The Boston Common, also known as the Common, is a “50-acre” public park set right in the heart of Downtown Boston. Established in 1634, it is the oldest national park in the United States and has “played an important role in the history of conservation, landscape architecture, military and political history, and recreation in Massachusetts.” In recent years, the Boston Common has been a center for protests and movements including Black Live Matter and the 2017 Women’s March. This vast public green space is also home to many significant historical monuments and memorials including the Founders Memorial, Shaw Memorial Elms, Charles Sumner Statue, and the focus of today’s video, the Soldiers and Sailors Monument.

The Soldiers and Sailors monument is located at 139 Tremont Street and sits on a “small rise” of the Boston Common known as Flagstaff Hill, for the large flagstaff placed there in 1837. The monument was erected to honor the memory of the many soldiers and sailors who lost their lives in the American Civil War. It was created by Irish sculptor Martin Milmore, took six years to commission and was dedicated on the 15th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1877 in front of a crowd of 25,000 people. The towering structure is 126 feet in height with a climbable base in addition to a 38 square foot platform boasting four bas-relief bronze tablets, five bronze statues, and smaller marble statues throughout the main column. The monument boasts a neoclassical design via its prominent column and bronze statues among other elements that pay homage to the works of the Classical Era of Ancient Greece and Rome. The monument also takes the form of “a [Roman] victory column, also known as a monumental column or triumphal column, which “is a monument in the form of a column, erected in memory of a victorious battle, war, or revolution. The column typically stands on a base and is crowned.

3 “Boston Common”, City of Boston.
4 “Boston Common”, National Parks Service.
7 Ibid.
9 “Boston”, Massachusetts Civil War Monuments Project.
with a victory symbol, such as a statue\textsuperscript{10}, Victory columns in the U.S. tend to represent the “female embodiment the nation Liberty or Columbia”\textsuperscript{11}, an eagle or a war hero\textsuperscript{12}. The Soldiers and Sailors monument here in Boston boasts both “female embodiments of the nation Liberty” and eagles but intentionally lacks the specific memorialization of a war hero. This strikingly juxtaposes Confederate Civil War statues as many serve to make the memories eternal to many prominent war generals and heroes like Robert E. Lee. This monument, on the other hand, serves to honor the everyday civilians and sailors, turned soldiers and sailors implying all who fought, and unfortunately lost their lives, to be war heroes and eternally memorialized to this day.

The monument’s dedication furthers this fundamental, honorable, and inspiring stark difference to other Civil War monuments. The dedication written by Charles William Eliot, president of Harvard College proudly states:

\begin{quote}
\textit{TO THE MEN OF BOSTON}
\textit{WHO DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY}
\textit{ON LAND AND SEA}
\textit{IN THE WAR WHICH KEPT THE UNION WHOLE}
\textit{DESTROYED SLAVERY}
\textit{AND MAINTAINED THE CONSTITUTION}
\textit{THE GRATITUDE CITY HAS BUILT THIS MONUMENT}
\textit{THAT THEIR EXAMPLE MAY SPEAK}
\textit{TO COMING GENERATIONS}\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

This nationalistic pride-invoking inscription states that the monument is for the common man, “the men who volunteered, fought, and died to keep the Union whole”\textsuperscript{14} rather than failed and fallen war generals, officials, or high-ranking members of society\textsuperscript{15}. A majority of a group is memorialized for once making the impact and implications of the monument that much more meaningful, inspiring, and beautiful. In fact, the few influential people mentioned in the bas-reliefs are easily overshadowed and overlooked as a result of the sheer size of the monument as a whole in addition to the large allegorical statues throughout\textsuperscript{16}.

The bronze allegorical female figure “surmounting the Doric column”\textsuperscript{17} of the monument stands at eleven feet is entitled “America”\textsuperscript{18}. She is facing south\textsuperscript{19} and is wearing a crown composed of 13 stars that ultimately represented, the thirteen colonies \textit{united} into thirteen states once again under the still-upholding U.S. Constitution. She is also holding an American flag in

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{11} Ibid.
\bibitem{12} Ibid.
\bibitem{13} Ibid.
\bibitem{14} Ibid.
\bibitem{15} Ibid.
\bibitem{16} Ibid.
\bibitem{18} Ibid.
\bibitem{19} Aline Kaplan, “Boston’s Soldiers and Sailors Monument. 
one hand in addition to a laurel wreath and sword in the other. This female embodiment of liberty at the very top of the monument in addition to the four eagles on each “side” of the monument at the feet of this “Lady Liberty” serve as yet another symbol of freedom and victory in addition to evoking sparks of American nationalism due to the strong symbol that is the American eagle. At the base of the Roman-Doric column and above the bas-reliefs are four eight-foot granite statues, each facing either north, south, east, or west representing the northern, southern, eastern, and western portions of the newly reunited nation.

The monument also boasts four projecting pedestals that hold the other four bronze statues recently placed on the monument after restoration in 2014. The subjects of the statues are four allegorical figures that represent “Peace” (facing south and holding an olive branch), “The Sailor” (facing seaward and wearing a navy uniform), “The Muse of History” (holding a book and looking into the sky, into heaven), and “The Citizen Soldier” (a federal infantryman wearing an army uniform and standing at ease). Collectively, these figures evoke Union victory marking this victory to be one of this nation’s greatest triumphs and successes and that this great success would not have been possible without the devotion and sacrifice of the many fallen soldiers and sailors.

The four bronze bas-reliefs are also a part of this massive monument, placed in between each pedestal with easy access for closer viewing. They depict different aspects or stages of the Civil War featuring a few prominent figures of the war and era. Something interesting about these story-telling landscapes is that “all the many figures in the bas-relief panels are real people who all can be identified.” They are titled “The Departure of the Regiment”, “The Sanitary Commission”, “Return from the War”, and “The Departure of the Sailors from Home”.

According to the Massachusetts Civil War Monument Project,

“‘The Departure of the Regiment’ shows troops passing by the State House steps after receiving their colors from Gov. John Andrew, a scene which played out again and again. Among the troops are General Benjamin Butler and Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. On the steps are dignitaries including Governor John Andrew, abolitionist Wendell Phillips and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. ‘The Sanitary Commission’ shows several leaders and supporters of that organization including James Russell Lowell and Rev. Edward Hale and several women volunteers aiding soldiers in the field. Boston’s monument is the only one in the Commonwealth to feature the work of the Sanitary Commission in which so many Massachusetts civilians were involved. The most elaborate relief is the

---

20 “Boston”, Massachusetts Civil War Monuments Project.
21 “Soldiers and Sailors Monument (Boston)”, Wikipedia.
22 “Boston”, Massachusetts Civil War Monuments Project.
23 Aline Kaplan, “Boston’s Soldiers and Sailors Monument”. And “Soldiers and Sailors Monument (Boston)”, Wikipedia.
24 Aline Kaplan, “Boston’s Soldiers and Sailors Monument”.
25 Aline Kaplan, “Boston’s Soldiers and Sailors Monument”.
26 “Boston”, Massachusetts Civil War Monuments Project.
‘Return from the War’ and depicts about 40 individuals with the structures of Beacon Street etched in the background. On horseback among the soldiers are Generals Nathaniel Banks, William Francis Bartlett and Charles Devens. Among the civilians are Governor Andrew, Senator Charles Sumner and Senator Henry Wilson. The fourth relief depicts ‘The Departure of the Sailors from Home’ and a naval engagement”

further displaying the immense public involvement in the bloodiest war in American history.

This monument uniquely sets itself a part from many other Civil War memorials as it was immediately erected in honor of the people of the Commonwealth. It is set in one of Boston’s most public places, free of admission charges, and its massive nature symbolizes, and ultimately honors, the many lives lost. Also, the monument to this day is cementing the singular cause of these many fatalities in history forever and is allowing these casualties’ memories to be eternalized and forever thanked by the many admirers. This monument is for the public and not for memorializing of individual efforts and fleets, unlike the majority of Confederate memorials. Its massive nature and inviting design with the incorporation of a scalable base allows for the interaction of the monument with the general public; it allows for closer examinations of the various bronze statues and bas-reliefs and even allows for the free expression of memory and gratitude with space to leave flowers, American flags, etc. In fact, to this day, these fallen soldiers -in addition to all the men and women who sacrificed their lives since the American Revolution- are honored for their efforts in promoting freedom and equality throughout the United States every Memorial Day when approximately 37,000 American flags are placed on Flagstaff Hill surrounding the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. The common man is idealized and memorialized here in a way they should be more often and in future works.

Thanks for watching!

27 Ibid.
28 “Boston”, Massachusetts Civil War Monuments Project.