

Fall 9-13-2013

# Victory, Reconciliation, and Reunion: The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument of Easton, Pennsylvania and a Memory of the Civil War

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Victory, Reconciliation, and Reunion: The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument  
of Easton, Pennsylvania and a Memory of the Civil War

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Submitted to the Department of History  
of Seton Hall University as a requirement for the  
Master of Arts in History

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September 13, 2013

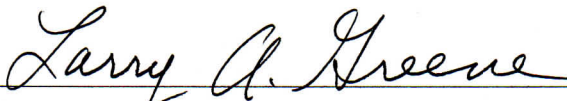


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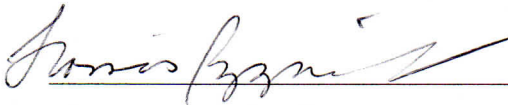
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## **Abstract**

Thirty-five years after the Civil War came to an end the people of Easton, Pennsylvania erected a monument to honor the men of Easton and Northampton County that fought and died in the sectional conflict. With the nation recognizing the sesquicentennial of the Civil War the study of how the people of Easton have chosen to remember this conflict can help us better understand the war itself and its ever changing place in the collective national psychology. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument that was built in Easton's Centre Square is reflective of a Northern monument design, and a memory of the Civil War, that was dominant throughout the North in the late nineteenth century. While the design and early history of the monument are a reflection of a Unionist and reconciliationist memory of the war, in the post-World War II era the centrality of the Easton monument in the life of the city would undergo its own transformation as questions of race and racial equality became, once again, intimately tied to the one hundred year old conflict. Even by the year 2000, what is clear is that the Easton monument and other monuments built at the turn of the twentieth century have influenced the way contemporary America has chosen to honor, and remember, the men who fought and died in more recent wars, like the Second World War. By examining the monument's history, design, and traditions what is offered is not only insight into a city's commemoration of the war, but a deeper understanding of how America's memory of the Civil War has changed since the 1865 peace at Appomattox.

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## Synopsis

Dedicated in 1900, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument of Easton, Pennsylvania is reflective of a Northern monument design and a memory of the Civil War that was dominant throughout the North in the late nineteenth century. In the years after 1865, the conflict was remembered in the North as a fight by honorable and courageous men to preserve the Union while simultaneously emphasizing the bonds of brotherhood and friendship that still existed with the citizens of the old Confederacy. The very placement of the monument in Easton's Centre Square ties the memorial to the history of the city, and further demarcates that plot of land within Easton as 'sacred'. The monument design and the inscriptions carved into its granite face are a further reflection of Northern monument design. The words 'It is sweet and right to die for your country' convey the sentiments of the Union cause (there was honor in death) while Daniel Webster's quote 'Liberty and Union now and forever' is a Northern attempt at building a new era of friendship and nationhood with the old Confederacy.

In the years that followed the Second World War the memory of the Civil War underwent its own dramatic transformation. The civil rights movement refocused the attention of historians – and the American people – on the forgotten legacy of the conflict: equal rights for African Americans. In Easton, the controversy, violence, and social unrest of the civil rights movement, coupled with the Civil War centennial, led the city to forgo any celebration to commemorate the war's one-hundredth anniversary. During these postwar years a new tradition emerged: the Easton Peace Candle. Constructed for the first time in 1951 both the Peace Candle and the monument would

honor the men and women of the armed forces, as well as the vision of America for which all were fighting: an America that is safe, secure, and where happiness abounds.

Even today, when looking at memorials built in the twenty-first century – like the National World War II Memorial – what becomes clear is that the Easton monument, and the manner in which a Northern society chose to commemorate and remember the Civil War, has influenced, or at the very least shares similarities with, the way contemporary America has chosen to honor and remember the men who fought and died in this global conflict. One hundred and fifty years after the Civil War ended, monuments, like Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, remind a people of not only the sacrifices of the Civil War soldier, but also offer insight into the generation that built such monuments as well as America's ever-changing memory of their Civil War.

**Introduction: The Easton Monument and Civil War Memory**

A canvas tarp covered the base of Easton's four hundred-ton Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument as day dawned on the morning of May 10, 1900. Hidden beneath the heavy canvas stood four stone figures each dedicated to the men – living and dead – that had fought in America's Civil War. When dawn finally arrived the first rays of sunlight were met with the deep reverberating blasts of a six-pound artillery cannon as it fired from atop Lachenour Heights, its blasts echoing in every Easton home and downtown store front. It had been thirty-five years since the guns of the Civil War were silenced and the nation began the slow and painful process of reconciliation and reconstruction. By 1900, in communities across the nation, monuments, statues, memorials, and shrines, were being erected to the men who had fought and died in America's Civil War. It had taken this expanse of time for the people of Easton, Pennsylvania to arrive at consensus at how they would remember the soldiers and sailors of Northampton County that had fought in the bloody battles of the sectional conflict.

The history of Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument is a story of how a city constructed a memory of the Civil War and how that war was remembered in Easton as the years and decades passed. Through the construction of a monument the people of Easton were participating in a construction of memory. In many ways the events surrounding the Easton monument are representative of how Americans across the country constructed a memory of the conflict and determined how those that fought and died in the war should be honored. In Easton this memory of the war would be influenced by the larger trends in Northern Civil War memory, the progression of time, and an evolving national consensus of what the Civil War meant then, and what it should mean

to future generations of Americans. By exploring how the people of Easton chose to remember their Civil War, the conscious and unconscious decisions that influenced this remembrance, as well as how that memory has changed over the last one hundred years, we can better understand how the War Between The States has influenced – and continues to influence – the psychology and society of generations far removed from the blood, death, and horror of the war’s battles.

With the nation recognizing the sesquicentennial of the Civil War the study of how a group of Americans (the people of Easton) have chosen to remember this conflict can help us better understand the war itself and its ever changing place in the collective national psychology. What has emerged over the last one hundred and fifty years is an evolving public memory of the Civil War as each generation reinterprets the conflict and its centrality in American life. For David W. Blight the formation of a Civil War memory had begun before the conflict had even come to an end. American memory of the war took root, Blight explains, “in the dead and the living” as those who died in the battles of the war would forever have a psychological hold on the survivors.<sup>1</sup> It would be these survivors of the war who would over time “construct versions of the past” and use that collective memory for both “self-understanding and to win power and place in an ever changing present.”<sup>2</sup> It would be the survivors – not the soldiers that died in the war – who would determine why the war was fought, how the war should be remembered, and how the victims of the war should be honored. This recollection of the Civil War would be both history and memory. It would be a history that would be passed down through the

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<sup>1</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War In American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>2</sup> David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 1.

generations, but it would be a memory that would differ in importance and message based on the era and the Americans that were doing the remembering. Each generation would emphasize, or forget, certain aspects of the war as they struggled to determine how that conflict of 1861 to 1865 fit into their own lives. In the years immediately after the war it would be Civil War veterans that would serve as living links to the conflict, but as these survivors passed away the memory of the war would coalesce in “objects, sacred sites, and monuments.”<sup>3</sup> For the people of Easton, the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument would serve as the closest physical link to the Civil War, both in 1900 and in the century that was to follow. Each time a resident of Easton gazed on the monument – whether in 1900 or 1950 – he or she would find themselves connected to the war and a collective memory of the conflict. This memory would be influenced not only by the monument itself, but also by what was inscribed on the monument’s façade, its location in the city, as well as by the cultural and societal forces at work in Easton and across the nation.

In the aftermath of the Second World War the memory and legacy of the Civil War would find new meaning in a nation transitioning from a wartime society, to one enjoying a long-deserved peace. In the 1950s a new wave of consumer purchasing would arise as Americans across the country spent money on a scale unseen in previous eras. It would be during this period of peace and prosperity that the fifty-year old Easton monument would find association with a new holiday tradition. Starting in 1951 a holiday candle made of steel and fiberglass would be erected over the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument in Easton’s Centre Square. This candle, originally a product of American consumerism, would quickly become a symbol of peace in an age when heightening tensions of the Cold War, a deadly war in Southeast Asia, and growing tensions between black and white

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<sup>3</sup> David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 2.



Americans were escalating at a frightening pace. The Easton Peace Candle, like the monument it would hide for six weeks each year, would remind the people of Easton of the bravery, heroism, and loyalty of the American soldier as well as the freedoms and liberties that *all* of America's soldiers fight to protect.

But it is perhaps the question of race, and racial equality, that would have the greatest influence on a post-World War II America. By the late 1950s, and into the 1960s, the civil rights movement would motivate a society of Americans to reevaluate the racial dynamics of a nation, and seriously consider *who* was an 'American', and *who* was entitled to enjoy the rights, liberties, and freedoms that American citizenship offered. It would be during these tumultuous decades – the 1950s and 1960s – that the nation would also recognize the centennial of the Civil War. The concurrence of the civil rights movement and the Civil War centennial would drive scholars and ordinary Americans to reexamine the Civil War and the significance that race, and racial equality, should play in the legacy of that one hundred year old conflict. What would emerge would be a memory of the Civil War that would *continue* to emphasize the unity and reunion of the nation since 1865, as well as the bravery, heroism, and valor of those soldiers that wore the Blue *and* those that wore the Gray. The memories of the Civil War in the North that had emphasized reconciliation and the victorious Union had largely passed into history by the 1960s as what was instead remembered was a generation of Union *and Confederate* soldiers that had fought honorably and courageously for the cause they felt was right. While the emancipationist legacy of the war would not be completely absent from the mid-century memory of the Civil War, it was, perhaps, deemphasized on both the national and local level in favor of this less controversial and regionally acceptable

memory of the conflict. Representative of an American society that preferred to focus on national unity and the bravery of the brother-soldiers, in Easton the war's centennial was seemingly deemphasized in what was perhaps an attempt to avoid any potential controversy and turmoil that often accompanied the discussion and debate of equal rights for African Americans during these postwar years. At the very least, this mid-twentieth century memory of the Civil War – and monuments like the one in Easton – offered city residents a new prism through which to consider the question of race in America, even if they were reluctant to confront this long ignored racial memory – and legacy – of the Civil War.

But even as the memory of the Civil War underwent its own transition during these post-World War II years the Easton monument, and other Civil War monuments built at the turn of the twentieth century, would share characteristics similar to those memorials – like the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. – that were constructed at the turn of the twenty-first century. While separated by nearly one hundred years of American history both memorials remember, and honor, those that fought and died in their respective wars. Whether examining the construction material of each monument, the designs that they take, or the words and phrases that are displayed for each visitor to read and contemplate, each memorial conveys a message of collective national (or city) gratitude. The soldiers of the Civil War, and the soldiers of the Second World War, were all said to be honored and remembered by the very presence of the monument in Easton's Centre Square, or the memorial that was built on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Even though the World War II Memorial was built over one hundred years after the monument in Easton, and even though each memorial is meant to remember the men of

two different conflicts, the Easton monument influenced, or at the very least shares characteristic with, a national style of memorialization and commemoration that was evident at the turn of the twenty-first century.

As the nation and the people of Easton marked the arrival of the new millennium the memory of the Civil War that would prevail would be one that emphasized the power, stability, and harmony of the United States, while simultaneously honoring not just the Civil War soldier, but *all soldiers* that had fought and died to ensure this national strength and unity. It would be this theme that would characterize the Easton monument's centennial anniversary, as crowds gathered to honor the Civil War dead and remember the one hundred year old sectional conflict. While slavery, race, and racial equality were, by the year 2000, recognized and debated as causes and legacies of the conflict, in the public imagination, and the centennial celebration of Easton's monument, it was still the optimistic and harmonious image of the Union and Confederate soldier reuniting after four years of bloody war – and the strength of the United States at the dawn of the new millennium – that was celebrated and embraced by the people of Easton (and the nation).

Today, one hundred and fifty years later, the legacy of the Civil War, and the memory of the conflict, is a continually changing entity influenced as much by academia as it is by the films, literature, and television documentaries broadcast to the American public each year. This construction of a Civil War memory would begin during, and immediately after the war's end in 1865, as the conflict itself would transform the social, political, economic, and constitutional landscape of the United States. However, these changes would take hold – and influence – an American people that were creating their own entangled and unique memories of the war. These schools of Civil War memory

would compete for dominance in the minds and imaginations of the American people. As the years since the war's end grew ever greater these schools of memory would overlap, while at other moments they would directly challenge and refute one another. In 1900 Easton, like other cities throughout the North, it would be the Unionist and reconciliationist memories of the war that would hold the greatest psychological and societal power as these schools of memory would be most clearly visible in the monument that was designed and constructed by city residents. For the people of Easton, like all Americans, their understanding of the war, its death, and the way in which their Civil War should be remembered would be influenced by these often conflicting schools of memory as these city residents began the complex and emotional process of honoring the dead – and the living veterans – who had left their city, and their county, to go off and fight in that War Between The States.

### *The Schools of Civil War Memory*

In the years that followed the Appomattox peace four major schools of Civil War remembrance emerged, each of which, in some way, influenced not only the builders of the Easton monument, but those generations that would forever live in its shadow. The 'Lost Cause' school of Civil War memory endeavored to find "something positive" from the "catastrophic experiment in nation-building" that was attempted by the secessionist states. In this memory of the war what was celebrated was the antebellum civilization and the culture of the South. The Lost Cause depicts the South as an idyllic land of high culture where slaves were loyal and happy and the very institution of slavery, so vehemently attacked by the North, was in reality a beneficial system that helped to

Christianize the African slave. The war, they said, did not occur out of a desire to preserve the institution of slavery, but instead, it was argued that secession was declared on constitutional grounds. Lost Cause advocates declared that they had “fought in defense of constitutional principles” and as the “true inheritors” of the revolutionary tradition passed on to them by the founding generation.<sup>4</sup> In this memory of the war it was the overwhelming “industrial might” of the North that brought about the ultimate defeat of the Confederacy, not the skill or bravery of the Northern soldier. Instead, in the mythology of the Lost Cause the valor of the fallen Southern soldier and the “righteous” political crusade of the Confederacy was paramount. The “devotion” of Northerners and Southerners to this Lost Cause memory of the war would be widespread by the late 1870s as this perspective of the conflict had by then “gained a special place in the American imagination.” Even today, this memory of the war still holds prominence in the minds of many Americans as it continues to influence modern-day perspectives of the war. In the South, in both the past and present, this Lost Cause memory has allowed a population to form a “collective identity” in which certain Southern groups, and individuals, perceive themselves as “victims and survivors” of a war of Northern aggression.<sup>5</sup>

A second school of memory is what Gary W. Gallagher has labeled the ‘Union Cause.’ In this memory of the war the slaveholding secessionists attempted to “undo the work of the founding generation.”<sup>6</sup> These seceding states dismantled a Union that offered “white citizens wide economic and political opportunities and stood as a democratic

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<sup>4</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten: How Hollywood And Popular Art Shape What We Know About The Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 17-22.

<sup>5</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 38, 89.

<sup>6</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 25.

example to the world.”<sup>7</sup> For those adherents to this memory of the war the seceding Southern states were not only traitors towards the republic, but towards the very principles of the founding generation – a generation that revered the ideals of democracy and equality for all (white) citizens. In this memory of the Civil War men like Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster were elevated and revered. Webster’s 1830 speech given in response to South Carolina’s support for nullification served as a foundational stone of this school of memory. In his speech before the U.S. Senate Webster declared “Liberty *and* Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable.”<sup>8</sup> It was this sentiment that embodied the Union Cause as it pulled on the hearts and minds of those followers that subscribed to this school of Civil War memory. Furthermore, just as the Lost Cause elevated Robert E. Lee and his Confederate army as heroes so too did the Union Cause celebrate the Northern soldiers that fought and died in the war. In this memory of the conflict the four branches of the U.S. military were said to be the powerful agents that had “crushed the rebellion and ensured” the future of the American republic.<sup>9</sup> For men like William T. Sherman, a follower (and figure) in this Union cause memory of the war, the “honor and glory” of preserving the Union and winning the war belonged to the Union soldier alone, as the Southern soldier had to forever live with the shame and guilt of being on the “wrong” side of the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

Next, the ‘Emancipationist’ school of Civil War memory considered the emancipation of the more than four million slaves to be the conflict’s most important outcome. This school of memory associated closely with the Union Cause as they both

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<sup>7</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>10</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 93.

bestowed “full blame for the outbreak of war on the seceding states” and declared that it was the powerful slave-owning Southern aristocracy that were the true perpetrators of the war.<sup>11</sup> A major proponent to this memory of the war was Fredrick Douglass who vehemently attacked “northern complicity in spreading, or at least tolerating” the Lost Cause memory of the conflict.<sup>12</sup> Douglass, and those who shared this emancipationist memory, believed that the elimination of slavery, and the fight to achieve equality of the races was the true memory – and legacy – of the Civil War. The tendency of the *white* North and the *white* South to “postpone” and “evade” this racial legacy of the war, and the “racial reckoning” that it ushered in, would help these two former enemies enter a period of national “reunion.”<sup>13</sup> The widespread belief, shared equally by the North and the South, that slavery was the “national original sin” would only help to initiate the reuniting of the former Union and Confederate soldier.<sup>14</sup> By the later part of the nineteenth century this emancipationist memory of the war would be overshadowed and ignored by a majority of white Americans as the Union and Confederate veterans began to adopt a “divine doctrine of forgiveness and conciliation” as a movement of reunion and reconciliation swept the nation.<sup>15</sup>

It would be this final school of Civil War memory – the ‘Reconciliationist Cause’ – that would grow in popularity and power starting in the late 1870s. In this memory of the war what was advocated was a memory of the “conflict that muted the divisive issue of slavery, avoided value judgments about the righteousness of either cause, and celebrated the valor” of both the Union and Confederate soldier. The adherents to this school of

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<sup>11</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 29.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>13</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

memory saw the way in which Grant and Lee conducted themselves at Appomattox as one of the initiators of this reconciliation and the start of the “healing process that reminded all Americans of their shared history and traditions.” While more associated with the Unionist school, individuals as famous as Ulysses S. Grant were *partial* adherents to this memory of the war. While Grant placed the responsibility of the conflict – and the guilt of secession – on the “southern slaveholders” he simultaneously described his former rival, Robert E. Lee, as a ““man of much dignity”” and hoped that the “good feeling” shown to him by Lee and other Confederates since the war had come to an end, would continue well into the new century.<sup>16</sup> In his memoirs Grant declared that the war had “made us a nation of great power and intelligence” as the nation was on the “eve of a new era” when there was to be a “great harmony between the Federal and Confederate” soldier.<sup>17</sup> Indeed as the twentieth-century dawned, and the years since Appomattox grew ever greater, it would be this reconciliationist memory of the war that would capture the hearts and minds of the American people.

In 1874-75, in both the North and the South, Union and Confederate veterans, for the first time, began celebrating Memorial Day together. It was as at these gatherings that orators spoke of the “shared soldiers’ valor” of those that wore the Blue and those that wore the Gray.<sup>18</sup> During these gatherings speakers often emphasized the theme of “reconciliation” as they spoke of the “conviction, duty, and obedience” that all soldiers displayed toward their cause (right or wrong) during the war. These traits, Blight explains, would become a “standard feature of memorial and reunion rhetoric” as the

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<sup>16</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 33-35.

<sup>17</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *Grant: Memoirs and Selected Letters* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1990), 779.

<sup>18</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 86.



wounds healed and the two sides grew closer in the years after the Appomattox peace. By Memorial Day 1877 the *New York Herald* would declare that “all issues on which the war of the rebellion was fought seem dead” as an atmosphere of “national reunion” had swept the city, and the country. In New York City, and in the surrounding communities, “citizens visited every cemetery...to lay flowers at the graves of the Union *and Confederate dead*” (emphasis added). In this new wave of reunion and reconciliation it was said that the causes of the war were now “forgotten” and instead, it was argued, that all Americans should “rejoice” as there was now “no North, no South, no East, no West – only one country and one flag.”<sup>19</sup>

In 1880, the *New-York Tribune* would print a piece of cultural and societal condemnation, declaring that the American people were living in an age characterized by “fraud, corruption, bargain, and sales.”<sup>20</sup> For the editors of the *Tribune* a society of Americans “now looked to the Civil War dead, as well as living veterans, as the alternative to their unheroic age” as this Civil War generation stood as a source of “honest passion, higher morality, [and] something ‘noble and true’ that was preserved for future generations of Americans.”<sup>21</sup> The “feud between North and South” argued the *Tribune*, should not be “renewed in the minds of our children by intemperate yearly declamations on the old quarrel” as all men, North and South, hoped to see the wounds of the war finally “healed over.”<sup>22</sup> It would be, in part, through this emphasis of “manliness and soldierly virtues” that a generation of Americans would begin to embrace these

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<sup>19</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 86-89.

<sup>20</sup> “Decoration Day,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1880.

<sup>21</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 95.

<sup>22</sup> “Decoration Day,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1880.

sentiments of reconciliation and reunion that were spreading throughout the nation in the later years of the nineteenth century.

Even American presidents were swept up in these feelings of national unity. In February of 1905 Theodore Roosevelt declared that the Civil War not only “left us a reunited country” but it created a nation that “has the proud right to claim as its own the glory won alike by those who wore the blue and by those who wore the gray, by those who followed Grant and by those who followed Lee.”<sup>23</sup> According to Roosevelt both sides had “fought with equal bravery and with equal sincerity of conviction” as each side was “striving for the light as it was given him to see the light.”<sup>24</sup> In his speech Roosevelt remarked that all “good Americans who dwell in the North must, because they are good Americans, feel the most earnest friendship for their fellow-countrymen who dwell in the South.” Those who lived in the North, and those who lived in the South, said Roosevelt, were fundamentally the same as they were the “same in the qualities of the heart and brain and hand which have made this Republic what it is in the great today [and] which will make it what it is to be in the infinitely greater to-morrow.”<sup>25</sup> In later years, Woodrow Wilson would further perpetuate this trend of reconciliationist memory when he declared at the fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Gettysburg that “our battles were long past, the quarrel forgotten.” Even in 1938, as the Second World War was set to explode onto the world stage, Franklin D. Roosevelt gave a speech to nearly 1,800 Union and Confederate veterans that had gathered to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the three day Battle at Gettysburg. To the assembled crowd Franklin

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<sup>23</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “Lincoln and the Race Problem,” Speech, New York City, New York, February 13, 1905, *Primary Speeches, Addresses, and Essays*, Published online by *The Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt*.

<sup>24</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “Lincoln and the Race Problem.”

Roosevelt accepted a new “monument in the spirit of brotherhood and peace” and further proclaimed that those veterans that were gathered that day met in “united loyalty to a united cause” as what was important on that day was that they now “stood together under one flag.”<sup>26</sup>

From 1865 onwards each of these schools of memory would maneuver for a position of dominance in the minds of Americans. While the Lost Cause held the greatest psychological hold in the South its power extended even into the North, as it slowly silenced the emancipationist memory of the war. The hostility and resentment that some white Americans felt towards the former African slave would have undoubtedly played a role in the de-emphasis of the emancipationist memory in the years following the Confederate surrender. In the South especially there were many “white southerners [that] found it difficult to tolerate black economic success...and progress” as some even “lashed out at those [African Americans] that had achieved it.”<sup>27</sup> For the defeated South the embrace of a war memory – the Lost Cause – that emphasized white culture, white civilization, and the ‘benefits’ of slavery was all but inevitable. At the same time, the Northern resentment and hostility towards the African American freedman would have further doomed the war’s emancipationist memory from finding widespread support in turn-of-the-twentieth-century America. As African Americans slowly made their way out of the South they found themselves in competition for jobs with Northern whites, who, while they might have favored the abolition of slavery, were still “convinced that as a

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<sup>26</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, “White Supremacy Triumphant: African Americans in the South in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *The African-American Odyssey*, (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2010), 370.

race they were superior to black people intellectually and culturally.”<sup>28</sup> The emancipationist memory of the war was destined for failure in the late 1800s as the very social and psychological beliefs of white America – North and South – still placed the African American in a subservient and inferior position on the social ladder of American society. Even Northern whites that had once “expressed at least some sympathy for former slaves” were now, as the years since the war grew ever greater, becoming “increasingly preoccupied with the frontier West or with opportunities presented by the Industrial Revolution” to find it advantageous to assist African Americans in their struggle to achieve social and political equality.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in the years that followed the war’s end the emancipationist memory of the conflict was quickly ignored by a Northern (and Southern) society now struggling to reunite and rebuild a shattered nation. This task of reconstruction was simplified when the more controversial memories and legacies of the war – those which formed the foundation of the emancipationist school of Civil War memory – were deemphasized in a post Civil War society. Instead, while both sides still emphasized the bravery and heroism of their own soldiers, each side also chose to stress those views which formed the foundation of the reconciliationist school of Civil War memory, as it was a memory of the war that both sides could support as they moved forward in their efforts to psychologically reunite and physically rebuild a nation set ablaze by four years of bloodshed.

Despite the popularity of the reconciliationist memory in the North (and throughout the nation) there were still those who believed that the de-emphasis of the emancipationist memory of the conflict was deeply troubling. In an 1878 Memorial Day

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<sup>28</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, “White Supremacy Triumphant: African Americans in the South in the Late Nineteenth Century,” 352.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

speech former slave and renowned orator Fredrick Douglass expressed his concerns to an assembled crowd in New York City. “Too many Americans” Douglass proclaimed “were losing an understanding of the deepest context of the war and its consequences” on the nation.<sup>30</sup> For Douglass this meant that the emancipation of southern slaves, and their fight for racial equality in America, was being ignored and quickly forgotten. It would not be until the 1950s and 1960s that this memory of the war would reemerge as a powerful contender in the psychology of the nation’s memory of the Civil War. Even today, for a majority of Americans their knowledge of the war does not extend beyond a simplistic understanding that ‘the war was fought to preserve the Union’ and bring an end to slavery. While not inaccurate this memory of the war is a reflection of society, the monuments that are scattered throughout the nation, and the memory of the war that is passed down from generation to generation. Even the centrality of slavery – which is considered by most academic historians to be the primary catalyst in starting the war – varies in importance based on region and who is being asked. Since that May day in 1900, when the tarp was dropped and the monument unveiled, the Easton memorial has been forever linked with the Civil War and the men of Northampton County who fought and died in its bloody battles. While the monument would remain static – forever frozen in stone – the memory associated with the memorial, and the war, would change over time as each generation would determine for themselves the importance of the war, its influence in their lives, as well as the role the war and the monument would play in the life, and history, of their city.

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<sup>30</sup> David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 171.

### **The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument and the Memory of the Civil War (1898-1945)**

By the turn of the century the era of Reconstruction had come to an end and the struggle for national reunification had largely passed into history. William McKinley was in the White House and a three-month long war with Spain was still fresh in the minds of Americans – North and South. But it was the War Between The States that still pulled on the heartstrings and weighed heavy on the minds of many Americans by the end of the nineteenth century. Speaking before the Georgia State legislature in 1898 President McKinley would assert, “sectional lines no longer mar the map of the United States” as “sectional feeling no longer holds back the love we bear each other.”<sup>31</sup> Two years later, in an address at the Antietam battlefield President McKinley would again emphasize the unity of the nation. “I am glad” he would declare “to preside over a nation of nearly eighty million people, more united than they have ever been since the formation of the Federal Union.”<sup>32</sup> It would be a sentiment of unity and reconciliation, while simultaneously honoring and remembering the sacrifices of the Union soldiers, that would sweep through Northern communities as the century came to a close. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, in communities across the North, there was a clear shift in northern memory, as many Northerners began to look favorably on the old Confederacy. By 1876 the tendency to condemn the “Confederate troops as the traitorous pawns of slaveholders” had faded considerably. In the years after the war, Northern literature and tourism began to depict the South as a “place of respite from the economic and social

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<sup>31</sup> William McKinley, “Speech Before the Legislature in Joint Assembly at the State Capitol, Atlanta, Georgia,” Speech, Atlanta, Georgia, December 14, 1898, in *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley, from March 1, 1897 to May 30, 1900* (New York: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1900), 158.

<sup>32</sup> William McKinley, “Speech at the Antietam Battlefield,” Speech, Antietam, Maryland, May 30, 1900, in *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley, from March 1, 1897 to May 30, 1900* (New York: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1900), 370.

pressures of life in the North.”<sup>33</sup> Simultaneously, many in the North found themselves “troubled by the decline of small-town communities” as they watched the forces of “urbanization and industrialization” transform a nation.<sup>34</sup> For many Northerners, argues Edward Linenthal, this transformation of the nation generated an empathy for a Southern people as they watched their way of life, and their Southern “civilization”, slowly disappear.<sup>35</sup> This Northern tendency to look favorably and sympathetically on a former enemy, and their society, soon paved the way for a series of Union and Confederate reunions in the 1880s which partially ushered in an age of reconciliation. However, as Thomas J. Brown explains, while this reconciliationist attitude grew in popularity in the 1880s and 1890s there was still a strong sentiment in Northern communities, especially among Union veterans, to oppose “any downplaying of their achievements in wining the war” and saving the nation; showing an embrace of both a Unionist and reconciliationist memory of the conflict. However, by the dawn of the twentieth-century, as the number of living veterans slowly dwindled there was a renewed interest among Union veterans to identify with their former Confederate foes. Brown explains that many scholars attribute this shift in Northern Civil War memory to a “desire, or need, for national solidarity” as the war with Spain would further advertise the fact that the people of the United States were a *united* nation.<sup>36</sup> To fight this war the former Union soldier, and the one-time Confederate soldier, would both have to leave their homes, and nation, as they went off to fight and die *together* in the battles of the Spanish-American War. In the war’s aftermath

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2004), 7-8.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 94.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 8-9.

the uniform that each man wore during the American Civil War was of little importance as the “staunch separation of Union and Confederate soldiers” was forgotten as these men returned home to bury the dead from the “Cuban campaigns.”<sup>37</sup> Simultaneously, this emphasis on reconciliation and unity would occur at a time when “many northerners worried that the influx of immigration imperiled American identity” and thus, in the late 1890s and early 1900s, both sides stressed a shared white American identity which further helped to bring these two former enemies closer together.<sup>38</sup>

This Northern progression to a Unionist and reconciliationist memory of the war would occur at the same time the Easton monument was being designed and constructed. With these feelings of reconciliation and national unity sweeping the country there was a widespread movement in towns and cities to “honor the memory of those who lost their lives during the war” and remember the cause for which so many had sacrificed.<sup>39</sup> What emerged in 1870, and continued into the 1910s, was an age of monument construction as Americans erected memorials and shrines to honor the commanders and ordinary soldiers who died in the many battles of the Civil War.<sup>40</sup> It would be through this monument construction that these Americans would participate in an ongoing creation of memory. In cities across the nation, like Easton, people would build a memory of the war as they went about designing their monument, choosing where it would be placed, crafting the ceremony of dedication, and in subsequent years, determining how that day, and the monument, would be honored and remembered. In many ways the history of the Easton

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<sup>37</sup> John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 221.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 102.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.



monument mirrors the trends of memory construction taking place on the national stage, as it was during this era of monument building that the story of Easton's memorial begins.

By the day of the monument's dedication on May 10, 1900 the county of Northampton would boast a population of 99,687 people, while Easton would be home to nearly 25,000 residents.<sup>41</sup> It would be from this community of post-Civil War men and women that one can trace the first mention of erecting a monument to honor the men of Easton and Northampton County that fought and died in the Civil War. In June of 1866 members of the Order of United American Mechanics (O.U.A.M.) Columbia Council No., 13 submitted a petition asking the city for permission to erect a monument to the memory of those "citizens who lost their lives in the late war to suppress rebellion."<sup>42</sup> In Easton, like other cities across the nation, the first proposal for the construction of a monument emerged not from a politician or legislative body, but from the men and women that were left to rebuild in the aftermath of the conflict. At the turn of the century the nation was in the midst of a 'statue mania', and the people of Easton, like other communities across the North, shared in this impulse to build monuments to the veterans of the Civil War. This mania was an expression of the underlying "anxieties" that were being felt by many across the country as uncertainties about "national unity" and the "rapid advance of modernism, immigration, and mass culture" were widespread in the 1880s, 1890s, and at the dawn of the new century.<sup>43</sup> Americans of all backgrounds and social classes watched as new technologies and waves of immigrants drastically

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<sup>41</sup> United States Census Bureau, "State & County QuickFacts, Easton: Historical population counts," March, 27, 1995, Published online by the *U.S. Department of Commerce*.

<sup>42</sup> "Proposition to Build a Monument in the Square," *Easton Sentinel*, July 5, 1866.

<sup>43</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 27.

transformed the century-old paradigm of what *they* felt American culture should be. In a way, by erecting these monuments a society of Americans were building a testament for their own generation, and to future generations, about the unalterable character of American culture, and even the American republic. Through the construction of the Easton monument city residents were not only paying tribute to a generation that was quickly dying off, but were making a grand and noble statement: if a civil war couldn't transform what *they felt* America meant, then neither would the forces of technology, industry, and foreign migration. Easton's Civil War monument would be a reminder of a pre-Civil War era when the forces of industrialization and technology were not threatening to transform American life, and when a majority of American society was still perceived as being *safely* white and Protestant. Monuments, like the one being built in Easton, would serve as refutation of the new modern America of the 1900s and a reminder of the society, and the traditional values, that many Americans saw threatened by the turn of the century: an America that was white and Protestant, where white workers didn't have to compete for employment with African Americans and immigrants, and a pre-Civil War America where the forces of industrialization weren't threatening to take the jobs once performed by the white American male laborer. While these societal forces being exerted on the development of Civil War memory – and monument construction – might not have been conscious or overt, they were still powerful factors in influencing the creators of the Easton monument and all Civil War memorials being built throughout the North.

Through this monument construction these ordinary Americans were searching for, or at the very least declaring, some form of stability in an era of radical change brought

about by the revolutions in industry, the spike in immigration, and the emergence of new technologies, while actively continuing the ongoing process of healing and cultural rebirth that emerged shortly after the Civil War had ended. As the people of Easton determined the design of their monument, the markings that would be inscribed on its façade, and the person (or people) to whom the monument would be dedicated they were in their own preliminary way taking the first steps into the murky realm of memory construction. As these views of the war and its memory coalesced, the statues and monuments erected to remember the war, and its soldiers, would play “a vital role in championing collective national ideals.”<sup>44</sup> In his discussion of Halbwachs, Peter Burke explains that the memories of a society are often “constructed by social groups” and it is these groups that ultimately “determine what is ‘memorable’” and how a specific memory “will be remembered.”<sup>45</sup> These same groups, explains Burke, have long understood the “value” of placing a specific image – or monument – in “particular locations” in order to aid the retention and conveyance of a particular memory. However, these same memories are also a “malleable” force in society and, understanding this, people have long constructed memorials like tombstones and statues to “assist the retention and transmission of these memories” to future generations.<sup>46</sup> The belief that it is honorable to die for one’s nation, or the assertion that it is just and righteous to fight for a cause greater than oneself, are ideals expressed by the Easton monument, and were said to be worthy of remembrance and respect by the builders of the memorial. In the years to come it would be in the shadow of the Easton monument that remembrance ceremonies,

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<sup>44</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory,” in *Memory*, ed. by Thomas Butler (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 98.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-101.

city festivals, and holiday celebrations would be held. The Easton monument would stand as a silent and ever-present (yet at times subconscious) reminder that the sentiments expressed through the construction of the monument – and its existence – are ideals which should be venerated by all citizens, of all generations. It would be in these stone monuments erected throughout the nation that the collective unconscious of a people would be expressed. By erecting a monument to honor the memory of the soldiers and sailors of Northampton County that fought and died in the Civil War the people of the region were declaring that these men, their cause, and their sacrifice was worthy of remembrance for all generations.

#### *Location of the Monument*

Once approval for the construction of the Easton monument had been obtained from the county and city commissioners, and the design of the monument had been selected, the contentious process of determining the monument's location commenced.<sup>47</sup> Even the political, aesthetic, and ideological debate that emerged surrounding the placement of the monument would include both city officials, as well as commissioners from the county. It would be the county of Northampton that would ultimately pay nearly \$14,000 dollars to erect the monument, as well as the posts and bronze chains at the memorial's base, four gas lamps at each of its corners, and even the grandstand that would be used on the day of the monument's dedication.<sup>48</sup> In fact, in a May 1900 article from the *Easton Daily Free*

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<sup>47</sup> The committee tasked with selecting the final design of the monument examined a number of design proposals from at least seven different companies. The design that was finally selected by the committee was chosen not only for its cost (it was the least expensive) but also because it was viewable from all sides. Other designs submitted were more appropriate for placement on a hillside or in front of a building, were thought to be too short, or were simply deemed too expensive by the committee.

<sup>48</sup> "Unveiling of Monument Highlighted 'Glorious'," Craig S. Thompson, March 20, 1958. Vertical File: Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. Easton Area Public Library, Easton, Pennsylvania.

*Press* the newspaper extends the credit of “finally erecting” the Easton monument to the men that served as Northampton County commissioners from 1896 to 1899.<sup>49</sup> It would be this board, led by William Coyle, William H. Reagle, and Preston H. Riegel, that would be the body that would not only adopt the “resolution favoring the erection of a monument”, but would also – after much debate between various city and county groups – approve the monument’s placement in Easton.<sup>50</sup> One such group was a local branch of the Grand Army of the Republic which requested that the monument be placed in “Centre Circle”, as they wanted the monument in a central location “where it may be more frequently seen by visitors” and thus would “show to all that Northampton appreciated the noble hearts and brave deeds of those of her sons who battled on land and sea that the Union might live and that the starry emblem of liberty might continue to kiss the breezes and beckon the oppressed in other lands....” This support from the G.A.R – veterans of the Union army and the very men the monument was built to honor – would bestow upon the monument an added degree of importance. In the dedication day parade divisions of the G.A.R., the National Guard, and the Sons of Veterans would all march demonstrating not only their support for the city’s commemoration of the war’s dead, but also the monument design and the memory of the war that was being created through its construction. However, the placement of this monument at the center of Easton almost never happened. Had legal wrangling between the city of Easton and the county of Northampton not been settled the monument might very well have been placed in a lot near the city courthouse, much to the dismay of the Grand Army, members of the city council, and many residents of Easton. It was in Center Square, proponents proclaimed,

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<sup>49</sup> “Monument Unveiled,” *The Easton Daily Free Press*, May 10, 1900.

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

that the monument would act as an “educational influence” as more residents and visitors to the city would see the grand memorial.<sup>51</sup> This attention to how often, and by how many people, the monument would be seen was not solely confined to Northern communities. Even in the South, explains Michael Kammen, communities argued about “where to locate their local monuments.”<sup>52</sup> Many worried that a monument placed in a cemetery would have fewer visitors and thus these Southerners (like their Northern counterparts) argued that their local monument should be placed in a “public place” like in front of a courthouse, or in the city’s downtown.<sup>53</sup> In Easton, Major A.R. Howell, representative for the Lafayette Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, told the Northampton County Commissioners that the “primary object of erecting the monument” and placing it in Centre Square, “was to show to the rising generations the gratitude and appreciation of the nation to those who had fought beneath its flag.”<sup>54</sup> By placing the monument in Centre Square, Howell argued, the memorial would have a prominent place in the community and would show to all generations that the “services” of those that fought in the Civil War were appreciated, as “no country could hope for defense on the part of its citizens unless it was shown that those services” were respected and given their proper place of honor in the memory of those that were left behind.<sup>55</sup> In 1891, standing on the Gettysburg battlefield, war veteran Daniel E. Sickles echoed a similar sentiment while dedicating a monument to the Forty-Second New York Infantry. “There is no better way to prepare for the next war” Sickles declared “than to show your appreciation of your

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<sup>51</sup> “Monument Site Selected,” *Easton Express*, March 3, 1899.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 117.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> “Monument Site Selected,” *Easton Express*, March 3, 1899.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

defenders in the last war.”<sup>56</sup> For Sickles, and many others, the hundreds of monuments and memorials that had already been “placed in towns and cities” throughout the nation – even by 1891 – was evidence of a proud and grateful nation.

However, the proposal to place the Easton monument within the “circular enclosure” of Centre Square ran deeper than the simple desire to have the monument seen by as many people as possible.<sup>57</sup> In 1900, Easton’s Centre Square, like it is today, was intricately tied to the history of the city. It was this plot of land that once served as the “place of every public assemblage in the days of the Revolution and the early days of the Rebellion.” In a May 1900 article *The Easton Express* reported that “in every critical period in our nation’s history” the people of Easton would gather in Centre Square “for public expression and declaration of patriotism and loyalty.”<sup>58</sup> It was here, in Easton’s past, that men and women gathered to express support for America’s independence, and more recently, after hearing the declarations of Southern secession, express support for its continued existence. By placing the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument in Center Square the monument builders were linking the memorial to Easton’s revolutionary and Civil War past, and through this placement they were bestowing on the monument, and the men it was built to honor, an added element of patriotism and societal reverence. As monument planners hoped (and achieved) the attention of residents and visitors to Easton’s downtown would be unavoidably drawn to the memorial upon every visit to the square. The connection this ground holds with the early days of the rebellion, as well as the era of the American Revolution, would further bestow this public space, and

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<sup>56</sup> New York Monuments Commission, *Final Report on the Battlefield of Gettysburg* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1902), 315.

<sup>57</sup> “Monument Site Selected,” *Easton Express*, March 3, 1899.

<sup>58</sup> “Northampton Honors Her Brave Sons,” *Easton Express*, May 10, 1900.

monument, with added importance. Not only does this placement provide a psychological link to the larger narrative of the nation's history, but the space has a defined physical boundary that connects the Easton residents of 1900 to the distant and more recent events in America's past.

While Centre Square's distinction as a place of assembly during the Revolution had for generations served as a connection to the founding era, for the post-Civil War residents of Easton more was needed to sanctify this ground – and link the city and its people – to the sectional conflict. Thirty-five years after the guns of the Civil War had fallen silent, more was needed than a mere point of assembly to connect this public land to the generation that had fought the Civil War. The builders of the Easton monument had the opportunity to construct on this spot a permanent symbol of undeniable and timeless gratitude; one that would forever link Centre Square, and the city of Easton, with the Union victory and the heroic sacrifices of those that fought and died in the war. The monument builders were ensuring that Easton's Centre Square would be the site around which residents would forever assemble when they gathered to publicly remember the Civil War dead.

With the erection of the monument Easton's Centre Square would serve a function similar to that of the National Mall. Both in 1900, and today, the nation's capitol, the National Mall, and the city's "monumental core" function like a "pilgrimage site, where communities of believers actually come together in the act of occupying a holy site, seeing a relic, [or] reenacting a sacred event."<sup>59</sup> With the placement of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Centre Square it would be during moments of regional and

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<sup>59</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 4.



national remembrance (and celebration) that the public space would take on an added degree of the 'sacred'. Speaking at the monument dedication ceremony in May of 1900 an Easton dignitary expressed sentiments that echo these sacred themes. The monument, said the speaker, allowed the living veterans to again "stand shoulder to shoulder" with their departed comrades, as the memorial was said to breathe their breath, quicken their hearts, and refill their "souls with the same patriotic fire" which burned in the days of the war.<sup>60</sup> While the living veterans of the war would one day join their fallen Union brothers these emotions would, in some way or to some degree, be felt by future generations of Easton residents. The 'sacredness' of the monument, and Centre Square, would stir in future citizens these same feelings of reverence and respect, as they remembered the fallen soldiers of the Civil War, and, in later years, the brave men (and women) who had given their lives in the conflicts of more recent history. During the one hundredth anniversary of the monument's dedication, and on every Memorial Day that would follow the unveiling of the monument in 1900, Easton's Centre Square would be transformed into a 'sacred' place where the people of the region would make a pilgrimage in an act of remembrance and respect. The uniqueness of the day, and the rarity of making a pilgrimage to Centre Square *specifically* to see the monument, would make such a journey different from any other, and would add to the ceremony's importance. It is *especially* during these moments of celebration that the monument stands "apart from everyday experience" and promotes "something eternal" as it takes on added elements of the 'sacred.'<sup>61</sup> In this way the journey to see the monument and its very presence in the square – something ancient, strange, and architecturally gothic –

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<sup>60</sup> "Northampton Honors Her Brave Sons," *Easton Express*, May 10, 1900.

<sup>61</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars*, 4.

adds to the sacredness of the public space and the significance of the square to the city of Easton.

This demarcation of a ‘sacred’ space within the territorial confines of the city is in a way a reflection of what was occurring throughout the nation by the 1900s. In the years that followed the end of the war a drive for reconciliation and reunion swept the nation. In many locations, North and South, it would be the Civil War battlefield that would emerge as the preferred site of veteran reunions and monument construction.<sup>62</sup> But in cities like Easton, far removed from the Southern Civil War battlefield, a site of honor and importance was needed. In the absence of a battlefield the city center performed the function and served in place of these sacred and hallowed grounds. By placing the Easton monument within the confines of this historically significant and demarcated space the builders of the monument were able to convey the importance of the memorial. Simply by its placement within the city the builders were able to subconsciously convey to all visitors the importance of the soldier’s sacrifice. If the battlefield stood as a sacred place of remembrance in 1900s America, then the monuments erected in American towns and cities, and the grounds on which those monuments were built, acted then (and today) as tethered links to these national shrines. Each monument served to connect the town – and its people – with the places where their cities’ husbands, fathers, and sons had fallen in a valiant defense of the American republic. While the people of Easton might have been unable to make the journey to Gettysburg or to the Wilderness, they were certainly capable of visiting the monument in Centre Square, and, through this pilgrimage, honor the memory of those men that gave their lives in the fight to preserve the Union.

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<sup>62</sup> David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 177.

### *The Monument Design*



The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Easton's Centre Square. Standing atop the central pillar is a lone bugler, while four stone statues at the memorial's base represent the four branches of the United States armed forces.

The design of the Easton monument is similar to other monuments constructed in the North during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Four stone statues, each representing a branch of the United States armed forces (Infantry, Artillery, Cavalry, and the Navy), surround a seventy-five foot granite pillar. Facing east, in the direction of the Delaware River, is situated the stone statue of the sailor “a symbol of the Navy of the United States” and the “bulwark against foreign aggression” both during the American Civil War, and the 1898 war with Spain.<sup>63</sup> Each of the

monument's four sides are inscribed with the names of the battles in which the men of Northampton County fought: Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Antietam, Chancellorsville, Mobile Bay, Fort Fisher, Shiloh, Pocotaligo, and Lookout Mountain. In addition, the names of eight Union military and political leaders adorn the monument: Porter, Meade, Farragut, Sheridan, Sherman, Grant, Hancock, and Lincoln. Perched high atop the central pillar is a westward facing lone bugler said to “sound taps for all the men of Northampton County who laid down their lives for the union cause.”<sup>64</sup> Two quotations, one written in

<sup>63</sup> “Unique Decision on Monument,” *Easton Daily Free Press* (Semi. Weekly Edition), May 10, 1900.

<sup>64</sup> Northampton County, Pennsylvania, *Soldiers' Monument / Dedication Program*. May 10, 1900.

Latin, are inscribed on the Easton memorial. In a story that seems more legend than historical fact, it is said that these quotations were the last elements to be carved on the stone shaft. By May of 1900, so the story goes, the monument had been completed, however, there were no inscriptions carved on the memorial's façade. It was the first mayor of Easton and veteran of the war, Charles F. Chidsey, while sitting in Billy Park's barbershop in Centre Square, that is said to have written down the "lines and figures that give inspiration to untold thousands." According to the story the mayor paused, thought for a moment, and decided that on the monument's north side the words, 'Dulce et decorum / est pro patria mori' ('It is sweet and right to die for one's country') should be engraved. It was these words, said the mayor, that were the inspiration to the hundreds of men that left Easton and Northampton County to go off and fight in the bloody battles of the Civil War. With this quote for the north facing side of the monument chosen the mayor then focused his attention on the south side of the memorial. Writing on a piece of paper the mayor decided that on the monument's south facing side the words to be carved should be "words that symbolized reconciliation with the seceding States, the famous words of Daniel Webster, 'Union and liberty now and for ever, one and inseparable.'"<sup>65</sup> It would be these words, wrapped in historical and national significance that would act as Easton's invitation of reconciliation with the South and all those Confederate soldiers that had once taken up arms against the men, and citizens, of Easton.

The origins of Webster's words rest in the nullification debate of the 1830s. For supporters of this theory of nullification, men like John C. Calhoun, the argument was that the government of any state could, by its own "sovereign authority", annul any act of the federal government that it deemed "plainly and palpably unconstitutional." For those

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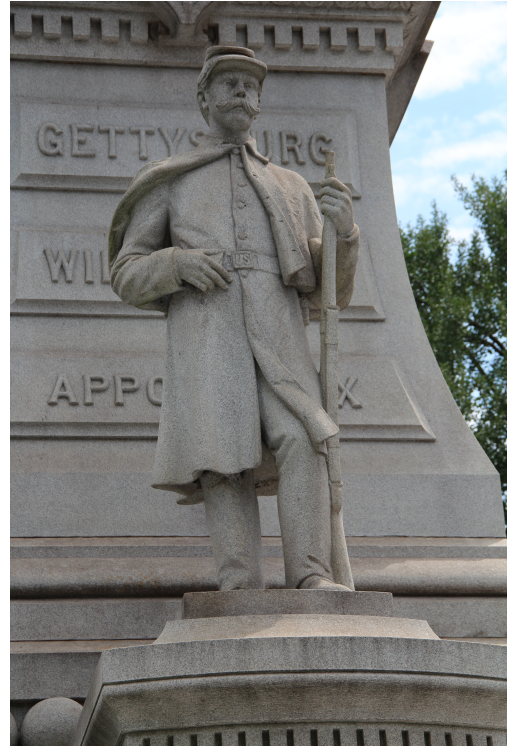
<sup>65</sup> "Unique Decision on Monument," *Easton Daily Free Press* (Semi. Weekly Edition), May 10, 1900.

who opposed this idea – men like Daniel Webster – the assertion struck at the very heart of constitutional law and federal sovereignty. In the eyes of Webster the *people* of the United States were the nation’s supreme authority, and it was the *people* that had determined that the Constitution was the “supreme law of the land.” The people, Webster argued, had already decided the debate as they had placed on the legislatures of each state certain “salutary restraints” and in this way had declared the “supremacy of the Constitution” over all state governments. If the Constitution was the supreme law of the land, and the states were inherently imposed with certain legal restrictions, then, Webster declared, Calhoun’s nullification policy allowing states to invalidate federal laws was unquestionably illegal. For Webster, and other opponents of this theory of nullification, it was imperative that this question of state and federal supremacy be decided before it split the nation in two. Speaking before the Senate in 1830 Webster argued that so long as the nation was united the country had “high, exciting, [and] gratifying prospects” in its future. For this reason, Webster declared, an inseparable and united nation was paramount, as it would be beneficial to those Americans living in the North and those living in the South.<sup>66</sup> It would be this sentiment of unity, and the benefits that came with this national cohesion, which would propel the Easton mayor to suggest that Daniel Webster’s words be engraved on the granite monument – a token of reconciliation, and a reminder to both sides that in a *United States* there would flourish national prosperity and happiness.

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<sup>66</sup> Daniel Webster, “The Second Reply to Hayne,” January 26-27, 1830, Published online by Dartmouth College.

The monument that was designed and constructed by the city of Easton conforms to the trend in Northern monument construction that was sweeping the nation by the early twentieth century. The most popular monument design to emerge in the years immediately after the Civil War was the standing soldier. In *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration* Thomas J. Brown remarks that what is most striking about early monument design is the “dominance of one type of composition: the statue of a uniformed standing soldier holding the barrel of a rifle that rests upright on the ground in front of him.”<sup>67</sup> These standing soldier statues are said to be depictions of a soldier at “place rest” or “parade rest” and were an extremely common form of soldier monument being built in *communities* throughout the nation. In fact, with the Easton monument, like other monuments erected in Northern towns and cities, there is a tendency towards depicting the stone soldiers at rest; as if the builders were trying to send the calming and tranquil message that the men who went off to fight and die in the war were now, finally, at peace. In contrast the soldier statues found on Civil War *battlefields* in the North “overwhelmingly tended toward active poses” as these memorials illustrated



The statue of a Union soldier at the base of Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. The soldier stands gazing off into the distance as his rifle rests gently at his side.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 24.

events that had taken place on that hectic and hallowed ground, and thus these statues were more prone to fluid and active depictions.<sup>68</sup>



Dedicated in 1865, this memorial on the Manassas (Bull Run) battlefield is characteristic of early monument design as the large central obelisk is the focal point of the monument.

By the late 1860s and 1870s, this new type of “commemorative style” (the single-soldier at rest) had soon replaced the “obelisk as the dominant type of Civil War monument” as these standing soldiers could be seen dotting the North by the 1880s, and the South

by the 1890s. Indeed, the period from 1890 to 1920 saw the soldier at rest account for over “80 percent of known single-figure monuments” as it had become the central icon of Civil War commemoration.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps a reflection of the feelings of reconciliation that were being expressed on the national stage, by the final decades of the 1800s both regions – the North and the South – began adopting monument styles that mirrored these sentiments of national harmony. As this single soldier monument became more popular, it also underwent its own evolution as these statues not only depicted the soldier holding his rifle at rest, but also portrayed him as a “sentinel holding his rifle in ready position with bayonet fixed.”<sup>70</sup> As the 1880s drew to a close there were nearly two hundred of these single soldier statues prominently displayed in city centers, community greens, and Civil War battlefields across the nation.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 33.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 24.

At the same time these single soldiers statues were growing in popularity there also emerged a trend in monument construction that combined the older obelisk with these single soldier statues. However, even as the style of monument continued to evolve in the 1860s, 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s the single-figure soldier continued to play a crucial role in Civil War memorialization, as the soldier statue was prominently displayed in this new style of Civil War memorial. Those communities that aspired to build something “grander than a single-figure statue”, Brown argues, most often favored this new form of Civil War memorial. The common characteristic that these new monument forms shared was a large central stone obelisk, and placed at the monument’s base were smaller stone statues, often representing the Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and Navy of the United States. It was the ordinary soldier in each of these branches of the military – and not the general or officer – that these monuments were intended to honor and remember. Therefore, carved reliefs and stone statues of Civil War officers were less likely to be incorporated into the monument, as it was the “ordinary private” that was said to “command” the attention of the observer at these memorials.<sup>71</sup>

In all of these ways the Easton monument is representative of the broader trend of Northern monument design that was prevalent in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Like other monuments constructed during this era, the Easton monument was designed to be “vertical, placed high on a pedestal that mediated between the physical site it dominated and the symbolic capital it embodied.”<sup>72</sup> The very material that the Easton monument was constructed from is similar to other monuments of the period. Monuments like Easton’s were intended to serve as “permanent fixtures” in a distinctive “spatial and social”

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 26-31.

<sup>72</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 37.



landscape and thus these monuments were often built using “enduring materials like marble, granite, or bronze.”<sup>73</sup> The granite shaft and stone statues of the Easton monument have indeed stood the test of time enduring the ravages of weather for the last one-hundred and thirteen years. It was only in 1984 that the monument underwent a cleaning and renovation when the “joints under the bugler” were sealed and the entire structure was reinforced and given a thorough inspection.<sup>74</sup> Even the bugler, which stands atop the granite shaft, conforms to the larger trend of Northern monument design, a variation of the single soldier statue that was so popular in the 1860s and 1870s. Like those statues that depict their soldiers with their rifles resting gently, peacefully at their side, the Easton monument further conveys this element of rest and calm. Instead of a rifle the soldier holds a bugle to his lips, presumably playing taps for all those



The lone bugler high atop Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument is in many ways a variation of the soldier at rest that was popular in many Northern monuments constructed at the turn of the twentieth century.

soldiers that had fallen in battle, and, in the years that followed the 1900 dedication, all those veterans who would eventually answer his tranquil and sober summons. The monument that stands in Centre Square reflects many of the larger Northern trends in monument design, from the large granite shaft, the statues that are placed at its base, the material the monument is constructed from, as well as the incorporation and depiction of

<sup>73</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 37.

<sup>74</sup> “From horn to toe” *Easton Express*, October 16, 1984.

the lone Civil War soldier that has, for the last one-hundred and thirteen years, stood at the summit of the seventy-five foot memorial keeping a watchful eye over the city, and the people of Easton.

### *The Monument's Inscriptions*

The inscriptions carved on to Soldiers' and Sailors' monuments built across the North also exhibit their own unique characteristics. In the immediate aftermath of the war the monuments that were built throughout the nation were most often "dedicated to the dead", but in the North monuments were soon constructed that were "dedicated to all soldiers" who had offered their service during the conflict.<sup>75</sup> In fact, by the 1880s monuments dedicated to all veterans of the war outnumbered those dedicated solely to the men who had died.<sup>76</sup> This shift in the focus of monument dedication did not occur in the South until the early years of the twentieth century. The Easton monument is reflective of this Northern trend in Civil War memorialization as the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument, dedicated in May of 1900, does not only remember those who fell in battle, but was built to honor "the memory of the heroic men who not only saved this nation, but made it great and honored throughout the world."<sup>77</sup> The need of a people to remember not only the men who *died* in war, but also those who *fought* in war, can be so powerful that there can at times even arise a comingling of wars that are separated by decades. For instance, in an article published in the *Easton Daily Free Press* (Semi-Weekly Edition) it was reported that no better a location could have been chosen to erect a monument to the "memory of the men who fell in battle in the Civil War *and in the war*

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<sup>75</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 36.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> "Northampton Honors Her Brave Sons," *Easton Express*, May 10, 1900.

*with Spain* (emphasis added)” then Centre Square.<sup>78</sup> While the Civil War monument was most certainly dedicated solely to those men who fought and died in the Civil War, the attempt to connect the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument to the recent (1898) war with Spain speaks volumes about the innate need for a people to honor those soldiers who fought to protect the republic and the liberties its citizens hold sacred.

It is this innate human need to honor and remember the sacrifices of American soldiers (here specifically Civil War veterans) that makes the words chosen to affix the monument so important, and also extremely reflective of the type of Civil War memory that was being formed in the minds of the people of Easton. In both the North and the South the inscriptions carved into Union and Confederate monuments often “expressed some of the same sentiments.”<sup>79</sup> While monuments built in the North, more often than in the South, were inscribed with passages from the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, and Daniel Webster’s Senate speech which proclaimed the “promise of ‘liberty and union’” there was a tendency for both sides to quote the Horatian adage ‘Dulce et decorum / est pro patria mori’ (‘It is sweet and proper to die for one’s country’).<sup>80</sup> Not only does the Easton memorial display this quote on the north side of the monument but it also has carved into its south facing side Daniel Webster’s words which reflect the hope that, with the fighting of the Civil War, the Union would be forever inseparable.

But also the Easton monument is reflective of Northern trends in Civil War memory, and monument design, in the words that are *not* displayed on the center obelisk or surrounding stone soldiers. Besides those monuments that include a passage from the

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<sup>78</sup> “The Soldiers’ Monument,” *Easton Daily Free Press* (Semi. Weekly Edition), May 10, 1900.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 36.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

Gettysburg Address less than five percent “of known Union inscriptions refer explicitly to the abolition of slavery” and as equally rare is any monument that identifies equal rights for African Americans “as an objective of the war.”<sup>81</sup> Easton’s monument, typical of other Northern monuments, makes reference to none of these causes or objectives of the conflict. In all of these ways the Easton monument is a product of a Northern Civil War memory and helps to reinforce and perpetuate this memory to future generations. In an *Easton Express* article from May 10, 1900 it was said that the monument called for “no justification by word of mouth” as it silently spoke its meaning.<sup>82</sup> For this Easton newspaper the inscription on the north side of the monument – ‘It is sweet and right to die for one’s country’ – was the dying inspiration of every soldier, while the inscription on the south side, ‘Liberty and Union now and forever, one and inseparable’ extended that hand of reconciliation to the Southern states and their veterans. The fact that both sides often used the quote ‘It is sweet and right to die for one’s country’, in a way, psychologically united the nation as these former enemies began remembering their dead, and living veterans, in a similar manner. Additionally, as already discussed, it was Webster’s quote that symbolized the benefits of unity, and thus acted as a spirit of reconciliation engraved into the monument’s stone façade. However, while the ‘forever’ and ‘inseparable’ parts of Webster’s quote hinted at the hoped for future unity of the nation, being a Northern monument, built to honor the Union soldier, it was understood by all who viewed the monument that it was the *Union* soldier who had made this perpetual unification possible. Falling in line with other Northern monuments there is no mention on the stone facade of the secessionist South, the horrific institution of slavery,

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<sup>81</sup> Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 37.

<sup>82</sup> “Northampton Honors Her Brave Sons,” *Easton Express*, May 10, 1900.

the Confederate military or political leaders, or the fight to emancipate the Southern slaves. The monument creates a memory of the war that fits into the Northern memory of the Civil War that existed at the turn of the century. The war was about the Union; it was about the preservation of the republic. According to this memory of the war, the Union soldiers who died for their country were sacrificing themselves so the republic might live and the nation might realize a rebirth of liberty and peace, never again to be threatened with separation. In this memory of the war, reinforced by the Easton monument, the sacrifices of the Easton and Northampton soldier were not in vain, nor would their sacrifices every be considered trivial or empty. Through their fighting and sacrifice they ensured that the Union would be preserved, and through these acts of bravery and loyalty they prevented the Union from ever facing a secessionist crisis in the future (Liberty and Union now and *forever*). Here there is a connection not just to the generation erecting the monument, but to all future generations. In this memory of the war it is not just the generation of 1900 that should be thankful for the sacrifices made by the Easton and Northampton men who fought and died in the Civil War, but all generations that followed. Without their sacrifice, and their fight to preserve the Union, the specter of secession might have forever loomed over the American republic. Being a Northern monument the Easton memorial bestows upon the Union soldier the honor of saving the nation, but it does so in a way that still respects the Southern veteran and the efforts at reconciliation being made with the old Confederacy at the turn of the century. The monument does not belittle the Southern soldier or even the cause for which he fought. Instead the Easton memorial emphasizes that, with the end of the war, the nation was *forever united*, and it is with that unity that both sides – Union and Confederate – could

work at rebuilding their now unified country as they would never again need to “suppress [any] rebellion” between a united American people.<sup>83</sup>

The inscriptions placed on the Easton monument, and other Northern memorials, also reflect a broader American culture fascinated and obsessed with death. With the Civil War, the private, individual encounter with death so common in earlier decades was now experienced by thousands of Americans in a simultaneous and very public manner. Even the monument’s dedication ceremony exhibited these underlying themes as imagery of death and resurrection were prominent. “Be kind, my friends, be very kind,” said a speaker at the monument’s dedication “to the Union veteran who lingers with you.” These aging veterans, said the speaker, are now “facing westward and watching the setting sun” waiting till their own shadow is “a little longer drawn” and they hear “from out the sky, one more blast of the bugle....” While this quote conjures imagery of death, as was explained at the monument’s dedication, the memorial constructed in Easton’s Centre Square is “not a tomb.”<sup>84</sup> Instead the monument acts as a catalyst for remembering these fallen Civil War soldiers as each time a visitor gazes on the Easton monument, the memory of the Civil War dead is ‘resurrected’ in the minds of the observer. For Drew Gilpin Faust it was this experience with death that “created the modern American union” as citizens across the nation – North and South – struggled to accept and understand the death that arrived as a result of the Civil War.<sup>85</sup> In many ways this encounter with death helped strengthen the feelings of reconciliation and reunion that were spreading throughout the nation in the late 1800s and early 1900s, as both sides had sent men off to

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<sup>83</sup> “Proposition to Build a Monument in the Square,” *Easton Sentinel*, July 5, 1866.

<sup>84</sup> “Monument Unveiled,” *The Easton Daily Free Press*, May 10, 1900.

<sup>85</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), XII, XIV.

fight and ultimately die in the conflict. The reality that both the North and the South were now dealing with this unprecedented scale of death provided a shared set of emotions – grief and sorrow – that both Northerner and Southerner could equally understand. At the dedication of the Easton monument, as a city paid tribute to both the dead and living veterans, it was said that even though they had gathered on that May day in 1900 to honor the memory of the Union soldier “there can be no disposition at this day to detract from or disrespect those to whom you were opposed.”<sup>86</sup> In the shadow of the newly unveiled monument the people of the Easton were expressing two memories of the war. The first, a unionist/Northern recollection of the conflict in which the Northern soldier was remembered as the hero who saved the republic, and a reconciliationist memory of the war in which even the enemy was said to have fought and died with the utmost valor. While the monument was built to honor and remember the men of Easton and Northampton County (Union soldiers) who fought and died in the war, the occasion of the dedication was still a moment when both sympathy and empathy – and that hand of reconciliation and reunion – was still extended to the people, and veterans, of the short-lived Confederacy.

It was also in this culture fascinated by death that many believed that the final words spoken by a dying person were believed to be truth, both because the person had no reason to lie, and because he or she was about to meet their God.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, these last words carried immense meaning on the “life narrative” of the individual as they “communicated invaluable lessons to those” family, friends, and citizens that were left

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<sup>86</sup> “Monument Unveiled,” *The Easton Daily Free Press*, May 10, 1900.

<sup>87</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 11.

behind.<sup>88</sup> In a way the inscriptions placed on monuments (like the one in Easton) serve as the last words of those soldiers that were killed on the distant fields of battle. Words, or inscriptions, like ‘It is sweet and proper to die for one’s country’ speak volumes to those that were left to find meaning in the deaths of thousands of young men who went off to fight for their country, but sadly, never returned home. These “public monuments” explains Kirk Savage, “are an inherently conservative art form” as they “obey the logic of the last word, the logic of closure” as the inscriptions and words carved into the stone “are fixed forever” as these “statues do not move and change” even while the society around them undergoes its own radical transformations.<sup>89</sup> The Easton monument conforms to these conservative artistic trends. The stone soldiers at the monument’s base and the bugler high atop the granite shaft all stand vertical, their forms lacking any real conveyance of motion as their gaze is fixed on a distant horizon, their faces void of any real emotion or depth of expression. The basic story of the Easton monument is told primarily through the inscriptions carved in granite, however, the depth of the story is only understood if one has knowledge of the Civil War, its Union leaders, and the battles in which the men of Easton and Northampton County fought. While an observer can certainly understand why the monument was built, and to whom it was dedicated, when compared to future monuments (like the 1954 Marine Corps War Memorial dedicated to remember the Iwo Jima flag raising) the soldier statues of Easton tell a story only when examined in conjunction with the larger memorial complex, while the fluid, moving soldiers of the Iwo Jima memorial convey a story solely by their presence and artistic depiction. The “conservative” tendency of these turn of the twentieth century memorials,

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<sup>88</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 11.

<sup>89</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars*, 10.



Savage explains, “means that monuments strip the hero or event of historical complexities and condense the subject’s significance to a few patriotic lessons frozen for all time.”<sup>90</sup> For the people of Easton, the patriotic lesson being conveyed was that the monument stood as a “testimony” of the “gratitude” of a city and county, and a reminder that in “civil life” all citizens should “jealously guard the rights, liberties, and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution” which the men of Easton and Northampton County fought to preserve.<sup>91</sup> The Easton monument, like all monuments, obeyed the ‘logic of the last word’ as it perpetuated this patriotic sentiment that all Americans, including the people of Easton, should dutifully follow. While the centrality of the monument and its role in Easton would change over time, there would also be an unconscious understanding – perpetuated by the very existence of the monument – that the men who died fighting in the Civil War were worthy of honor in the memory of the city, and the nation. Inscriptions like those on the Easton monument act as the perpetual last words of not merely a single man, but a generation of Americans that sent their men off to fight and die in a Civil War.

### *The Monument and Memory*

The Easton monument, unveiled in the *North* at the turn of the century, acts in a manner similar to the ceremonies held on battlefields throughout the country, as it creates a memory of the war that perpetuates a Unionist and reconciliationist memory of the conflict. In *Memorial Mania*, Erika Doss explains that from the 1870s to the 1920s statues “not only embellished the postbellum public landscape but encouraged passionate

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<sup>90</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars*, 10.

<sup>91</sup> “Monument Unveiled,” *The Easton Daily Free Press*, May 10, 1900.

and consensual understandings of nationhood” and these understandings were in many ways influenced by the monuments being erected, and the heroes being honored.<sup>92</sup> Being a Northern monument, erected in a Northern state, by a Northern people, the Easton monument espouses the belief that the Union cause, and the preservation of the United States, was the righteous crusade. On that dedication day in May of 1900, it was not only said that the men being remembered fought to suppress the rebellion of the Southern states but some speakers went so far to declare that the men who fought and died *saved the nation*.<sup>93</sup> By elevating the Union cause and making no mention on the monument of the Southern people, culture, commanders, and soldiers, the monument designers were successfully building a memorial that perpetuated a Northern memory of the war; a memory in which the Southern people were the traitorous secessionists fighting for an unjust cause and the immoral institution of slavery. Additionally, the names carved into the stone monument are those of famous Union leaders – men like Grant, Sherman, and Lincoln – and not, by 1900, the equally well known Confederate leaders. But also every Easton newspaper that discussed the monument, and its dedication, made it explicitly clear that the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument being unveiled in Centre Square was built to honor those men who fought and “lost their lives in the late *war to suppress rebellion* (emphasis added).”<sup>94</sup> Thus, Easton’s Civil War memorial was a monument built by a *Northern* people, to honor the *Northern* struggle to defeat a Southern rebellion that was attempting to destroy the republic that was held sacred by so many Americans in the North.

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<sup>92</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 20.

<sup>93</sup> “Northampton Honors Her Brave Sons,” *Easton Express*, May 10, 1900.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*.

However, at the same time the Easton monument emphasizes this Unionist memory of the war it also conveys elements focused on reconciliation and reunion. Daniel Webster's quote that symbolizes and hints at the now inseparable nature of the American republic, extends that hand of friendship and brotherhood to the old Confederacy. Regardless of why the war was fought both sides – in a spirit of reconciliation – were now emphasizing the indivisible nature of the American republic. While the disagreements over slavery and states' rights might have once been enough to break the nation in two, in this new era of reunion Webster's quote emphasized the *future* Union, declaring it an inseparable nation in which "liberty" for all citizens would prevail "for ever."<sup>95</sup> Even the remarks made at the dedication ceremony in May of 1900 convey the reconciliation and reunion sentiments that the construction of the monument was, *partially*, meant to express. Addressing the crowd of city and county residents, as well as Union veterans, a city dignitary declared that even though the South took up arms against the United States the soldiers that did so were still "armies like you of American blood" who despite their actions still "preferred the same adherence to the rights guaranteed by the Constitution" as any Union soldier or citizen of the North. Speaking of the recent war with Spain the dignitary continued, proclaiming that in past wars the "conflict was against a stranger, upon foreign soil and in distant territory." But in this war, the war that they had gathered to remember that May day – America's Civil War – the forces who once opposed one another on the fields of battle were now "reunited, and in common cause" determined to uphold the "dignity and strength of the nation."<sup>96</sup> Through the incorporation of Webster's quote on the monument, as well as the sentiments expressed

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<sup>95</sup> "Monument Unveiled," *The Easton Daily Free Press*, May 10, 1900.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

at the monument's dedication ceremony, these reconciliationist sentiments were expressed by the residents of Easton and Northampton County, as well as reflect a Northern populace that was embracing a Civil War memory that emphasized a victorious Union and two former enemies beginning to reconcile with one another.

The Easton monument, and the hundreds of other memorials that were erected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Doss explains, "paid tribute to America's soldier dead and reified a national ideology of militarism and masculinity."<sup>97</sup> The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument of Easton, like other monuments of the era, is dedicated to the *men* who sacrificed their lives in service to the nation. The monument makes no mention of the sacrifices made by women (domestically or in the war effort), nor does it recognize the contribution made by African Americans (free or enslaved). While this is not unusual for monuments erected at the turn of the century it does further strengthen and perpetuate a memory that the war was a conflict fought by *men* to protect the nation (normally spoken of in the feminine) and the women that these men left behind. These statues and memorials continued to play a "vital role in championing collective national ideals" and helped to perpetuate the Northern vision of the war as a fight between *brothers* in which *men* died trying to preserve the sacred bond of nationhood that the South had so treasonously destroyed in their declarations of secession.<sup>98</sup>

In fact, it is in this creation and perpetuation of a collective national memory of the war, and a shared national ideology, that the Easton monument is representative of other monuments being constructed across the North at the turn of the century. In her discussion of Eric Hobsbawm, Erika Doss explains that monuments, like the Easton

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<sup>97</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 24.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

monument, became “central to the construction of shared national ideologies and identities” as they operated as “open air museum[s]” chronicling the events of America’s recent past, and paid tribute to the ordinary men who were now the creators of history.<sup>99</sup> Throughout American history it was often the leaders – the men of destiny – who were said to make history, and consequently, to be remembered by those that followed. But the Civil War of 1861-65 acted not only as a rebirth of the republic, but also a reboot of who makes and who should be remembered in the annals of the national narrative. In this new paradigm, with the outbreak of the Civil War, hundreds of Easton and Northampton residents left home and fought to suppress a Southern rebellion. By participating in this epic struggle the soldiers who fought in the war became the *makers* of history, and thus worthy of remembrance by those generations that were to follow. It would be to those heroes – the ordinary soldier – that monuments would now be dedicated. While their names might never grace the pages of a history textbook, they would be spoken of with the same admiration and respect bestowed upon Lincoln and Grant, or even Jefferson, Adams, and Washington.

However, still forgotten in this narrative were the millions of African Americans that were, in some way, linked to the history and legacy of the Civil War. Whether they were one of the millions of black Americans who were enslaved, or one of the many who fought for the Union cause, their names and their contributions were forgotten during the era of Civil War memory, and monument building, that existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Instead of emphasizing an emancipationist memory of the war, ordinary Americans would continue to perpetuate a memory of the Civil War that stressed the reconciliation and reunion that had taken place over the last thirty-five years,

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<sup>99</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 38.

as two former enemies became friends, and brothers, once again. Even as the years and decades progressed this reconciliationist memory of the war would remain popular, not only in Easton, but across the country, as people as powerful and influential as the American presidents continued to reinforce this message of reunion and national harmony.

*Reconciliationist Memory and the American Presidents (1913-1938)*

By 1913 fifty years had past since the Union and Confederate armies had clashed in a bloody three-day battle in and around a small Pennsylvania town named Gettysburg. To mark and honor the occasion a reunion of the still living veterans – of both sides – was held on the battlefield at Gettysburg. Speaking to the assembled crowd on July 4, 1913 President Woodrow Wilson would declare that his task was to comprehend what the fifty years since the Battle of Gettysburg had meant to the nation. Addressing the spectators, as well as Union and Confederate veterans, the president stated that the years since war had meant “...peace and union and vigor, and the maturity and might of a great nation.”<sup>100</sup> Brimming with confidence and certainty the president continued:

“How wholesome and healing the peace has been! We have found one another again as brothers and comrades in arms, 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.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 183.

<sup>101</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “Address at Gettysburg,” Speech, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 4, 1913, Published online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

For Wilson, the fifty years since those July days of 1863 saw the focus not on the unfinished task of the war – equality for African Americans – but instead the years had proven the remarkable ability of the American people to unite after such a deadly and divisive war. By 1915, David W. Blight explains, African Americans remained “deeply interested” in remembering the war and defining the memory of the conflict, however, fifty years after the war had come to an end blacks in America were still a “segregated and invisible” demographic in national society. By 1900 the memory of the war was focused not on the social and racial injustices that still existed throughout the country, nor was the emphasis placed on the treasonous acts of the secessionist states. What was remembered by the turn of the century – and would only grow in popularity in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s – was the peace and unity that was achieved in the expanse of time since the fighting had come to an end.

Even by 1938, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt watched as war clouds coalesced over Europe, the president traveled to Gettysburg to dedicate a new battlefield monument that would mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the battle. The president used his dedication of the new Eternal Light Peace Memorial to not only remind the assembled crowd about the unity that had grown since the war’s end but he also linked the bravery and determination of the Civil War soldier with the citizens of his own generation – a generation that was (unknowingly) about to confront an even greater, and arguably, far more critical crisis. To the assembled crowd, which included over 1,800 Union and Confederate veterans, Roosevelt declared that the soldiers of the Union and the old Confederacy now stood at Gettysburg as brothers, “united in loyalty”, swearing

allegiance and devotion to only “one flag.”<sup>102</sup> Roosevelt continued, as if to foreshadow the determination that he would display during World War II, proclaiming that Lincoln understood that “when a challenge to constituted government is thrown down, the people must in self-defense take it up” and that the “fight must be fought through to a decision so clear that it is accepted as being beyond recall.”<sup>103</sup> It would be this determination, and a rejection of anything but unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, that would drive Roosevelt and the Allies throughout the Second World War.

For Franklin Roosevelt, and many others, the distinction between the Union and Confederate soldier was meaningless nearly a century after the war had come to an end. Civil War veterans now aged and frail stood at the High Water Mark and shook hands over a stonewall where once, long ago, their blood was spilled. The truth that it was once the soldier of that old Confederacy who had challenged the government, and it was the Union soldier who had battled to preserve that now cherished institution was all but forgotten on that day in Gettysburg. Nearly a century after the war had ended, and the nation was reunited, the two sides of that ancient conflict were now, in the memory of a new generation of Americans, only one. They might have worn different uniforms but they were a generation of men that shared similar qualities of heart and mind. They were all brave and loyal, courageous and determined to fight for a cause they believed just. It was these qualities that Roosevelt now revered as he paid tribute to the surviving veterans who assembled that day in 1938, and to those soldiers that had long ago answered the bugler’s call.

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<sup>102</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Address at Gettysburg,” Speech, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, May 30, 1934, Published online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



By 1938 the memory of the Civil War, and the courage, loyalty, and devotion displayed by the Union (and Confederate) soldier was now being used to call a new American populace to arms. As the Civil War generation slowly died off, and the years since 1865 grew greater, the painful and raw emotions of the war were soon overpowered by new events and national emergencies. With the early morning attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 any lingering doubts of national unity would soon be forgotten as a nation – now firmly united – undertook a new crusade against new international enemies. However, as a nation embarked on a determined mission to eradicate the Nazi threat from the map of Europe, at home, there was still a lingering and ignored legacy of the war: equality for African Americans. It would be this failed objective of the Civil War that would come to define the memory of the Civil War in post-World War II America.

### **Civil War Memory, Civil Rights, and the Easton Monument in Post-World War II America**

In the aftermath of the Second World War the Easton monument took on new meaning as the memory of the Civil War underwent its own readjustment. In the years that followed World War II the United States emerged as a world power, confronted a communist menace on the international stage, and experienced its own internal turmoil as racial equality became the focus of social and political debate. Perhaps more than any other societal force, it was the African American struggle for equality that captured the psychology of a nation in postwar America. With the commemoration of the Civil War centennial (1957-1965) there arose an opportunity for activists, historians, politicians, and ordinary Americans to reevaluate the century old conflict through a new prism of

race, race relations, and racial equality. In many areas of the nation little had changed since the fiftieth anniversary of the war. In the 1960s, as in the 1910s, the war was still remembered as “a celebration of white reconciliation and white supremacy” as the role of African Americans in the conflict was marginalized and ignored by many Americans.<sup>104</sup> The emancipationist memory of the war that had emerged in the years after Appomattox was all but forgotten as a *white* North and a *white* South used the intervening one hundred years to strengthen those ties of unity that existed between the two regions of the nation. The “intense nationalism” that arose during the world wars, and the Cold War of the 1950s, only helped to strengthen these ideas of national unity and brotherhood.<sup>105</sup> What was forgotten by the mid-twentieth century was the belief that the Union victory in the war had “reinvented the republic and advanced democracy” for all Americans – white *and black*. It was instead the memory of reconciliation and reunion that held sway over the hearts and minds of a majority of the (white) American public.<sup>106</sup> However, the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, combined with the centennial observance of the Civil War, provided historians, civil rights activists, and politicians the opportunity to reassert this forgotten emancipationist memory of the conflict into the national dialogue. The concurrence of these two events provided American society an opportunity to reexamine the *true* legacy of the war, and to consider what role, if any, the African American struggle for political and social equality should factor into a nation’s memory of the one hundred year old sectional conflict.

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<sup>104</sup> Jon Wiener, “Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights: The Civil War Centennial in Context, 1960-1965,” in *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, ed. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 237.

<sup>105</sup> David W. Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>106</sup> Jon Wiener, “Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights”, 237.

One of the most powerful and popular leaders of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., would compel a nation to consider whether these two events – the Civil War and the civil rights movement – were in fact connected by a common ideological and psychological thread. In his 1963 ‘I Have a Dream’ speech King would convey a sentiment similar to the one expressed by Abraham Lincoln when, in 1863, the president spoke at the dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery. For Lincoln the Civil War had “necessitated a new founding” and a “redefinition” of the United States rooted in the “destruction of slavery and the reborn, ill-defined principle of human equality.”<sup>107</sup> One hundred years later, standing in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial, King’s speech would compel a nation to reconsider how these two distant events were intertwined. “One hundred years later the Negro still is not free” King declared to the assembled crowd, arguing that “America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned.”<sup>108</sup> “Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy” King continued, “Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children.”<sup>109</sup> While King never mentions the Civil War, nor does he call the daily injustices experienced by African Americans a failed legacy of that war, standing in the shadow of the ‘Great Emancipator’, one hundred years after Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg, there was fostered a symbolism, and a connection to the Civil War, that was clear to many in attendance. For King, the civil rights movement, like the Civil War, marked a “revolution” as this African American struggle for civil rights served as “refounding” of those same principles spoken

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<sup>107</sup> David W. Blight, *American Oracle*, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream.” Speech, Washington, DC, August 28, 1963. Published online by the Lillian Goldman Law Library of Yale Law School.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

of by Lincoln at Gettysburg.<sup>110</sup> However, while King's words had a powerful effect on activists in the civil rights movement, for a majority of the American people his speech did little to redefine how they remembered their century old Civil War. In 1963 King was speaking to an American public that still preferred a Civil War mythology – and memory – in which the “mutual valor of the Blue and Gray” was emphasized instead of the “troublesome, disruptive problem” that revolved around the tensions that existed between whites and African Americans.<sup>111</sup>

Even the National Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC), established in 1957 to commemorate the war's one-hundredth anniversary, had difficulty finding an “adequate” and meaningful way to “balance Civil War remembrance with [the] civil rights rebellion” of the decade, as it was race that proved to be the “thorniest problem” for the commission.<sup>112</sup> It's possible that the CWCC controversy making headlines around the nation might have partially convinced the city of Easton to forgo any centennial celebration. Why sponsor an event that could potentially spark protests and criticism of Easton's racial policies, or lack of support exhibited by the city's elected officials? On a national level, Blight explains, many African American leaders had been “brutally critical of the purpose and tone of the centennial from its beginning” claiming that while the South might have lost the war, it was certainly going to “win the centennial.”<sup>113</sup> In many ways the critics were right. Instead of seeking an acceptable solution to this problem the leaders of the commission continued to promote the conflict as a “brothers' war” as it was this vision of the Civil War, one in which the conflict was remembered as

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<sup>110</sup> David W. Blight, *American Oracle*, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 11, 14.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 20.

a war fought “between men of equal valor and purpose, North or South” that would be “potentially pleasing...to all sides and memories.”<sup>114</sup> For members of the Centennial Commission the question of race, its relationship to the war’s legacy, as well as a nation’s memory of the conflict, were each powerful factors influencing how the war would be marked and remembered one hundred years later. One of the most popular forms of centennial commemoration that was unofficially endorsed by the CWCC, and was embraced by both Northerners and Southerners, was the reenactment of famous Civil War battles. In July of 1961, nearly 70,000 people paid “four dollars each to sit in bleachers and witness a mock staging of the First Battle of Bull Run” near Manassas, Virginia, the site where the actual fighting had taken place one hundred years earlier. Produced at a cost of nearly \$170,000 the reenactment of the battle included over 3,000 reenactors and was a joint production of the First Manassas Corporation, the CWCC, the National Park Service, the Defense Department, and the Virginia Civil War commission.<sup>115</sup> In a miniature sixty-four page booklet distributed to visitors on July 22-23, 1961 the battle reenactment was said to “remind all Americans” that the bonds of brotherhood and national unity that were evident at the war’s centennial was “a continuing cause for gratitude” and served as a “source of strength” for the nation.<sup>116</sup>

While popular to some, there were many who asserted that a single century was far too little time in the history of the United States to be holding such realistic and vivid performances. Critics argued that it was “quite impossible” to relive the four years of the Civil War without “recalling experiences” that would be unpleasant to the people of both

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<sup>114</sup> David W. Blight, *American Oracle*, 14.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> First Manassas Corporation, *The Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run)* (Washington, D.C.: First Manassas Corporation, 1961), 2-3.

the North and the South.<sup>117</sup> However, what was more concerning to many was the fact that at the same time these centennial ceremonies were taking place there were also violent and racially charged confrontations between civil rights activists and white segregationists occurring throughout the nation. Two months before the reenactment to commemorate the First Battle of Bull Run, and at the same time the 1861 attack on Fort Sumter was being remembered, newspapers across the nation were reporting on the “vicious mob attacks” perpetrated against the Freedom Riders as they journeyed throughout the South.<sup>118</sup> The simultaneous pairing of these two events – the Civil War centennial and the civil rights movement – was incompatible for many living throughout the United States. To have a nation honor and remember the Civil War (which had as one of its greatest objectives the end of slavery and the guarantee of African American equality) while concurrently witnessing the brutal and violent attacks on civil rights activists throughout the South was, for many, fundamentally inconsistent. The result was a new criticism of the Civil War and its legacy, this time viewed through the lens of the civil rights movement. There were some historians and civil rights activists who now argued that the entire Civil War was “in vain” if nearly a century after the war had come to an end “the Negro’s right to full equality” was still being limited by “prejudice enacted into law or perpetuated by custom.”<sup>119</sup>

In an attempt to gloss over such a controversial topic as political and social equality for African Americans some newspapers, magazines, and cities appear to have avoided linking the two events. Easton appears to have followed this trend as very little was published during the postwar years about the Civil War or the monument in Centre

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<sup>117</sup> Jon Wiener, “Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights”, 242.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

Square. With this lack of local attention being focused on the Civil War it was national publications that appear to have dominated and controlled the discussion of America's Civil War during its one-hundredth anniversary. In 1961, with the war's centennial quickly approaching, *Life* magazine published a six part series on the Civil War. The lives of Union and Confederate soldiers, the weaponry and military strategies used during the war, as well as the societies of the Northern and Southern home fronts were all explored over the course of the three month series. What characterizes the collection of *Life* articles is an absence of any comprehensive attention given to African Americans during the war, the centrality of slavery in starting the sectional conflict, or even the Union's wartime goal of emancipating the Southern slave. Instead what the series emphasizes is the heroism and "incredible courage" of both the Union *and* Confederate soldiers. In the very first article of the series the arduous journey of Confederate Lieutenant John S. Wise is presented as he strives to get word of Lee's surrender to Jefferson Davis. Then, only a few paragraphs later, the story of how Sergeant Harry Reese, a soldier in the 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry, crawled through a 511-foot tunnel to reignite a mine that had been placed beneath a Confederate fort at the Battle of Petersburg is recounted.<sup>120</sup> Throughout the series the men who wore the Blue *and* the men who wore the Gray are each characterized as possessing an equal degree of heroism, bravery, and valor.

It's only in the culminating article of the *Life* series that Robert Penn Warren mentions the "racial problem" that, by 1961, was becoming an ever-growing force in national society and politics. However, even here the discussion is limited to only a few paragraphs, and the complicity of a nation in this racial strife was presented as if to be

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<sup>120</sup> Bruce Catton, "Gallant Men in Deeds of Glory," *Life*, January 6, 1961, 50-70.

shared equally by both regions of the country. To the South, Warren said the war offered the ‘Great Alibi’ and to the North it provided what he called the ‘Treasury of Virtue.’ According to the ‘Great Alibi’ all the problems of Southern society – including racial strife – could be blamed on the war and the former Union soldiers, while in the North the act of ending slavery was atonement for any moral failings of the North in not only the past, but also the present and future. Through the ‘Great Alibi’ the Southerner “turned defeat into victory, defects into virtues” as all was “explained” and “transmuted” by this Southern perspective and memory of the Civil War.<sup>121</sup> Even the North’s ‘Treasury of Virtue’ saw the war as a “consciously undertaken crusade so full of righteousness that there [was] enough overplus stored in Heaven...to take care of all [the] small failings and oversights of the descendants of the crusaders....” Foremost among those forgiven “small failings” was the segregation and discrimination of African Americans in the United States. Therefore, while Warren’s piece in the *Life* series recognized that there were racial issues troubling the nation, it did not label these issues an unfinished legacy of the Civil War, nor did it assign unconditional blame to either the North or the South. What the series did was omit the African American, and his ongoing struggle for equality in the United States, and through this omission the authors of the series (and the publishers of the magazine), avoided the need to address whether this outcome of the war remained unfulfilled and “unfinished.”<sup>122</sup> Throughout the *Life* series the Civil War was instead depicted as the “great single event” in the history of the nation as it was said to be the country’s only “‘felt’” history, as each day, and especially during the war’s centennial anniversary, the conflict was “lived in the national imagination” of all Americans – North

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<sup>121</sup> Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 55-64.

<sup>122</sup> Jon Wiener, “Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights”, 248.



and South.<sup>123</sup> In fact, just as newspapers and magazines had done in the years immediately following the 1865 peace (and would continue to do in the decades that followed) *Life* made an attempt to appeal to Southern as well as Northern audiences by presenting the war – and a memory of the war – as one in which African Americans, and African American equality, was eclipsed by the heroism and bravery of the Union and Confederate soldiers, as well as the post-war unity of the nation.<sup>124</sup>

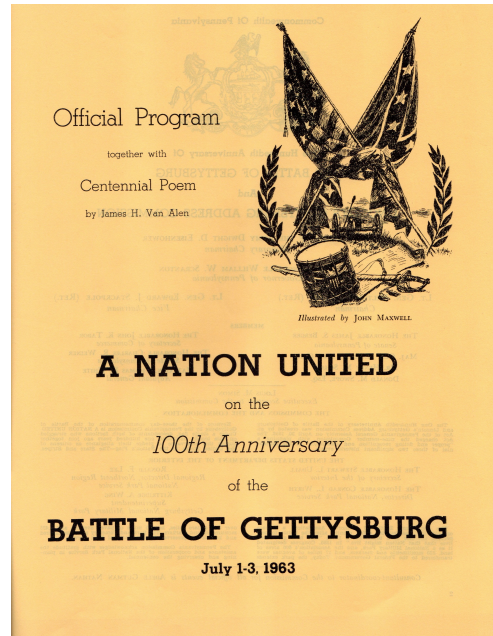
This emphasis on the unity that emerged in the aftermath of the Civil War was not solely confined to the pages of popular magazines. In a sixty-four-page booklet published in 1963 by the U.S. Civil War Centennial Commission the final chapter, entitled ‘The War’s Legacy’, presents eight bullets said to represent the greatest legacies of the four-year conflict. The high number of Union and Confederate dead, the memorials erected in remembrance of the war, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Red Cross, and the songs that became popular during the conflict are all listed in the first few bullets. It’s only in the chapters last few lines that the “extinction of slavery” and the “promise of equality without racial limitations” guaranteed by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments are mentioned as legacies of the war. However, while this *promise* of racial equality appears on the list there is no mention of the controversial and divisive question of whether this promise had been kept or even fulfilled – not only by the generation that had fought the war, but by those generations that had followed the peace at Appomattox. Instead, what the booklet proclaimed was that the war’s greatest legacy was the “unity of the American people” and the “stronger and more enduring”

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<sup>123</sup> Robert Penn Warren, “A Mark Deep On A Nation’s Soul: ‘The Great Single Event Of Our History’ Lives On In Pain And Pageant-And Unity,” *Life*, March 17, 1961, 82.

<sup>124</sup> Jon Wiener, “Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights”, 244.

nation that the war had created.<sup>125</sup> Even the July 1963 program for the centennial commemoration of the Battle of Gettysburg featured the words “A NATION UNITED” printed boldly on the cover.<sup>126</sup> “Under a single flag” the program states “descendants of both factions...join together during this observance to pledge their allegiance as citizens of the United States to the Nation’s Flag – The Stars and Stripes.”<sup>127</sup> These booklets, pamphlets, and programs published during the centennial of the Civil War depict a nation still emphasizing the reunion of the Union and Confederate soldier and the unity of the nation that has existed since 1865. What emerged in the mid-century was a memory of the conflict that celebrated



Here the words "A NATION UNITED" are featured prominently on the program cover for the Battle of Gettysburg centennial commemoration.

this national unity and only briefly acknowledged that racial equality had a connection to the century old conflict. It was a mid-century memory of the war that failed to truly consider whether the racial legacy of the conflict succeeded or failed, and if it was indeed an unfinished legacy of the war, why, when, and how would this legacy finally reach fruition.

<sup>125</sup> James I. Robertson, Jr., *The Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 63.

<sup>126</sup> *Civil War Times Illustrated, Gettysburg!*, vol. 2, no. 4, edited by Robert H. Fowler (Gettysburg: Historical Times Inc., 1963).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

*History, Memory, and the Easton Monument in Post-World War II America*

By the mid-twentieth century the Easton monument, like all monuments erected in memory of those who fought and died in the Civil War, would be an ever-present reminder of the conflict and the sacrifices made by the people of Easton and Northampton County. However, the centrality and memory of the war would expectedly undergo its own transformation as time passed and new conflicts, new trials, and new national psychologies gripped the city and the nation. What is most obvious in the post-World War II years is that the number of published Easton newspaper articles that made reference to the monument, or the Civil War itself, decreased dramatically. Even during the centennial of the Civil War (1957-1965) newspapers in Easton wrote very little about the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, and there was an absence of any reference to a Civil War centennial celebration to be held in Easton's Centre Square. While this absence might seem peculiar, the redefining of Civil War memory in the 1950s and 1960s, perhaps, makes this absence seem more explainable. As already discussed it was during this period in the nation's history that the very memory and legacy of the war was refocusing on the question of race. By mid-century the civil rights movement had swept the nation as African Americans and white activists worked tirelessly to achieve equality for black Americans. To hold a ceremony at the monument celebrating the centennial of the war, or even the fiftieth anniversary of the monument's dedication, would only offer historians and civil rights activists an opportunity to bring the divisive and controversial questions of race and racial equality to the forefront of Easton's political and social debate.

In Easton the avoidance of any substantive discussion about the causes and legacy of the Civil War, as well as an absence of any lavish commemoration of the Civil War centennial, would occur at the same time there emerged a generation of teenagers and young adults who were, according to Kenneth Keniston, “emotionally ‘stranded in the present’” as they proceeded to reject their past in its entirety.<sup>128</sup> Keniston explains that by the 1950s and early 1960s all Americans – including the youths of the era – had outgrown and forgotten the past, “looking instead to its future” which was “seen as ever better than what went before.”<sup>129</sup> It is this focus on the present, argues Keniston, which was the outlook of the alienated and mainstream youths of post-World War II America. In a search for sentience the youths of a postwar society rejected “the culture which shaped them” as there was a “concentration on the present” and a “focus on [the] immediate experience.”<sup>130</sup> While these post-World War II youths became eager and powerful participants in the rebellion of the postwar era, including the fight for African American equality, this participation was rooted not in American history, or a legacy of an unfinished objective of the Civil War, but a search for “external stimulation” and “internal transformation.”<sup>131</sup> Therefore, the absence of any centennial celebration in Easton wouldn’t have sparked outrage from a generation of young Americans who were increasingly ignoring their past, and instead were focusing on the present fight for social equality, and how it related to their own lives – not the distant, dusty struggles of history.

Witnessing the apathy of these younger generations, in the 1970s and the 1980s a generation of older Americans overcompensated for this historical apathy of the young by

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<sup>128</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 534.

<sup>129</sup> Kenneth Keniston, *The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), 105.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

manifesting a “nostalgia” for all things historical. For many Americans this new historical nostalgia manifested itself in the form of increased attendance at “museums, historic sites, and villages” as well as a greater interest in participating in historical activities ranging from “battle re-enactments to historic preservation at local levels.” Many Americans, explains Michael Kamman, sought to balance the discontinuity of the postwar years by finding an authentic and meaningful sense of historical *continuity* in their lives and thus increased their participation at historically relevant sites, events, and societal endeavors.<sup>132</sup> However, the history that many Americans encountered in a post-World War II America would be an idealized and commercialized history. The product of a nation entering a new era of consumerism, in the 1950s even history was becoming a form of commercialized entertainment in the popular culture of the United States. From the 1950s onward history became the focus of tourism, films, and television documentaries, and even the center of “selective presentations” in amusement parks like Disneyland, and Walt Disney World. However, the past that was most often being remembered in the public imagination of the postwar years emphasized the nostalgia of bygone eras, and not a serious discussion of topics that were as potentially contentious as the causes and legacy of the Civil War. It would be this avoidance of historical topics (like race) that might cause public controversy, while simultaneously embracing the idealized vision of America’s past that would become convention in the years that followed World War II.

While it is difficult to state with absolute certainty why so little was written about the Easton monument in the 1950s and 1960s, or why the city decided to forgo any form of centennial celebration, the trends taking place across the nation offer a few possible

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<sup>132</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 533-534.

explanations. As discussed above, it was during this time that the memory of the Civil War that held the most power in the minds of the American people was one that emphasized the reunion and national reconciliation that had manifest since the Appomattox peace of 1865. While the teenagers and youths of American society rejected their history, the older generations embraced a nostalgic and idealized vision of bygone eras. It wasn't the divisive questions of causality or the war's legacy that Americans remembered when they thought of their Civil War in the mid-century. Instead, what was remembered was the idyllic and harmonious way in which the North and the South reunited after the Civil War, as a post-World War II nation chose to commemorate "the heroism, valor and deeds of countless thousands of men from *both* sides who lived and fought and died for the principles in which they believed."<sup>133</sup> To recognize this national unity the conflict's centennial anniversary was celebrated on Civil War battlefields throughout the North and the South. These war sites drew massive crowds as Americans from across the nation flocked to observe battle reenactments, witness official centennial ceremonies, and see, firsthand, the locations where the actual fighting had once taken place. The emergence of a consumer culture in the 1950s helped intensify the attraction of these Civil War battlefields, as specially-designed centennial pamphlets, plates, glasses, pins, and stamps were advertised to an American public that was eager and willing to spend in the new post-World War II marketplace. It was also during these postwar years that the once remote battlefields of the Civil War were quickly becoming locations that a family could visit for a day or weekend, as an increasingly mobile society took to the roads in numbers unseen in previous eras. With this increased mobility the 'sacredness' of places like Centre Square was quickly diminished, as the once distant

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<sup>133</sup> *Civil War Centennial Map*, printed by General Foods, United States: 1961.

battlefields – the places where history was actually made – now became locations that Americans could more easily afford to travel and visit. The emergence of television in the 1950s-60s as popular mediums for entertainment, and the history themed shows and documentaries of the era, *might* have further diminished the perceived need for a centennial celebration in Easton, as there were now multiple outlets for city residents to remember and reflect on their Civil War.<sup>134</sup>

It's also during these postwar years that Easton's Downtown Improvement Group (DIG), undertook an effort to revitalize the city's urban center. One of the cornerstones of DIG was its effort to beautify Easton's downtown, as well as determine what to do with a number of "empty buildings" in the area that could "easily accommodate new retail stores" in Centre Square.<sup>135</sup> "The two new buildings" that were proposed at the time would "drastically alter the present spatial qualities of Centre Square" explains the *Easton Express*.<sup>136</sup> It was the aesthetic and economic improvement of Easton's downtown – and not the one hundred year old monument, or the Civil War – that were the stories capturing the headlines in Easton newspapers during these postwar years.

Whether it was the improved accessibility of the once remote Civil War battlefield, an increasing consumerization of American society, the emergence of television as a serious form of information and entertainment, or a downtown revitalization effort, in Easton the memory of the Centre Square monument and the Civil War was largely overlooked in this postwar city. For one, or all of these reasons, either consciously or unconsciously, the

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<sup>134</sup> *The Battle of Gettysburg* (1955), *The True Story of the Civil War* (1956), *The Americans* (1961), are only a few of the Civil War themed programs being produced and broadcast to the American public on television in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1950s CBS series *You Are There*, hosted by Walter Cronkite, reenacted famous Civil War related events reporting them to the television audience as if they were taking place at that time, and not one hundred years earlier.

<sup>135</sup> "DIG Head Urges Public And Private Effort in Downtown Easton Plan," *Easton Express*, January 21, 1966.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

need to hold a citywide celebration to mark the war's centennial anniversary, and remember their monument, was perhaps deemed unnecessary. Instead, as the years since the Second World War grew ever greater, it would be World War II that would command the attention of all Americans – the people of Easton included – as this modern struggle would become the dominant, and most important war in the minds of the American people. It would also be during these post-World War II years that the Easton monument, and Centre Square, would be the focus of a new Easton tradition and holiday celebration, one that would, overtime, become as recognizable as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument itself.

### **The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument and the Easton Peace Candle**



The Easton Peace Candle is erected every holiday season in Centre Square, covering the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument from public view.

On December 10, 1951, for the first time since its construction, Easton's Civil War monument would be hidden from view. Instead of the familiar granite shaft and the accompanying stone soldiers, residents, holiday shoppers, and visitors to the city would see an enormous wooden candle covering the fifty-year-old memorial. The origins of what would eventually be referred to as Easton's 'Peace Candle' are found not – as one might expect – in a message of peace and societal harmony, nor even in an effort to remember the Civil War and



those that died in the nearly century-old conflict. Instead, the origins of the candle are found in a desire to stimulate the economy of the city. In the new consumers' republic of the 1950s it was an effort to "promote shopping in downtown Easton" that gave birth to the city's unique holiday decoration. The idea for the candle emerged after a group of Easton residents complained that merchants and businesses in downtown Easton were prematurely celebrating Christmas in October and in the process "stealing the thunder of Halloween and Thanksgiving." Soon an ad-hoc committee was formed and this group of Easton residents, and city officials, went about thinking of ways to "promote shopping in downtown Easton" while limiting "it to a respectable time period" and in the process protect the business profits made during the holiday seasons of Halloween and Thanksgiving. Several proposals were generated by the committee, one of which called for creating a huge Christmas tree by piling evergreen trees around the monument, while another called for transforming the monument into a "super-duper" candy cane. In the end, the cost of turning the monument into a giant Christmas tree was deemed too expensive, while the proposal for a gigantic candy cane was said to be too secular. Instead, it was the proposal that called for turning Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument into "the world's tallest candle" placed "smack-dab in the middle of Centre Square" that won the approval of the committee, and, over time, the residents of Easton.<sup>137</sup>

Through the use of plywood and metal, the Easton Civil War monument vanished from view in December of 1951 as the nearly fifty-year-old stone shaft was transformed into a giant candle. Each of the stone statues found at the monument's base were transformed into four lesser candles, while the entire memorial complex was adorned

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<sup>137</sup> Donna Troxell, "Famous flame burns on and on and on...", *Easton Express*, November 28, 1980.

with nearly seven hundred brightly lit Christmas trees and all of Centre Square was strung with lights that extended all the way to the Northampton street bridge.<sup>138</sup> At that first unveiling a crowd of nearly one thousand watched as Easton Mayor Joseph Morrison hit a switch and lit the “giant red flame of the candle.”<sup>139</sup> In the spirit of the interfaith harmony characteristic of post-World War II America, Rabbi Mordecai Thurman of Easton’s Temple Covenant of Peace, spoke at the dedication ceremony in 1951, declaring that “Christmas is the festival of good will, which commemorates the life, the spirit and the work of the Prince of Peace” as the holiday season was the time of year when the people of Easton dedicate the candle and themselves to God.<sup>140</sup> It was there, in Centre Square, amidst the crowds, the smell of evergreens, and flickering light of the candle that the Rabbi professed that the candle was more than just a symbol of the holiday season, but represented “warmth and blessed togetherness in a cold world, light to brighten the darkness and ignorance of the world, and cheerfulness for an unhappy, sick world.”<sup>141</sup> It was at this first lighting of the candle, in this setting of peace and social harmony, that Mayor Morrison “unveiled a plaque” meant to “honor the men and women” serving in the armed forces as around the world American soldiers were struggling – and dying – in an effort to contain and defeat the emerging political and economic force of communism.<sup>142</sup>

In a city (and a nation) still remembering the sacrifices and the deaths of those who fought and died in the Second World War, and a society about to embark on the road to what would become the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, these remarks,

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<sup>138</sup> “The Easton Peace Candle,” *The Easton Christmas Book*, December 1987.

<sup>139</sup> Frank Whelan, “Peace Candle a reminder of seasons past,” *The Morning Call*, December 17, 2003.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Donna Troxell, “Famous flame burns on and on and on...,” *Easton Express*, November 28, 1980.

<sup>142</sup> Frank Whelan, “Peace Candle a reminder of seasons past,” *The Morning Call*, December 17, 2003.

and their underlying sentiments, seem appropriate for the unveiling of the candle in a postwar America. Only six years after the detonation of the two atomic bombs, the society of the United States was undergoing its own rapid advancements in technology and modernization. The result was a transformation of American society. In cities across the country suburbs were emerging as the urban core of many major cities began a slow downward spiral that would continue well into the later decades of the century. Casting a shadow across the entire nation were two frightening and dangerous specters: racial strife and a cold war. At home tensions between white and black Americans were slowly rising as the possibility of race riots was a reality that Americans of all backgrounds and social classes were forced to live with. Half a world away, the United States was engaged in a 'police action' on the Korean Peninsula, while it simultaneously became further entangled in a small Indochina nation called Vietnam. In this atmosphere of modernization, racial and political instability, and a mounting death toll from the Korean War, Rabbi Thurman's plea for a new spirit of warmth and togetherness had at its foundation a hoped for dawning of a new era: an age of happiness, health, safety, and brotherhood. While the Easton candle might have been born out of a desire to stimulate shopping in downtown Easton, it soon took on a far deeper meaning to many of the city's residents. Like the monument it now hid from view, the Easton candle stood for peace and societal harmony in an era when change, racial violence, and nuclear Armageddon weighed heavy on the minds of all Americans.

Nearly a decade after that first lighting of the Easton candle, on November 27, 1961 the Easton Area Christmas Committee announced to the people of Easton that they had some "bad news." The years had taken its toll on the holiday decoration as fire, and the

forces of weather and time, had caused the candle to fall into disrepair. Therefore, for the first time since its erection in 1951, the committee had decided, “against putting up the huge ‘candle’ at the Centre Square monument” as the candle was in need of “extensive repairs.” Instead what the committee erected was “a spiderweb of lights” as over 2,650 bulbs radiated outward from the monument in a celebration of the holiday season. It wasn’t until five years later, on November 25, 1967, that the Peace Candle returned to Easton. It was in this year, reports *The Morning Call*, that the Easton candle was said to be “the largest such candle in the country” and while it might have been referred to as the ‘Peace Candle’ long before 1967, it’s in this year that the “first reference” to the holiday decoration as the “Peace Candle” appears.<sup>143</sup>

Two years later, in November of 1969, a “hushed silence” fell over a crowd of more than four hundred and fifty people as they gathered to watch Easton Mayor Fred Ashton, Jr. throw the electrical switch and light the ninety foot Peace Candle. This year, however, the lighting of the *Peace* Candle took on a far deeper and personal meaning for many Easton residents. Speaking to the assembled onlookers Reverend Harry Maue, the pastor of Olivet Presbyterian Church, declared that it was time that the Peace Candle serve as a call for “‘real peace in America.’” Referring to both the violence and death caused by racial strife, as well as the ever growing list of Vietnam War casualties, Reverend Maue urged that these numbers, and the candle itself, serve as a “timely reminder ‘that we must consider peace.’” In an age marked by racial hatred, social tension and transformation, as well as widespread suffering which befell the nation as a result of the Vietnam War, such sentiments seem appropriate in postwar America. “Locally” said the Reverend “the peace candle should have added significance, serving as a symbol that we should not have race

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<sup>143</sup> Frank Whelan, "Peace Candle a reminder of seasons past," *The Morning Call*, December 17, 2003.

against race, minority against majority, children against parents or parents against children.”<sup>144</sup> The Peace Candle, by 1969, had become a symbol of a new type of reconciliation. It was a city landmark used by many to urge the ending of a war, and amidst the counterculture revolution of the 1960s, it became a symbol of reconciliation for the familial generations (parents and children) to seek peace and harmony.

In the decade that was to follow, the 1970s, the Peace Candle’s symbolism would only grow in power and prominence. In December of 1972 a group of Easton residents circulated a petition urging the city council to let the Peace Candle stand until the war in Indochina had come to an end, thus allowing the candle to serve as a “symbol of peace” for all city residents. While the president of Easton’s City Council applauded the idea, he explained that it was “physically impossible” to leave the candle up indefinitely.<sup>145</sup> The following year, in 1973, controversy again arose concerning Easton’s candle as some residents declared it was “wrong to light the candle” during the energy crisis which had swept the nation when certain OPEC nations placed an oil embargo on the United States, resulting in fuel shortages and price increases throughout the country.<sup>146</sup> Ten years later, in 1983, the first real criticism of the Peace Candle emerged when some city residents urged the city council to end the construction of the three-decade-old holiday decoration. The Peace Candle, said the critics, was a “hodge-podge of Americana” and stood as an architectural and aesthetical “abomination, a garish symbol of inner-city decadence” that everyone was now trying to reverse in downtown Easton. One opponent of the Peace Candle, a woman from nearby Palmer Township, objected to the “phallic symbolism” of

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<sup>144</sup> “Yule Candle Dedicated In Centre Square Rites,” *Easton Express*, November 28, 1980.

<sup>145</sup> Edward P. Kennedy, “Schultz Says the Candle Can’t Be Kept Standing,” *Easton Express*, December 26, 1982.

<sup>146</sup> Frank Whelan, “Peace Candle a reminder of seasons past,” *The Morning Call*, December 17, 2003.

not only the Peace Candle, but also the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument that it hid during the holiday season. In a letter to the city council the woman explained that she was "in favor of keeping the Peace Candle" year round if it meant hiding those "hideous soldiers and guns – the paraphernalia of war." While this woman was certainly in the minority in her rationale for opposing the Peace Candle's continued construction, there were many that still wished to see the tradition brought to an end. Instead of the Peace Candle opponents urged the city to decorate Easton's downtown and Centre Square with tastefully decorated Christmas trees as they would be cheaper and, they said, would harken back to Easton's past since the city was "one of the first" in the early 1800s to "publicly display an evergreen as a Christmas tree."<sup>147</sup> However, for every Easton resident that spoke out against the Peace Candle there were many more that supported its continued display. Joyce J. Moore of nearby Phillipsburg, New Jersey explained that a "war memorial that can spread good will during the holidays is a wonderful" thing for the residents of Easton and Phillipsburg, explaining that "while we should never forget those who gave their lives for our freedom...the Peace Candle is an essential reminder that war is obsolete in the nuclear age."<sup>148</sup> Ultimately, the pro-candle forces were victorious in their effort to see the Peace Candle serve as a continued beacon of peace and social harmony. Even up to the present day the Peace Candle makes its yearly appearance in the days following Thanksgiving, as crowds gather from Easton and nearby communities to light the candle, and usher in the holiday season.

What is most remarkable about the Easton Peace Candle is what it physically does to the Civil War memorial. From the end of November to early January (a little over six

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<sup>147</sup> James Flagg, "Peace Candle lights up a bit of controversy," *Easton Express*, March 13, 1983.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

weeks) the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument is hidden from view – erased from public memory. The names of Civil War battlefields, the stone soldiers each representing a branch of the Union armed forces, and the lone bugler perched atop the stone shaft are, in our modern era, concealed beneath a framework of fiberglass and steel. For some it may seem as though this concealment of the monument hinders and suspends the reflection meant to be invoked by the very presence of the war memorial, as it is the Peace Candle that now commands the attention of city residents. In fact, in Indianapolis, Indiana, home to a similar Soldiers' and Sailors' monument, city officials (and residents) choose not to hide their memorial. Instead, the monument is turned into a giant Christmas tree as lights are strung from the stone statue high atop the memorial all the way to its base nearly four hundred feet below. What is created is a pyramid shaped holiday decoration – a 'Christmas tree' – which marks the holiday season while still allowing city residents to view the Civil War monument located within the web of lights.

While the sheer size of the Indianapolis war memorial dwarfs that of the Easton monument – and thus might make the construction of a Peace Candle surrounding the Indianapolis memorial structurally unsound – the interesting tradition, and decision, to conceal the Easton monument still remains. During the holiday season what Easton residents and visitors to the city see is not a monument built to honor the Civil War dead, but a structure *originally* built to consumerism and the forces of the market economy. While the erection of the Peace Candle and the hiding of the Civil War monument may on first analysis appear more an act of generational disrespect – a refutation and neglect of those traits the monument was built to honor – upon closer examination, the two structures share a similar message and underlying societal sentiment. The 1900 Civil War

monument is a memorial meant to honor the sacrifices of a generation, and convey to future generations of Americans the moral character and traits that are exhibited by true American heroes. The courage and bravery displayed by the men of Northampton County who fought in the Civil War, and the dedication and loyalty that were given to the Union cause are, according to the Easton memorial, the traits that all American soldiers offer their nation, and all American citizens should strive to emulate and perpetuate. But also, these Northampton men that went off to fight the Confederacy were striving to reunite a nation. Through their fight, and their sacrifices, they were attempting to rebuild a shattered republic and restore those bonds of brotherhood that had existed for the decades leading up to the outbreak of war. While the Easton monument is certainly a reminder of the honored dead, and the battles in which they fell, it is also a clarion call to future generations of Americans that liberty, safety, peace, and security are worth the struggle and possible sacrifices.

Although the Civil War memorial transmits its own message to those that reflect on its deeper meaning, the Peace Candle that is erected in the days after Thanksgiving further transforms what some have described as a gothic and “stark monument” into a display that holds “forth the promise of peace on earth, and good will to men.”<sup>149</sup> While the Peace Candle may cover the Civil War monument for six weeks each year it still pays tribute to those Americans who are serving, or have served, in the American armed forces. The plaque dedicated in 1951 to those service members fighting in the Korean War, and the centrality of the candle in the Vietnam War protests of the 1970s, demonstrates the close association that the candle has had with the men and women serving in the United States military. Through this connection to the American soldier the

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<sup>149</sup> “The Easton Peace Candle,” *The Easton Christmas Book*, November-December 1987.



Peace Candle also stands as a symbol for the freedoms, liberties, and way of life that the American soldier has always fought to protect and preserve. Since the first dedication of the Peace Candle in 1951 the monument has stood not as a symbol to inaugurate the season of gift giving and consumerism, but as a beacon of togetherness, security, health, and happiness. Whether it is the specter of communism that emerged in the 1950s or the threat of terrorism that roared onto the scene one clear September morning in 2001, the Peace Candle has continued to stand as a symbol of hope, love, and social unity. In this way both the Civil War monument and the Peace Candle communicate a message of societal togetherness and dedication to a common purpose. The stone memorial honors the sacrifices made by those men who gave their lives so the republic might live, and in that rebirth, a nation would experience a new era of social harmony, brotherhood, love, and togetherness. The Peace Candle, in its own right, transmits this message of national unity, by forcing residents to reflect not on the sacrifices made by those who fought in the Civil War, but by eliciting the time-honored holiday feelings of warmth, peace, and love. The Peace Candle and the Civil War monument are two manmade creations that endeavor to make all Easton residents reflect on not only those who served their country in times of war, but also on the society that those men and women of the armed forces were trying to create and protect through their service. Therefore, while it might be true that for six weeks each year the Civil War monument is covered, the memory of those that fought and died in that War Between The States over one-hundred and fifty years ago is still honored in the presence of the Peace Candle. The Northern and Southern men who fell on the fields of battle from 1861 to 1865, like the veterans of the Second World War nearly a century later, were, in their own minds, fighting to build a better nation, a

happier nation, and a nation where all Americans would live in peace, harmony, and happiness. When viewed in this manner the living veterans of World War II could still offer their support of the Peace Candle regardless of the fact that the candle covers the Civil War monument. The Peace Candle, like the monument it hides from view, still honors the valor, courage, and dedication of not only the soldiers of the Civil War, but the soldiers of all conflicts in which the United States has fought. It is this message – and hoped for vision of America – that the Peace Candle symbolizes as it silently watches over holiday shoppers and hustling city travelers for two months every year in Easton’s Centre Square.

### **The Easton Monument, the Post-World War II Memorial, and a Centennial Celebration**

It was in the aftermath of the Second World War that the memory of the nation’s most recent global conflict (World War II) took priority in the minds of millions of Americans. With the deaths of thousands of young soldiers – Northern and Southern – the centrality of the Civil War in the memory of a nation was, understandably, deemphasized. “The memory of war”, explains Susan Sontag, is often “local” as people tend to keep alive the memories of those conflicts that have the greatest psychological and emotional link to their own lives, regions, and generation.<sup>150</sup> In the years that followed the end of the Second World War, the Civil War – nearly one hundred years old by 1960 – was becoming an increasingly distant conflict, not only in American history, but also a collective American psyche. The forces of memory now shifted as the deaths of

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<sup>150</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 35.

these World War II soldiers – the sons, brothers, and husbands of countless American communities – took priority in the psychology of a nation.

From the mid-1940s through the 1950s communities across the nation undertook the construction of countless ‘living memorials’ to honor the memory of these fallen World War II soldiers. These postwar memorialization efforts often took the form of “‘useful’ public buildings and social spaces” such as libraries, auditoriums, hospitals, swimming pools, and parks that included the word ‘memorial’ in their name and “typically displayed bronze plaques” listing the soldier dead of the city or surrounding region.<sup>151</sup> By 1945, explains John Bodnar, the memorial debate in the United States centered on “a need to forget and repair the ruptures the war had brought to people’s lives” and for many the dedication of these ‘living memorials’ would not only remember the sacrifices of the American soldier but would simultaneously “improve the quality of life for those who survived.”<sup>152</sup> These ‘living memorials’, explains Doss, were often “nativist and utilitarian” in design as they were meant to be both functional and serviceable, as they were built to serve a purpose more than they were meant to evoke idealism or reflection.<sup>153</sup> In over 265 cities across the nation there were at least “42 auditoriums, 29 parks, 20 stadiums, 19 hospitals, and a variety of airports, art centers, libraries, museums, and recreation centers” built to honor the memory of those soldiers that died in the Second World War, all of which offered useful services to the living.<sup>154</sup>

The criticism often raised in the 1950s and 1960s of these ‘living memorials’ is the same as those raised in the 1910s as there was a similar, although far less popular

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<sup>151</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 40.

<sup>152</sup> John Bodnar, *The “Good War” in American Memory*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 95.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

movement, to dedicate these more utilitarian forms of memorialization in memory of the Civil War dead and living veterans. For the critics of the 'living memorial' it was the very contemplation evoked by the "traditional memorial", that made it such a valuable form of memorialization in American society. The very solemnity and reverence that the stone monument evoked in the visitor, argued supporters of the traditional monument, was something that the 'living memorial' of the 1910s, and the midcentury, were incapable of generating. Supporters of the traditional stone or granite monument argued that these memorials of bygone eras stood as "indispensable" structures in society as they "made 'men remember'" a past war and its heroes, while the 'living memorials', argued the critics, failed to "inspire" the succeeding generations to be 'worthy of the sacrifices' made by the men who fought in the bloody battles of the conflict.<sup>155</sup> Over time the bronze plaque that adorned the gymnasium and museum would be forgotten and the 'living memorial' meant to honor the veterans of the Second World War became just another public facility to be used by city residents in their daily lives.

Despite the criticisms these 'living memorials' were still very popular as the 1950s and 1960s progressed, so much so that there were many who argued that by the 1970s and 1980s that the era of the traditional stone and granite monument had come to an end; a relic of another generation of Americans and their soldier dead.<sup>156</sup> There were some, explains Doss, who argued that by the 1980s "the age of monuments was 'finished'" a partial manifestation of the lack of any "unifying ideology" during the divisive era of the Vietnam War.<sup>157</sup> Even the design of the Vietnam War memorial, completed in 1982, did not glorify the nation "nor the sacrifices of foot soldiers for magnificent national

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<sup>155</sup> John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*, 97.

<sup>156</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 43.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

causes.” Instead the memorial built to honor and remember the Vietnam veteran was a “testament to ordinary people who have lived and died” and not to any “idea of national greatness or heroism.” For John Bodnar, the Vietnam War memorial closely resembles the “cemeteries that were erected in the South immediately after the Civil War” as it offered a sacred and demarcated space where “people could honor those they had lost and express their grief” while downplaying the causes for which so many had perished.<sup>158</sup>

The turn of twenty-first century, however, marked a return to a movement of memorialization that saw the construction of memorials that embraced the characteristics common in the traditional stone and granite monuments of the past. In contemporary America the once popular ‘living memorial’ had lost its appeal as the “pace of commemoration...quickened, and the number of memorials” increased as a growing number of Americans now began to view these memorials and monuments as “public art” as well as a “particularly powerful vehicle of visibility and authority.”<sup>159</sup> The commemoration and “memory work” preformed by the ‘living memorials’ of the early postwar years was “no longer considered adequate” by the 1990s and early 2000s, as contemporary feelings of “indebtedness” drove a memorialization “mania” that called for the construction of a national monument to the men who fought and died in the Second World War.<sup>160</sup>

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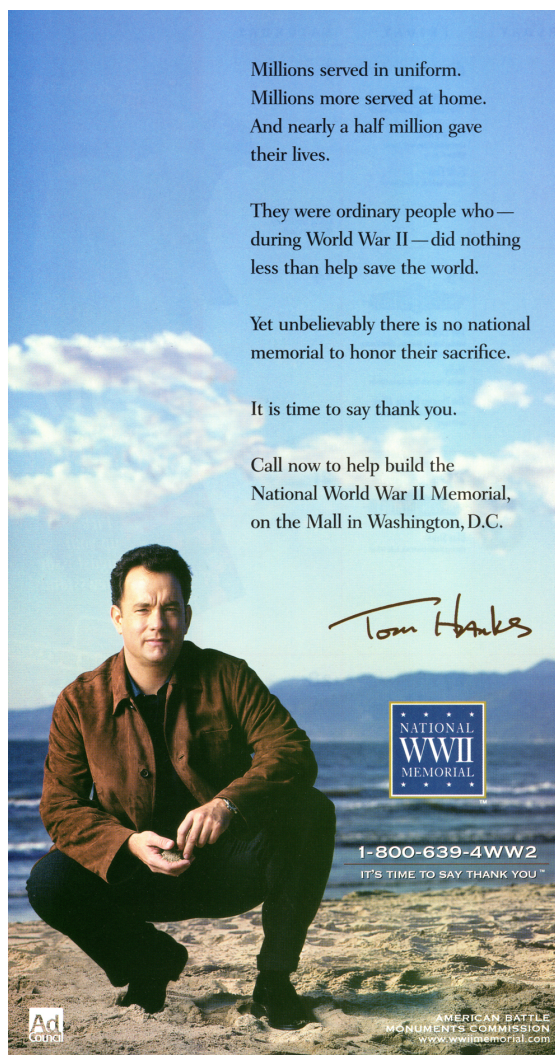
<sup>158</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 4-5.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>160</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 193.

Dedicated in 2004 the National World War II Memorial would mirror many of the same features of monument design, sentiment, and placement that were popular in the memorialization movement that existed at the turn of the twentieth century, and, are visible when examining the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument of Easton. The idea for the monument that now resides in Washington, D.C., like the Easton monument, originated not with a legislative body or governmental institution, but from an ordinary mail carrier, who, after visiting the nation's capital in 1962, was struck by the fact

that there was no national memorial to honor the men who *sacrificed* so much in fighting the Second World War.<sup>161</sup> Eventually, men like Senator Bob Dole, and Hollywood star Tom Hanks would aid in the organization of a committee, and a campaign, that would raise nearly \$190,000,000 to build the National World War II Memorial.<sup>162</sup> Dole, Hanks, and other supporters of the memorial would argue that a national monument was required, and necessary, if a generation of Americans were to properly – finally – honor



Advertisements, like this one featuring Tom Hanks, emphasized the need for a National World War II Memorial as a way to honor the "sacrifices" of those who fought, struggled, and died in the Second World War.

<sup>161</sup> John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*, 91.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

the *sacrifices* of those men who fought and died in the global conflict. In the small city of Easton in 1900, just as in 2004 in communities across the nation, it was this fundamental need to honor the *sacrifices* made by the brave men who fought and died in each war that acted as the primary impulse for building each monument – one to honor the Union dead, the other to honor the soldiers of the ‘greatest generation.’

When finally dedicated in 2004 the National World War II Memorial would occupy one of the country’s most ‘sacred’ national spaces – the National Mall. Found between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, the National World War II Memorial, and all the monuments that reside in this space, are destinations of pilgrimage for generations of Americans who wish to learn about their nation’s history, and reflect on the events – and men and women – who sacrificed so their nation might endure. Like the Easton monument did for the men of the Civil War, the National World War II Memorial strives to invoke in the visitor an appreciation for the sacrifices made by the Americans that struggled, fought, and died fighting in World War II. Speaking at the dedication ceremony President George W. Bush declared “at this place, at this memorial, we acknowledge a debt of long standing to an entire generation of Americans – those who died, those who fought and worked and grieved and went on.”<sup>163</sup> For President Bush, and the countless other Americans in attendance and around the nation, the men who fought and won the Second World War did nothing less than save their country and “thereby saved the liberty of mankind.”<sup>164</sup> Senator Dole, like President Bush, echoed these same themes of gratitude and sacrifice. “We have raised this memorial to commemorate the service and sacrifice of an entire generation” declared the Senator, as

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<sup>163</sup> George W. Bush, “National WWII Memorial Dedication,” Speech, Washington, D.C., May 29, 2004, Published online by the National WWII Memorial.com.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

this World War II generation – the “armies of democracy” – have “earned a permanent place on this sacred ground”, the National Mall.<sup>165</sup> Like the Easton monument, the National World War II Memorial, and the remarks made at its dedication, convey those same themes of sacrifice as do the words carved into the granite of Easton’s Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument – ‘It is sweet and right to die for your country’ – as it is in this death, or this sacrifice, that the soldiers of both wars ensured the preservation of the American experiment. Those that fought and died fighting in the Second World War, like their Union counterparts of a bygone era, had not only saved their nation, but, this time, *saved all of mankind*.

It was the passing of many World War II veterans in the late twentieth century that fueled this desire to construct the National World War II Memorial, just as it was the passing of the Civil War generation that propelled a nation to erect monuments to the surviving veterans and their long-dead Union brothers. Like the reasons behind the construction of the National World War II Memorial, and the sentiments expressed by the very presence of the monument, the design of the memorial also shares characteristics similar to the monument that stands in Easton’s Centre Square. The World War II memorial that was built in Washington, D.C. contains “a huge stone plaza ceremonially framed by two 70-foot flagpoles whose bases are decorated with seals of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Army Air Forces, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine.”<sup>166</sup> Decorated with “4,048 gold stars, one for every hundred American soldiers who died in military service during the war” the nation’s 405,973 honored dead are unnamed as the

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<sup>165</sup> Bob Dole, “National WWII Memorial Dedication,” Speech, Washington, D.C., May 29, 2004, Published online by the National WWII Memorial.com.

<sup>166</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 197.



memorial “collapses them into an anonymous patriotic mass.”<sup>167</sup> The National World War II Memorial, like the Easton monument, does not list the names of those men who served or died in the war, but instead, the monument itself – its very presence on the National Mall – is meant to honor their sacrifice and service. Additionally, like the Easton monument, the World War II memorial recognizes those branches of the U.S. military that participated in the war and contributed to its ultimate victory by incorporating their seals – instead of stone statues, as the Easton monument does – into the design of the World War II memorial. Finally, like the Easton monument built at the turn of the twentieth century, at the National World War II Memorial it is stone that marks and transmits the “strength, force, and permanence” of the national monument.<sup>168</sup> Engraved in the stone façade of the memorial, just as with Easton’s monument, are words that “evoke the collective patriotism” of a nation. The announcement stone of the memorial speaks to the purpose of the monument:

“HERE IN THE PRESENCE OF WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN,  
ONE THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FATHER AND THE OTHER THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY PRESERVER OF OUR NATION, WE HONOR  
THOSE TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICANS WHO TOOK UP THE  
STRUGGLE  
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND MADE THE SACRIFICES TO  
PERPETUATE THE GIFT OUR FOREFATHERS ENTRUSTED TO US:  
A NATION CONCEIVED IN LIBERTY AND JUSTICE.”

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<sup>167</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 201-202.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

Just as the builders of the Easton monument strived to do, the designers of the National World War II Memorial sought to connect their own monument, and generation, with not only the founders of the American republic, but also the generation that struggled to preserve it. By invoking Washington's name the builders of the National World War II Memorial made the link to the founders of the country, and by referencing the 'preserver of our nation', Abraham Lincoln, the architects of the World War II memorial further hallowed this national monument by invoking Lincoln's spirit and the brave Union men who fought and died in the Civil War. Over one hundred years later, the builders of the National World War II Memorial attempted to connect this newest national monument to the now much larger narrative of American history, just as the builders of the Easton monument strived to do in 1900, when they decided to place their own monument in Centre Square, the place where many had gathered to show their support for the American Revolution, and later express their outrage over the acts of the secessionist states.

The number of memorials built to honor and remember American wars, like the National World War II Memorial, are "flourishing in contemporary America", explains Erika Doss.<sup>169</sup> The memorial mania of today, like the statue mania of the past, is shaped "by individual impulses and factional grievances, by special interest claims for esteem and recognition, and by efforts to symbolize and enshrine the particular issues and aspirations of diverse and often stratified publics."<sup>170</sup> Just as it was one hundred and thirteen years ago the purpose of today's war memorials, like the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., is similar to the Easton monument, and other monuments

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<sup>169</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 188.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

built at the turn of the twentieth century. Regardless of time, each generation of monuments is intended to honor the soldier dead and acknowledge the debt that society owes to those Americans who gave their lives so the republic, and the values it holds dear, might endure.<sup>171</sup>

While Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument is a clear reflection of a Northern memory of the Civil War – and a Northern memorialization of that war – the Easton monument (and other Northern memorials) has also served as a model for a later memorialization effort. Even though the Easton monument and the World War II memorial are separated by over one hundred years of American history they both strive to honor many of the same principles celebrated and revered by the American people. Like the monument in Easton, the National World War II Memorial remembers the sacrifices made by the common soldier and the struggle to preserve the American republic. However, in Washington, D.C. it's no longer a Union victory that is celebrated, but a national one; it is no longer reconciliation that is revered, but the strength and power of a long united nation – North and South have no meaning in this 'sacred' national space. The importance and emphasis that was once placed on reunion during the Civil War Centennial had been entirely realized – and by the new century forgotten – as crowds gathered on the National Mall to remember a new generation of American soldier. Even the placement, design, and inscriptions of the National World War II Memorial mirror those of the Easton monument. The placement of the World War II memorial in the 'sacred' space of the National Mall, its conveyance of permanence through its use of stone, and the idea that 'It is sweet and right to die for your country', are all

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<sup>171</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 190.

characteristics that the National World War II Memorial shares with the over one hundred year old monument that resides in Easton's Centre Square.

What is clear is that over a century later the principles of Northern Civil War commemoration embodied in the Easton monument are visible in monuments built to honor and remember not just Northern causes, but national ones. The Easton monument, and the manner in which a Northern society chose to commemorate and remember their Civil War, has influenced, or at the very least shares similarities with, the way contemporary America chose to honor and remember the men who fought and died in the Second World War. It would be this tendency to simultaneously remember the men of that sectional conflict, while merging that memory and that remembrance, with the veterans of *all* American conflicts, that would, in certain ways, characterize the one-hundred year anniversary of Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in May of 2000.

#### *The Centennial Anniversary of Easton's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument*

By the turn of the twenty-first century the stone soldiers, the granite shaft, and the bugler that watches from high above Centre Square had become defining landmarks of Easton, and beloved by nearly all its residents. In the year 2000, the city of Easton held its own celebration to remember the debt owed to the Civil War generation, and to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of their Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. Celebrated with festivals, Civil War reenactments, movie showings, as well as city and county proclamations, the war that had been for so long pushed to the margins of the city's collective memory had once again captured the hearts and minds of the people of Easton. During this centennial celebration the sacredness of Centre Square, and the monument,

was once again reinforced in the minds of Easton residents. To mark the occasion the city of Easton and the county of Northampton both issued proclamations of remembrance and declared citywide festivals. One hundred years later the monument was said to have served as “an ever present reminder of the brave soldiers of Northampton County who served their Country, and sacrificed their lives, to perpetuate the Union, and the fundamental belief of the Founding Fathers that all men are created equal.”<sup>172</sup> While the monument was never meant to represent this idea of equality, nor have any *direct* link to the Revolutionary generation, the passage of over one hundred years has led to a metamorphosis of the monument – and Centre Square – as the memorial has grown larger than simply remembering the Civil War and honoring the soldiers who gave their lives in the sectional conflict. Long before the one-hundredth anniversary of the monument’s dedication, in April of 1972, Northampton County Commissioners approved the “placing of a marker in Centre Square” meant to commemorate the “first public reading of the American Declaration of Independence and the flying of Easton’s Stars and Stripes” on July 8, 1776.<sup>173</sup> This earlier, renewed attempt to link the monument, and Centre Square, to the grander national narrative, and the history of Easton, mirrors those attempts in 1900 when the decision to build the monument in Centre Square was partially attributed to the fact that it was on that ground that the men and women of Easton had once gathered to support the war against Great Britain.

In the year 2000, Easton officials decided to not only rededicate the monument to the veterans of the Civil War but to also unveil a new plaque in Centre Square. The new marker – and the monument itself – was said to honor not only the veterans that fought

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<sup>172</sup> The County of Northampton, “Proclamation,” March 20, 2000.

<sup>173</sup> “Marker Approved For Centre Square,” *Easton Express*, April 14, 1972.

and died in the Civil War but also those “veterans from all wars in which the United States has fought.”<sup>174</sup> Over one hundred years after the war ended the significance of the battles – and the war’s dead – were seemingly merged with the soldiers and wars of other generations. Perhaps an indication of convenience more so than an act of societal disrespect, the Civil War soldier, one hundred years later, no longer stood apart from the ‘American soldier’. With two World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the military campaigns in the Middle East, the Civil War soldier – in this changing memory of the conflict – can no longer be seen as the sole protector, and savior, of the American republic and the liberties that its citizens hold sacred. In this memory of the Civil War – and all American wars – every American soldier, including the soldier of the Civil War, is now tied together by a single thread, as each has displayed characteristics of bravery, loyalty, and devotion to their fellow soldiers and the people they were fighting for back home. It is these traits, as well as the unity and power of a united nation, that Easton’s Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument has always endeavored to convey to its many visitors, and will undoubtedly continue to advance into the distant future.

In fact, in its own proclamation the Northampton County Council mirrored the declaration issued by Easton. According to the county the memorial in Easton stood “in continued recognition of those who dedicated themselves to the noble cause of the Union” and that as “time marches onward, and the world around us changes” the monument would “forever serve as a reminder of the birth of our Nation as the land of the free and the home of the brave.”<sup>175</sup> By the year 2000, it was the aftermath of the war that was remembered, as the monument was said to stand as a reminder of the nation that

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<sup>174</sup> Madeleine Mathias, “Memorial has stood 100 years,” *The Morning Call*, May 1, 2000.

<sup>175</sup> The County of Northampton, “Proclamation,” March 20, 2000.

was created, and preserved, by the Union soldiers of Easton and Northampton County. By the monument's centennial anniversary the reconciliationist and reunion sentiments that were popular in 1915, and even 1950, no longer existed, as there was no reconciliation to be done, and no reunions to be held. In the year 2000, the memory of the war that was celebrated was one focused, indirectly, on the "continuity" that has existed since the conflict came to an end.<sup>176</sup> The word unity was not mentioned in either the Easton or Northampton proclamations, because, by the year 2000, the unity of the nation was a secured and unquestionable absolute. With no need to emphasize this unity the rededication of the monument was instead focused on honoring the men of Easton and Northampton County and the cause for which they fought, while simultaneously remembering a memory of the Civil War – and the Civil War era – that was popular in the minds and imaginations of a twenty-first century American public. To celebrate the occasion Easton held a parade, offered visitors the opportunity to visit an authentic Civil War encampment, and the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind* was screened in the State Theater.<sup>177</sup> By the millennium, public discussion in Easton that centered on the Civil War had been largely stripped of controversy, or even solemn and heartfelt remembrance of the war's dead. By the year 2000, the monument, and the Civil War itself, was seen by many Americans as a war that emphasized the strength of the American republic, and the indivisible nature of its people and institutions. According to this memory of the war, even in the face of secession, and the culmination of that internal division, the people of the nation had created a government more powerful and *united* than the one that existed prior to the outbreak of war in 1861. Slavery's role in starting the war, and the failure of a

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<sup>176</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 4.

<sup>177</sup> Madeleine Mathias, "Memorial has stood 100 years," *The Morning Call*, May 1, 2000.

nation to guarantee African American equality in the war's aftermath, were no longer controversial or divisive topics by the monument's centennial anniversary, as it was the uplifting image – or memory – of two former enemies reuniting with one another that held dominance in America's memory of their Civil War.

### **The Easton Monument and the War's Legacy in the 21st Century**

Both the city of Easton, and the nation, have experienced their own dramatic transformations since the monument's dedication that clear, cool day in May more than one hundred and thirteen years ago. Besides the obvious advancements in technology the social fabric of the nation has witnessed its own dramatic changes. By the twenty-first century the rigidly defined boundaries of the traditional community are continuing to expand at an exponential rate. Air travel, television, the Internet, and social media networks like Facebook and Twitter unite people across the nation – and the world – to an degree unimaginable to those Americans living one-hundred, or even fifty years ago. However, with this transformation of the traditional American community the nation has experienced a shift in how people view the history of their nation, and their city. For some, this twenty-first century community paradigm has created a sense of “placelessness” as a feeling of belonging to no particular community has become prominent.<sup>178</sup> For many, argues David Glassberg, this ‘placelessness’ is a “particularly American problem” as this “high degree of geographic mobility” has created a society of people constantly in transition, as they search for new economic, social, and personal

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<sup>178</sup> David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 20.



opportunities and in the process what has been created is a citizenry that is increasingly disassociated with any specific city, town, or community.<sup>179</sup>

In our modern era, this societal instability and the personal detachment from ones local history has led many Americans to display an increased interest, love, and value in the “special places” of their community’s past. For many Easton residents, and those in surrounding cities, the Easton monument is valued not only for its unique connection to a past event (the Civil War), but also its connection to the long history of Easton during which the monument stood as a silent sentinel to those important (and trivial) events in the city’s history. In this way the respect bestowed upon the monument is attributed, in part, due to the human sentiments of nostalgia; a longing for an idealized era when times were simpler and troubles less complex. Today, for the people of Easton the monument is a connection to those people and those bygone eras. This longing for the past, Glassberg explains, can be witnessed by the fact that the American people “spend a lot of their leisure time looking for” the sense of history that seems so elusive in the technology driven era of the twenty-first century. This sense of history helps locate an individual in time as it offers the individual a “knowledge” that provides a sense of *when* they are by filling in the gaps of their “personal recollection and family stories” allowing each person to understand more completely his or her “place in a succession of past and future generations.” On a societal scale this sense of history even helps a people locate themselves in the national narrative, allowing a citizenry to “gain a sense” of who they are by connecting themselves to their past through the “personal experiences and memoirs” of their larger community and nation.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> David Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 20.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 7.

Like other Civil War memorials, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument provides the people of Easton with a "shared history" and this is a "crucial element in the creation of an 'imagined community'" through which individuals and groups "envision themselves as members of a collective" all sharing a common past, present, and future.<sup>181</sup> Centre Square, and other places of prominence that are home to such war monuments, according to Glassberg, "loom large not only in our personal recollections but also in the collective memory of our communities" as these spaces have, are, and will continue to be defined as 'sacred' and historically significant in both the physical and psychological boundaries of the community.<sup>182</sup> While it might be on Memorial Day, or during one of the silent moments of reflection while surrounded by the crowds of Centre Square, there comes a time when every Easton resident will pause, gaze, and wonder about their monument. As they stand and stare their thoughts might be simple: what is this monument?, how long has it been here?, why was it built? But in these moments of reflection these residents are remembering their past, and are engaged in an ongoing construction of memory. As they look at the stone statues at the monument's base, read the inscriptions carved in granite, and reflect on the place of prominence the monument is given in their city, they are forming their own memory of the Civil War, and they are finding that 'sense of history' that for so many is elusive in twenty-first century American life.

While a lone monument cannot counter the societal forces that are creating this new global community the Easton monument does stand as a guardian to the history of the city, and a reminder of that shared national past. Unchanged since the day it was unveiled to the people of Easton, its very presence in Centre Square speaks volumes about the

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<sup>181</sup> David Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 11.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 19.

residents of the city, their memory of the Civil War, and its place in their lives. What is most obvious is that the Civil War monument still stands in its place of prominence at the center of Easton. Not since 1902 has it been suggested that the monument be moved from the square, when, in November of that year, Congressman William Mutchler proposed that the monument be relocated to an “advantageous site in front of the courthouse and county prison.”<sup>183</sup> Intended to clear Centre Square for the construction of a public building the proposal was vehemently opposed by the local G.A.R. and was ultimately rejected by the city council. Besides this early attempt to move the monument the memorial has remained – unchallenged – in its place of prestige and power for the last one hundred and thirteen years. The fact that the monument has remained where it was originally constructed demonstrates that the people of Easton still harbor some feelings toward their monument, be those feelings respect and reverence, or merely the nostalgia and the security that is fostered knowing that their familiar monument will still be there when they make a trip to Easton’s downtown.

### *The Memory of the Civil War Today*

To understand how fluid and diverse a nation’s ‘sense of history’ truly is one need look no further than how Americans today remember their Civil War. In 2011 *Time* magazine declared that one hundred and fifty years after the war ended most Americans had lost “clarity about the cause of the Civil War” despite the fact that it was “the most traumatic and transformational event” in the history of the United States.<sup>184</sup> *Time* cited a Harris Interactive Poll which asked 2,566 adults across the country what the “North and

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<sup>183</sup> “Public Building Site: Congressman ‘Mutchler in Washington to Suggest Centre Square,” *Easton Free Press* (Semi. Weekly Edition), November 18, 1902.

<sup>184</sup> David Von Drehle, “The Way We Weren’t,” *Time*, April 18, 2011, 40.

South were fighting about.” When asked about the motives of the North in fighting the war seven in ten Americans (69%) said that the North was “fighting to preserve the Union” while significantly fewer (31%) answered that the North was “fighting to abolish slavery.”<sup>185</sup> The survey also revealed that there was even “less consensus about what the South was fighting for” in the war, as fifty-four (54%) of respondents indicated that the “South was fighting for states’ rights” and nearly half (46%) said the South was fighting to “preserve slavery.”<sup>186</sup> The poll further found that a “majority, including two-thirds of white respondents in the 11 states that formed the Confederacy” had indicated that the South’s main motivation in fighting the war was “‘state’s rights’ rather than the future of slavery.” To the frustration of historians like David Blight, in the public mind there is still a “need to deny that slavery was the cause of the war” as this “forgetting was the price of reconciliation” as for “most of the first century after the war, historians, novelists, and filmmakers worked like hypnotists to soothe the posttraumatic memories of survivors and their descendants.”<sup>187</sup> Despite the fact that African slaves were the “largest financial asset” in the United States “worth 3.5 billion dollars in 1860” these slaves were removed as key actors in the reason for the secession. As the *Time* article explains “history is not just about the past” as it “also reveals the present” and for the “generation of Americans after the Civil War, the present did not have room for that radical idea laid bare by the conflict: that all people really are created equal.”<sup>188</sup>

In the aftermath of the war many Americans – North and South – refused to accept or admit that it was “slavery that had broken one nation in two and fated its people to fight

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<sup>185</sup> Samantha Braverman, “150 Years Later: Remembering the American Civil War,” March 29, 2011, Published online by *Harris Interactive*.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> David Von Drehle, “The Way We Weren’t,” *Time*, April 18, 2011, 40.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

over whether it would be put back together again.” As discussed in early pages, the memory of the war that emerged in 1865, and gained widespread popularity throughout the nation was the Lost Cause; a vision of the war and Southern society that depicted that South as an idyllic land where slaves were happy, and it was the aggressive meddling North who were the real catalyst for the war and the perpetrators of the widespread death and destruction the war brought. The presidents that followed Lincoln adopted the “reconciling tone of Grant at Appomattox” and, by the fiftieth anniversary, it was “nearly impossible to know” from the remarks given by President Wilson “why the war had happened or who had won.” What was emphasized instead was the remarkable ability of the nation to reunite and rebuild after such a horrific and deadly war. It was only after the Second World War that historians began to “break the grip of forgetfulness” as the civil rights movement refocused the attention of the nation on the question of racial equality in America.<sup>189</sup> However, as the Harris Poll indicates, even with these efforts the belief that states rights’ (and not slavery) was the driving force behind the secessionist movement is still believed true by many Americans (especially those living in the South).

Even today, over one hundred and fifty years after the guns fell silent, there still survive elements of that Lost Cause memory of the conflict. In an attempt to appeal to a wider audience documentaries, television shows, and textbooks often take a ‘middle-of-the-road’ approach when presenting the reasons the South seceded and the United States was thrust into four years of bloody war. While this approach might make textbooks and television shows more marketable in both the North and the South – and thus cause program ratings to increase or textbook profits soar – it also reinforces a belief in the minds of many Americans that the South did not secede over the question of slavery –

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<sup>189</sup> David Von Drehle, “The Way We Weren’t,” *Time*, April 18, 2011, 48.

much to the displeasure of academic historians. The fact that a majority of those Southerners surveyed in the Harris Poll indicated that the war was fought over states' rights and not slavery illustrates the extent to which certain memories of the war still have regional popularity. The Southern preponderance to say that states' rights was the motivating factor in the South's declarations of secession can most certainly be attributed to the fact that, in the recent past, and even today, there still exist and are perpetuated certain elements of the Lost Cause memory of the war. In the (white) South one remnant of the Lost Cause that is still widely disseminated is the belief that the Civil War was a war of Northern aggression and that the brave and virtuous Southern soldier was merely fighting to protect his home, family, and lifestyle from a federal government that was increasingly meddling in the Southern economy and political system.<sup>190</sup> What gets lost in this uniquely Southern memory of the war is the role that slavery played in the war, as it's easier to recall with pride the brave soldier fighting for his wife, children, and state, then it is to remember the catalyst that led to secession – the institution of slavery – and all the death and bloodshed that secession brought with it. In some ways the South's embrace of a states' rights explanation for secession can, like the Lost Cause itself, be attributed to nostalgia and a search for that 'sense of history' that seems so elusive in the twenty-first century. This embrace of certain Lost Cause elements is, in some ways, a byproduct of the sense of 'placelessness' that David Glassberg describes, as it's easier for some men and women of the South to find a connection to their past by embracing the stories and memories that were popular in their region's recent or distant past. It seems

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<sup>190</sup> Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (1999) is a superb account of how, even in contemporary America, there exist in parts of the South elements of the Lost Cause memory of the war, as the Confederacy itself, and its leading figures and symbols, are still remembered with an affection that exists only in those states that once made up the Confederate States of America.

only natural that families or communities do not want to remember defeat or the un-virtuous acts – like slavery – that were performed or supported by those generations that came before. It's easier and far more uplifting to remember one's great-great-grandfather, or small town neighbors, fighting the ever-encroaching tentacles of the octopus that is the Northern federal government, then it is to remember these same men fighting to ensure their mastery of another human being.

This debate over “why brother fought brother” has once again emerged as the nation celebrates the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. With dances, reenactments, and remembrances planned across the South “the dying embers of the Lost Cause” have been reignited once again, explains Laura Parker in a 2011 article in *USA Today*. Even the U.S. Congress has decided to hand “off the federal government's role in the sesquicentennial to the National Park Service” as members of the House and Senate, recognizing the “deep divisions” that are still associated with the conflict, have voted against creating an official sesquicentennial commission as was done during the war's one hundredth anniversary.<sup>191</sup> While a plan submitted to Congress by the NPS did “not receive the attention or funding that was anticipated” it did strive to “facilitate a deeper and broader public understanding and awareness of...the events that precipitated the war...and the relevance [of the war] to contemporary issues that are the legacy of the war, including the modern Civil Rights movement....” Part of the NPS plan called for highlighting “legacy sites” such as Little Rock Central High School and Monroe Elementary School (the focus of *Brown v. Board*) to “demonstrate” the effects of the

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<sup>191</sup> Laura Parker, “Wounds reopen on war's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary: How to commemorate Civil War has always been a difficult task,” *USA Today*, April 8, 2011, 10.

Civil War, and the civil rights movement, “continued for more than 100 years and remain relevant today.”<sup>192</sup>

What seems to define the sesquicentennial of the Civil War is the fact that there is no single overarching memory of the war that holds dominance over the hearts and minds of *all* Americans. Instead what exists today is an academic and popular debate about what the *real* memory of the war truly is, and what the legacies of the now one hundred and fifty year old conflict actually are. While there are still regional disagreements over the role slavery played in starting the war, there is, unlike during the war’s centennial anniversary, an ongoing academic and public discussion of these topics. In this new era of historiography, it seems more likely that this Civil War observance will mark a period in the evolution of Civil War memory when legitimacy and refutation will be focused on all memories of the war as the debate will certainly continue even after the anniversary has ended. It will be within the confines of this new memory of the war that the Easton monument will be analyzed and explored anew, and perhaps the design, inscriptions, and statues that form the memorial will take on new meaning to those that undertake future explorations of the monument, and its meaning, to the people and the city of Easton.

### *Conclusion*

One hundred and fifty years later the Civil War still holds a special place in the minds of many Americans. But like all historical events, with the passage of time the war has morphed from an apocalyptic struggle to a cold and distant confrontation between two alien cultures, both fighting for survival and both sinful – one for its support of the

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<sup>192</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, *Civil War to Civil Rights: An Action Plan for the Midwest Region of the National Park Service to Commemorate the Sesquicentennial of America’s Civil War* (Lexington: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 5-6.



horrific institution of slavery, and the other for its long inattention to the institutions existence. For a majority of Americans living today – during the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the war – the conflict is viewed through this prism. It was a fight over slavery. Brave men – North and South – died fighting for what they thought was right, but ultimately the right side won. To many twenty-first century Americans the outcome of the conflict seems inevitable, as if the story could have only one ending. With the passage of time places like Bull Run and the Wilderness, Antietam and Gettysburg have lost an element of the ‘sacred’; swept away by time, modernization, and an ever-evolving memory that American society has regarding its Civil War.

Today, scattering the battlefields and public spaces of the nation there stand monuments, reminders of an age long since passed, when the wounds were fresh and the memories still vivid. The erectors of these memorials intended for them to serve as an enduring reminder of the sacrifices made and the cause for which so many men gave that ‘last full measure of devotion.’ The Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument of Easton, Pennsylvania is reflective of a psychology of monument design and a memory of the Civil War that was dominant throughout the North in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the North, in 1900, it was the Union and reconciliationist causes of the war that held the most influence over how a Northern population remembered the war. The conflict was remembered as a fight by honorable and courageous men to preserve the Union and end the horrific institution of slavery, while simultaneously the North struggled to build anew the bonds of brotherhood and friendship with the citizens of the old Confederacy. In the monument’s design, the inscriptions on its façade, and the

sentiments expressed when the monument was dedicated in 1900, Easton's monument conveys both of these schools of Civil War memory.

The placement of the monument in Centre Square demarcates this public space as 'sacred' and important. This spot of land is not only tied to the history of Easton, but the very placement of the monument at the center of the city further bestows on this ground an added degree of the 'sacred'. The granite obelisk, the single-soldier statue that stands atop the monument, and the four stone statues that represent the branches of the Union military are all traits shared by other monuments built in the North in the years after 1865. In this way the Easton memorial stands as an example of the evolution of the memorialization movement that was taking place in the years after the war came to an end. Even the inscriptions placed on the monument's façade are representative of Northern Civil War memory as they convey the Unionist and reconciliationist memory of the conflict. The adage 'It is sweet and right to die for your country' conveys the sentiments of the Union cause (the idea that there was virtue and honor in sacrificing one's life for the republic) while Daniel Webster's quote 'Liberty and Union now and *forever*' is an example of the North attempting to build a new national psychology, striving to rebuild those ties of friendship and nationhood as they reconciled with their one-time Southern enemy. These Union and reconciliationist feelings would continue well into the twentieth century as Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt would each applaud the ability of the American people to reunite after such a horrific war.

In the years that followed the Second World War the memory of the Civil War underwent its own dramatic transformation as the civil rights movement refocused the

attention of historians – and the American people – on the forgotten legacy of the conflict: equal rights for African Americans. In cities like Easton, the controversy, debate, violence, and social unrest of the civil rights movement, coupled with the Civil War centennial, perhaps, led the city to forgo any celebration to commemorate the war's one-hundredth anniversary. Such a celebration would have focused the attention of the city on the racial injustices and inequities that still existed for African Americans one hundred years after the war had ended. "Officially, and on a societal level", Blight explains, "the process by which the nation and the states remembered" the Civil War during its centennial anniversary only caused to enhance the "racial divisions of the 1960s more than it helped to alleviate them."<sup>193</sup> Coupled with the possible racial tensions that might have emerged in Easton as a result of a centennial celebration, the popularity of television during the post-World War II years (and Civil War related programs) allowed a city, and a nation, to reflect on their Civil War in the privacy of their own living rooms, decreasing the need for a costly citywide celebration. It was also during these postwar years that a nation took to the highways like never before, for the first time having the opportunity to visit the once distant – both geographically and financially – battlefields of the war. For one, or all of these reasons, the city of Easton chose to bypass any commemoration of the Civil War centennial or even the fiftieth anniversary of their monument's dedication. However, amidst these racial tensions and societal transformations of the postwar years there also emerged a new tradition in Easton: the Peace Candle. Constructed for the first time in 1951, the structure of wood, metal, and steel would cover the Civil War monument turning the memorial into a giant candle of peace. While such a structure might at first appear an act of generational disrespect, upon

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<sup>193</sup> David W. Blight, *American Oracle*, 21.

closer examination both the monument and Peace Candle convey the same societal sentiments. Both honor those who serve, and have served in the armed forces, as well as pay homage to the unity and hoped for vision of America that all soldiers were – and are today – fighting for: an America that is safe, secure, and where happiness abounds. Even today the influence of the Easton monument, and this Northern style of memorialization, can be seen in other memorials built to honor the soldiers of more recent conflicts, like the Second World War and the National World War II Memorial that resides on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The ‘sacred’ places where each of these monuments reside, the mediums that they are constructed from, the words that are carved into their stone façades, and the connection that each memorial makes to those eras that came before, are all characteristics that link these two monuments. The Northern memory of the Civil War, and the manner in which a people chose to honor the men who fought and died in that war, had, by the twenty-first century, transitioned into an American memory and a style of memorialization used to commemorate more recent national causes and the men who fought and died in defense of those ideals.

Today, the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument still stands silently in Easton’s Centre Square, a reminder of an age of monument building that swept the nation in the late 1800s and early 1900s. However, the monument still speaks to those that are listening, and reminds a city and a nation of the conflict that the men of Easton and Northampton County risked, and sacrificed, their lives. As was true during the Civil War centennial, during the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the monument says more about the people that erected it than it does about the men the memorial was meant to honor. The Easton monument, and others like them that scatter the nation, tell us about the society that

underwent the arduous, expensive, and time consuming process to build these memorials to the men who fought and died in the Civil War. However, just as these monuments speak volumes about the Americans of the early 1900s, the way in which we view and care for these stone relics of the past, also shed light on our own character. While the centrality of these sites has diminished in the century since their construction, they are still meticulously preserved and protected historic landmarks. But, in an age of rapid technological innovation, where the static is anathema to progress, these monuments are still seen as the epitome of another era. They have seemingly fallen victim to the same forces that have left the war nothing more than a static and distant struggle that exists only on the pages of history textbooks that sit dusty and forgotten on classroom bookshelves across the country. Through an analysis of these sacred sites and memorials – and Civil War memory itself – we not only enrich our understanding of the past but also our relationship to the men and women who lived the events.

One hundred and fifty years later, the smoke has cleared, the blood has long since dried, and the painful memories – memories of another age, another generation of Americans – are quickly fading into the recesses of the collective American unconscious. As more time passes it will be the monuments erected in stone that will continue to serve as reminders of this era and that distant war. However, monuments, like those in Easton, will create a memory of the war that is only as powerful as a citizen's knowledge of the conflict. If the observer's understanding of the Civil War goes no further than a basic recitation of facts from a textbook, then the memory of that war is shaped just as much by what they know, as it is shaped by what they see before them in Centre Square and what they read inscribed on the monument's stone façade. One hundred and fifty years after

Appomattox those first schools of Civil War memory are today intertwined in a memory of the Civil War that is continuing to change, influenced by regional perspectives, television documentaries, and the forces of a globally connected nation and world. Writing at the war's centennial anniversary renowned Civil War historian Bruce Catton reflected on the conflict and its influence on the nation:

“The memory of our Civil War has not been a divisive force in this country. On the contrary, it has been a source of unity – something that ties us together and gives us a new depth of mutual understanding. Incredibly, the greatest and most terrible war we have ever fought – the one we fought with each other – has given us greater strength and a more enduring unity.”<sup>194</sup>

In recent years new scholarship has emerged that has called into question the popularity of the feelings of unity and reconciliation that emerged in the years that followed the peace at Appomattox. In *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* Caroline E. Janney argues that the reconciliationist sentiments said to have emerged in the years after 1865 were not as overwhelming or unanimous as is often claimed. Many soldiers, Janney argues, found it impossible to fully embrace these feelings of reconciliation as, in their hearts and minds, the cause for which they fought – Northern or Southern – was, and would always be, the righteous one.<sup>195</sup> In many ways the Easton monument stands in support Janney's argument. The people of Easton did not build a monument solely dedicated to a reconciliationist memory of the war, nor did they build a memorial built entirely to a Unionist memory of the conflict. Instead, the Easton

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<sup>194</sup> *A Portion of That Field: The Centennial of the Burial of Lincoln* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 84.

<sup>195</sup> Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 270, 301.

monument stands as a symbol of a Northern memory of the war where the different schools of Civil War memory – the Unionist and reconciliationist schools foremost among them – were vying for dominance in the minds of the American people. History is rarely as black-and-white as textbooks, or television documentaries make it appear, and, the Easton monument is a reflection of the shifting and transforming nature of Civil War memory at the turn of the twentieth century. The monument in Easton, like the society that built it, reflects elements of both the Unionist and reconciliationist memories of the war that were popular in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

When the people of Easton gathered in May of 1900 to dedicate a monument to the brave Union soldiers who had fought and died in the Civil War what was acknowledged was not only the Union victory that these men made possible, but also the steps toward reconciliation that were already taking place at the dawn of the new century. As the years progressed, and this unity grew stronger, it would be the reunion of these once bitter enemies, and the strength of a long *united* nation, that would be honored and remembered by the war's centennial in the 1950s-60s. The monument that stands in Easton is not only a reflection of a Northern memory of the Civil War, but, as time progressed and this Northern memory shifted into a national memory, the Easton monument stands as a reflection of a memorialization style that, even today, is seen in monuments built to honor the soldiers – and remember the wars – fought in the twenty-first century. Today, the story of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument of Easton, Pennsylvania, and the monument itself, is representative of a changing Civil War memory, that, over its one hundred and thirteen year history, has reflected the tendency of a city – and a nation – to remember the

victory, reconciliation, and reunion that had become popular in America's memory of its Civil War.



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