks: “It is part of the plan of the exhibit to contrast the new life among the Negroes and Indians with the old, and then show how Hampton has helped to produce change.” Wexler’s brilliant analysis of the Hampton Album is highly recommended and well worth reading; many of her conclusions closely resemble the ones made in this thesis, particularly in the way that Wexler balances a recognition for the high degree of skill and aesthetic power behind the photographs with the fundamental lie they tell. “What a photograph represents is a solution to a clash of forces that we must learn to see,” Wexler writes. If “photograph” were replaced with “monument,” it would express the general thrust of this thesis beautifully. It also demonstrates the general argument in this thesis that monuments are not so different from other works of art, aside from their especially public nature.
American virtuousness and heroism by framing the conflict of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery as a moment when the nation truly emerged as its ideal self, worthy of the heroic status afforded to it after World War I. The monument’s form manifested this meaning in a few key ways. Firstly, it achieved this as part of a larger designed landscape along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, in which it operated as a frame for the great canvas of civilization of a modern boulevard leading to the Philadelphian Acropolis. Sacrificing local tastes and priorities for a more transcontinental language of form, its role in the larger designed space established its priorities—not to serve as an emblem of memory among local groups such as Union veterans, but to present a national story of progress.

Secondly, understanding how Hermon Atkins MacNeil’s career, particularly through his portrayals of indigenous people, was characterized by a certain practiced ignorance towards the United States’ crimes in the project of Manifest Destiny helps to contextualize the point of view of the monument’s artist. MacNeil portrays the reduced, dying state of the indigenous tribes as a result of a pre-arranged destiny, where specific decisions by individual actors do not factor. In Soldier and Sailors MacNeil replicates this with a practiced ignorance toward the bitter conflicts that characterized the Civil War, instead neutralizing it as an event where divine forces, as represented by Greek goddesses, presided over the young nation’s destiny to cleanse itself of sin.

Thirdly, the monument’s similarities with the Arc de Triomphe, particularly Francoise Rude’s Le Départ relief, help to illustrate how MacNeil sought to emulate Rude in portraying a moment where a nation divided amongst itself forged its true identity in a romantic display of martial valor. Patriotic imagery such as bald eagles help to illustrate this sense of national identity. This sort of exuberant display of nationalism is best understood as a response to the United States’ socially and politically hegemonic position following World War I. At a time when America was developing both in Europe and in its own borders
a reputation as a biblical city on a hill, the time was perfect to demonstrate how the sublime moment of the Civil War forged the nation’s victorious and virtuous identity.

Finally, the monument participates in a reconciliatory impulse to erase distinctions between Union and Confederate soldiers and causes, characterizing the war as a grand display of valor by white soldiers on both sides which created the great nation of the early 20th century. The lack of Black soldiers in the work is indicative of the missing piece of race in this triumphal story—the state of race in both the local context of Philadelphia and America at large was quite grim, and MacNeil’s practiced ignorance towards a reality that permeated American politics and culture shows who is left out of the United States’ grand triumphal moment. While it is important to distinguish ignorance and neglect from overt racism, Black intellectuals such as WEB DuBois and Martin Luther King Jr. have noted how pernicious a culture of white ignorance and ‘negative peace’ can be.

This study has sought to investigate this relic of statue mania in a way that applies not just narrowly to the specific case at hand, but to demonstrate how the forces of urban planning, art, and history create a complex web of meaning in a monument. The monuments worthy of our attention are not simply those which excite controversy, but those which float just outside of our contemporary understanding, so rooted in an earlier time that to understand an object is to understand a slice of the era it emerged from. Controversies around monuments often jump to the issue of management—whether the monument stays or goes—before having a robust discussion about interpretation, and this study in its own small way hopes to ameliorate that. However, it should be noted that getting so caught up in interpretation that management is barely broached is both undesirable and unrealistic. It is undesirable because too many people have had to live with the pain of monuments that celebrate violence and atrocities wrought upon their communities for too long, and to expect nothing but patience and magnanimity from them is to expect negative peace. It is
unrealistic because management is first and foremost among minds currently, be it civic officials, editorialists, or people in general. The personal experience of this author, and probably the reader as well, can attest that any discussion that arrives at monuments will certainly move towards the question of removal. This study then will conclude with an attempt to address the management of monuments, both forgotten and controversial, by suggesting that much of the solution relies on a greater degree of public advocacy and participation.

During the boom of statue mania, monument unveilings could number in the tens of thousands, with cities even sometimes declaring holidays for the occasions.152 If such an occasion existed for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial when it was finally unveiled in 1928, there was little to no reporting on it—the first public reveal of the monument was apparently an accident, as fierce winter winds blew away the tarp coverings and gave an early look at the high bas-relief sculptures. Snapshots were published in the Inquirer, and any future mystery or excitement around the memorial perhaps dissipated.153 The obsolescence of the monument would only continue thereon.

In 1917, just a year before he was commissioned to design the Soldiers and Sailors monument, in an essay for The American Magazine of Art MacNeil fretted about the present and future of public monuments in a way that now comes across as prescient:

Today in American sculpture we have a very curious condition. We have a constant demand for and desire to erect public monuments, but this does not seem to be so much the outgrowth of a native taste and instinct for beauty in our common everyday possessions and surroundings as we would wish … Even after monuments are erected and the ceremonies [are] over, it is difficult to tell whether people

152 For instance Poole-Jones in “Historical Memory” writes that the unveiling ceremony for a monument to politician Frank Blair in 1885 led the Mayor to declare a citywide holiday; with papers reporting attendance of 15,000 people.

153 “Sculptural Group Unveiled by Winter Winds,” Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA), March 6, 1927, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
venerate or shun them. It is no uncommon sight to see them year after year grow thicker and thicker with dust and dirt. MacNeil here foretells the fate of his own design in Philadelphia. Today, those fears have proven true for Soldiers and Sailors. In the video by the Association for Public Art, Alan Greenberger describes an instance where he was struck by the monument, reading the inscription “one nation, one constitution, one destiny” for the first time in 35 years of living in the city. Greenberger is a professional architect and the chair of the current Philadelphia Art Commission— if it took him 35 years to register a basic detail of the monument, the outlook for the monument’s general public visibility is not rosy. During the protests of the summer of 2020 following the murder of George Floyd, protesters used the Art Museum steps, the Octavius Catto monument, and the Frank Rizzo monument as rallying points, but entirely ignored MacNeil’s sculpture. Even if one is not inclined to feel sentimental about public art, the practically minded should consider that the city at one point spent about $4 million in today’s money on two 40-foot-tall marble pylons, which seem to have almost no purchase on public memory or imagination today.

One oft-repeated observation about monument takedowns is that rather than amounting to an erasure of history, the takedowns were often teachable moments, windows into a toxic heritage of white supremacy that had been vaunted for decades across the nation. It is likely that there is truth to these comments, though that may also speak to a total paucity of interpretative work done around urban monuments. Indeed, when one

155 Mitchell, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors. Anecdotally, talking to friends and professors alike, just about everyone either had never really noticed or registered the monument, or had never noticed it until research drew their attention to it. This was true of myself until I started studying Philadelphia’s monuments.
157 Figure arrived at by converting 250,000 from the year 1927 in “Inflation Calculator,” CPI Inflation Calculator, accessed June 2021, https://www.in2013dollars.com/.
hears the common complaint that monument takedowns amount to an erasure of history, such complaints are rarely, if ever, accompanied by proposals for robust methods to work with and interpret the dark stories behind the supposed heroes celebrated in sculptures dedicated to Columbus or perpetrators of white supremacy.\textsuperscript{159} Despite what may be learned from a monument removal, what is sacrificed permanently is a chance for the monument to ever serve as a lesson about the historic period and ideas which shaped it, as well as the histories the monument consciously ignored and obviated, for future generations.\textsuperscript{160}

Such sacrifices are often necessary: no guided tour or interpretive placard can remove decades, sometimes even centuries, of pain and trauma associated with grand monuments to Junipero Serra or the White League of New Orleans, and the simplest solution of removing the source of that pain may very well be the best one.\textsuperscript{161} For each monument that brings public debate however there are at least ten more like the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial which invite little more than indifference, but which offer a window

\textsuperscript{159}A couple of the plethora of such op-eds include Richard Greene, "Knee-jerk Reactions on Monuments and Memorials May Miss the Lessons of History," \textit{Fort Worth Star-Telegram} (online), June 2020, https://www.star-telegram.com/opinion/richard-greene/article243630512.html and Sophia Nelson, "Opinion: Don’t Take Down Confederate Monuments: Here’s Why," NBC News (online), June 2017, https://www.nbcnews.com/think/news/opinion-why-i-feel-confederate-monuments-should-stay-ncna767221. Like most installments in this genre, these op-eds spend energy on vague notions of how we must "face history" without any real consideration for how they intend to interpret and reckon with this history if indeed the monuments do stay up. Meanwhile, historic plantations like Monticello and Montpelier are actually seeking to undertake this work of preserving monuments to enslavers while substantively exploring the complexities of the people who Jefferson and Madison treated as property, and for it have received blowback from visitors who, as it happens, do not actually want an honest account of history. See Hannah Knowles, "As Plantations Talk More Honestly About Slavery, Some Visitors are Pushing Back," \textit{Washington Post} (online), November 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/09/08/plantations-are-talking-more-about-slavery-grappling-with-visitors-who-talk-back/.

\textsuperscript{160}Unless some sort of commemorative device is erected in place of the monument which was once there.

\textsuperscript{161}Serra was an 18th century Franciscan priest who oversaw the violent subjugation of indigenous people in California—today monuments to him dot California’s parks and cities. One of the most notable examples was a statue in Golden Gate Park which protesters removed in the summer of 2020. Morning Star Gali, project director of the organization Restoring Justice for Indigenous People, called statues of Serra "monuments to genocide." Carly Severn, “How Do We Heal?’ Toppling the Myth of Junipero Serra,” \textit{KQED} (online), NPR, July 2020, https://www.kqed.org/news/11826151/how-do-we-heal-toppling-the-myth-of-junipero-serra. In 2015, a monument to white supremacist paramilitary groups called the White League was taken down in New Orleans. Robert Greene II, "It's Time For New Monuments," \textit{Current Affairs} (online), June 2020, https://www.currentaffairs.org/2020/06/its-time-for-new-monuments.
into the past if examined closely. As works of art they are designed to excite people with their craft—the close association with the Arc de Triomphe alone can attract an audience that may otherwise be entirely bored by dry texts or lectures about monuments and reconciliation. Monuments also have the draw of historic objects, palpable remnants of history much like museum artifacts, except they are not hidden behind glass panes and they don't require paid admission. The Soldiers and Sailors pylons that stand on the Parkway today are the same ones which greeted soldiers arriving home after World War II, the same pylons which Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X likely passed when they visited the city, the same monument which thousands gathered around to see Pope John Paul II deliver mass in Logan Square in 1979.\textsuperscript{162} Through this power the monument can be used as a lesson in the 1918 riots, sectional reconciliation following Reconstruction, the City Beautiful Movement, and topics that extend beyond even the scope of this thesis. Instead of a sunk cost, the monument can become both an attraction in the city and a lesson in history, always free and accessible to the public.

The goal of public engagement is a noble and generally uncontroversial one, but it is not a silver bullet for the issues created by monuments in cities, which the summer of 2020 proved to be quite real and pressing. Cities all over the nation are commissioning review processes for their monuments, which indicates that they are in fear of not just the monuments that have caused controversy in the past, but also monuments that could excite outrage in the future.\textsuperscript{163} The long-overdue recognition of this reckoning is that monuments


\textsuperscript{163} One of the most visible of these review processes is one currently being conducted in Chicago as of time of writing; see Leah Hope, “41 Chicago Monuments Under Review for Possible Removal; City Launches Website
have always been objects of ideology within designed spaces, not just passive features of civic beautification. Unexamined monuments can be something of a ticking time bomb.

During the George Floyd protests of 2020, a Columbus monument led to violence between left and right-wing demonstrators in Marconi Plaza. Just across the street from Columbus is a monument to Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian physicist and long-tenured member of the Italian Fascist Party. As head of the Academy of Italy under Mussolini, Marconi worked to prevent any Jewish person from entering the Academy. For now, the Marconi monument has not caused any issues, but Columbus was once considered uncontroversial as well.

There is no guarantee that the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, with its central location in Logan Square and outdated conceptions about the history of the Civil War will be forever overlooked either—even the Shaw Memorial has caused trouble in Boston. Raising awareness around the history of these monuments and honest presentation of their ideologies as situated in the eras in which they were created will help cities to work through the tensions that monuments create. What soft solutions like public discussions or

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166 Cathaleen Chen, “Columbus Day: How Did Christopher Columbus Become so Controversial?” Christian Science Monitor (online), October 2015, https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2015/1011/Columbus-Day-How-did-Christopher-Columbus-become-so-controversial. Challenges to the heroic narrative probably began to gain more currency around the late 20th century, with publications like Howard Zinn’s The People’s History of the United States in 1980 bringing Columbus’ violence and brutality to the public record. As historian William Fowler told NPR, the heroic narrative of Columbus was the hegemonic one for hundreds of years.

167 Philip Marcelo, “Boston Black Soldiers Monument Faces Scrutiny Amid Racial Reckoning,” WBUR (online), NPR, July 2020, https://www.wbur.org/news/2020/07/27/robert-gould-shaw-massachusetts-54th-regiment-restoration-controversy. The Shaw Memorial has been vandalized multiple times in the past decade; though this thesis has largely accepted Blight and Savage’s positive interpretations of the monument, the vandalism should not be dismissed as simple delinquency. As Boston artist L’Merchie Frazier notes: “The hierarchy is very evident. White commander out front; Black soldiers in the background. It’s the first thing you see.” It is no new insight that art which may have been progressive, even radical, at its time can become regressive as standards shift. Indeed, this is one of the issues with monuments cities have not really begun to reckon with. Most would not expect a well-meaning film about race, by comparison, to hold up to current standards—it would be as if Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner were constantly broadcast into the sky in a public square. Even when that film was released in 1967, Shaw was already about 70 years old.
investigatory commissions cannot do, however, is correct for the power imbalances that led to the original creation of monuments and civic inaction when groups raise concerns about offensive monuments. Martin Luther King famously remarked that riots are the “language of the unheard”; likewise, iconoclasm is usually a measure people are forced to take when they have no other means of being of having a voice in a city’s commemorative landscape.168

Like the City Beautiful planning style which they arose out of, statue mania era monuments were undemocratic phenomena. As planning historian Robert Beauregard argues, the progressive-era assumption of acting in the public interest allowed planners to “skirt the ideological issue of the compatibility of planning and democracy.”169 No one voted on members of the Philadelphia Art Jury, the Comprehensive Plans Committee, or even the very concept of the Soldiers and Sailors monument.170 Kirk Savage’s observation that monuments are the product of “those people in society who happen to have the power to erect them” is a natural outgrowth of the fact that monuments have rarely, if ever, had any democratic inputs around their commission and placement process.171 As a result, no interpretive decision can negate the fact that for most monuments in any given town or city, most people did not ask for them and do not necessarily want or care about them. The designers of the City Beautiful spaces, despite their flaws, did genuinely hope that their spaces could be the domain of the public.172 Events like the protests of the summer of 2020 and the occupied protest zone on the Parkway show that Mumford’s belief that these spaces

168 King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”
170 “Philadelphia Art Commission--Regulations,” City of Philadelphia, accessed June 2021, https://www.phila.gov/departments/philadelphia-art-commission/regulations/. Section 3-910 of the Home Rule Charter reads “The Art Commission shall be composed of eight appointed members and the Commissioner of Public Property.” In fact, if any popular mandate can be tied to the monument, it is when the public essentially voted against it by approving Mayor Moore’s 8.5 million expenditure, see Zurier 54.
171 Savage ix.
172 See Burnham and Bennett 8, where they argue that their improvements will serve to benefit everyone from “the wage earner” to “people of means and taste.” Despite the implicit classism, an honest evaluation of City Beautiful Movement ought to recognize its genuine desire to create public lands and space.
are designed solely for the privileged fails to account for the dynamic potential of these spaces. Monuments are, at least in theory, public objects, designed for the sake and edification of the city’s people. Yet for the democratic potential of monuments to be achieved, the public should also have a degree of agency over monuments— it is far past time for cities to outgrow the paternalism of Burnham and planners like him who believed that monuments ought to shape rather than reflect public spirit. The ideal of monuments as public objects, totems of the memory and spirit of a city’s people, is one which most would agree is noble, but it cannot be truly achieved until democratic mechanisms with substantive legal force provides the public with genuine agency. Monuments with public commissions should not just be for its people, they should also belong to its people.

It is quite beyond the scope of this thesis to detail a public policy initiative which would achieve this aim, though such a topic would be a worthy subject for further study. In any case, such a measure would be best determined not by one individual writing a thesis, but through a participative process involving activists and artists working at grassroots levels. A terrific starting point is the artist Ada Pinkston’s work with Monument Lab— Pinkston imagines a monument design which would be collectively determined and voted on not just once, but every two years as attitudes change. Such a project would serve the crucial purpose of introducing the concept of monuments as a democratic phenomena,

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173 See Cunningham, “Peaceful Protests” and Mumford 146. Having attended one of these protests myself, I can attest how valuable the wide avenues of the Parkway and the plazas at the Art Museum were as spaces for public gathering—the effect of being among a massive crowd in these spaces was greatly diminished once the protest proceeded to the more narrow and densely arranged spaces of Old City and Center City. The protest zone is an even more direct example of this—a truly public use of park space along that the city otherwise has struggled to find a good use for. See Ellie Rushing, "Philadelphians Experiencing Homelessness Build Protest Encampment on Ben Franklin Parkway: ’We all Matter,’” Philadelphia Inquirer [online], June 2020, https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia/philadelphia-protest-encampment-ben-franklin-parkway-tents-20200612.html.

which at the time of writing is so foreign that it probably would not even register as a possibility for most.

An inequitable commemorative landscape can be addressed not just with removal of offensive monuments, but also with new monuments that address such inequities. Claflin University history professor Robert Greene II makes just this argument in his op-ed “It’s Time for New Monuments.” New monuments, Greene argues, would help to “balance the narrative” between those who resisted white supremacy in the south and those who upheld it. This has implications for the future: as Greene argues, “an understanding of the past that centers movements of revolution and change pushes Americans in the here and now to consider what they can do to make a difference.”

Greene’s ideas apply in equal measure in the north—the undemocratic process of monument building has left Philadelphia with only four monuments to historical figures who are not white and male. A public, truly democratic process would create space for agitation for monuments that resist the cozy lessons of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, works of art which can begin to imagine a landscape in which the rich tapestry of history is represented in full rather than in selective pieces.

175 Greene II, “It’s Time For New Monuments.”
Bibliography


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