

Barnard College, Columbia University

From War Memories to War Memorials

America's 20th Century Wars Viewed Through the National Landscape

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Introduction

Washington's plans and monuments aspire to represent the essential America, but as they take shape on the ground, they become enmeshed in the complex realities of a living America. It is this interplay of aspiration and practice that makes the memorial landscape come alive, for in that interplay the landscape ceases to be a mere symbol of America and becomes an actor in the nation's drama. Not only do the monuments of Washington retell the story of the nation but in certain times and places they change national history itself.¹

Planning for the World War I National Memorial in Washington, D.C. is currently underway. The fight for its creation became increasingly paramount nearing the beginning of the war's centennial in 2014. The contention surrounding the creation of this memorial highlights the debates and intricacies surrounding memorialization today. But how did America get here? Why is memorialization so important and what is it that memorials are trying to accomplish? Oddly, while World War I was the first of America's 20th Century wars to be fought, it is the last of the wars to receive a National War Memorial. In fact, the chronology of the wars goes in reverse to when the memorials for them were erected. Vietnam, while the most recent of the wars to be fought, was the first to receive a National Memorial; the Korean War Veterans Memorial was the second, World War II third, and the World War I Memorial will be the fourth. The National War Memorials have been looked at individually, but this thesis will hopefully add a cohesive analysis of the United States National War Memorials as a whole and how they have effected one another. These memorials are not just connected by time, but by the process of memorialization itself. This thesis will focus on the memorialization of Americas 20th Century wars, and the impact these memorials have on history.

This thesis explores the question of how National War Memorials affect the nations war memory and their interpretation of history. The memorials were each created to preserve and

¹ Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 11.

promote certain memories and ideals, but how much power do they really have? What is the effect of the National War Memorials, and do the changes made to them over time have the ability to change the narrative as well? This thesis will look at the four National War Memorials, and try to find out what is at stake with each of them. This will be done through the analyzation of: the chronology of the memorials and their creation, the purpose of the memorials and their intended audience, the ability of the memorials to be living memorials and to change over time, and ultimately their actual influence.

Before diving into the importance of memorials, it is essential to clarify what is meant by the term memorial. There is some confusion regarding the difference between a memorial and a monument and whether or not the words are interchangeable. This confusion is understandable due to the fact that different historians have differing interpretations regarding what it is each term means and what it is they are supposed to convey. Some historians believe that the meaning of the words are different, but cannot agree what it is that each of them stands for. For instance, they might accept the difference as due to the simple fact that “the memorial object serves more functions than does the single purpose monument.”² However, other historians acknowledge their more nuanced differences as well as their similarities. For example, Erika Doss believes that monuments “commemorate great men,” and that memorials “remember and honor the subjects [the monuments] address.”³ However, she then goes on to say that both are memory aids and in that way are similar. Additionally, according to Judith Dupré, monuments refer to structures that commemorate a victorious history while memorials refer to structures that are more related to loss or even death.⁴ Nevertheless, since Dupré ultimately believes that both

² Wilbur Zelinsky, *Nation into State: The Shifting Symbolic Foundations of American Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 181.

³ Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 38.

⁴ Judith Dupré, *Monuments: America's History in Art and Memory* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007), xiii.

symbolize a form of resolution, and since they are not a portrayal of one idea but rather a compilations of many different ideas including death, life, victory, loss, and the passage of time, she believes that the terms can be used interchangeably.⁵ Both historians ultimately agree that the terms are quite similar and in their works therefore use them interchangeably. While this thesis focuses on National War Memorials, when citing works by other historians the use of the words “monument” and “memorial” are interchangeable.

This leads to the larger question of what is the point of memorialization, and why do Americans find it so important. Historians have differing opinions regarding the importance of memorialization and why people find it so compelling. Dupré believes that memorialization is about redemption, “the best of [the memorials] are redemptive, allowing us to understand the past in a way that is meaningful to the present.”⁶ Assigning a specific message or specific memory as to a how an event, specifically a war, should be remembered, allows veterans and the nation as a whole to move on. Memorials are about resolution and the fact that the event has been wrapped up and codified in a certain way.⁷ Another opinion, by Marvin Trachtenberg, is that memorials are a way for different generations to connect and for there to be a source of continuity between them.⁸ Kirk Savage believes that memorials promise something everlasting and eternal, something that goes above and beyond the everyday and that because of that memorials have become so popular.⁹ Memorials promise something that will last beyond the current political climate or global issue and really help people move on and learn from their past. It is a way for the nation to take a step back and really internalize what happened in the past.

⁵ Ibid., xiii.

⁶ Ibid., xii.

⁷ Ibid., xii.

⁸ Marvin Trachtenberg, *The Statue of Liberty* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1976), 15.

⁹ Savage, *Monument Wars*, 276-277.

Additionally, Savage believes that memorials are relevant in many different types of situations, and as it relates to war memorials that means regardless of whether the war was won or lost. However, others believe that only some momentous events deserve memorialization, in this case war victories. In the wake of World War II, a Report on War Memorials was completed by the National Commission of Fine Arts. They wrote that, “the building of war memorials is part of the Nation’s obligation toward those whose heroic efforts resulted in victory.”¹⁰ According to the report, memorials are created just to memorialize the victories. Thankfully, this viewpoint is not upheld by the nation as a whole since memorials to wars that the United States did not win exist; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a prime example of this.

While many historians’ views regarding the importance of memorialization have been covered, the reason for the sudden emergence of all the National War Memorials in a relatively short amount of time is still in need of an explanation. Recently, National War Memorials have become an integral part of America’s memory, and this began with the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. But why this particular war? What was it about that time that caused this need for memorialization, and maybe even a reshaping of history? Historian Erika Doss imagines that the increase in memorials is due to the heightened anxiety regarding the shaping of America and what is and what is not important for Americans to remember. She believes that this “memorial mania” is representative of the “statue mania” that permeated throughout America – and Europe – in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹ While this explains the increase of memorials in the beginning of the twentieth century, it does not explain why war memorials – and National War Memorials specifically – did not take off until the late twentieth century.

¹⁰ U.S. Congress, *Report on War Memorials: National Commission of Fine Arts*, Senate Document No. 234, 79th Congress, 2nd Sess., introduced July 5, 1946.

¹¹ Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 2 ; Ibid., 20.

Historians discuss how after the Civil War there was a memorial campaign that began in order to patch up the wounds that had been produced by the war, and it was that which caused spikes in the increase of memorials over time. I believe that this same mentality is what caused the era of National War Memorial commemorations.¹² The Vietnam War caused a rift in the nation that had not been seen in a long time. Something was needed in order to heal both the veterans of the war and the nation that had been fragmented over its existence and outcome, and a National War Memorial had been the solution. Ultimately, that is what led to the era of National War memorialization, and the focus of this thesis.

The first chapter of the thesis will deal with the chronology of the National War Memorials, and the reasoning behind why each of them was erected. It will also look at the similarities and differences between the different construction processes, as well as what is at stake with war memorials. The second chapter will then highlight how the memorials have changed over time and will explore the idea of living memorials. Did the memorials change over time to cater to the people who are experiencing them, and how did these changes alter their original purpose? Finally, the third chapter will complete the story with a discussion of the proposed World War I National Memorial and how the other Memorials impacted and contributed to its process. Why is a National War Memorial to a war with no living veterans so contentious? Why is it that so many government agencies care about what it looks like and what it represents? Ultimately, how does the creation process of the World War I Memorial shed light on the movement of memorialization as a whole? All of these different questions will hopefully help answer the overall question of what impact these National War Memorials have on the nation and their memories.

¹² Ibid., 20.

I. Creation and Commemoration: Formation of the National War Memorials

Memorialization is an integral part of America's war memory. However, the Memorials as the nation knows them today are vastly different than when they were originally imagined. While the building stages of the memorials and their design contests are what set the tone, controversies continuously surround them and views regarding them are often times shifting. Although memorials might be subject to change over time, the themes and ideas that they are meant to convey and the reasoning behind them can be seen at the beginning when they are first being formed. This chapter will therefore analyze the creation processes of the each of the National War Memorials.

Additionally, while the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, and World War II Memorial are all currently standing, surprisingly enough the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was the first to be erected. This chapter will highlight the reasons for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and how its creation led to a National War Memorial boom. It will also emphasize the different threads that run throughout all the memorials. Ultimately, the chapter will provide a window into the mentality of the nation during the creation of each of the memorials, and will clarify why certain ideas or themes were chosen to be memorialized for posterity.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated on November 11, 1982. Prior to the dedication there was a 56-hour candlelight vigil where the names of the 57,939 Americans killed in Vietnam were read, and the actual dedication began with a parade for the 150,000 spectators and 15,000 veterans in attendance. However, all this took place seven years after the end of the

war, and it is essential to understand what went on during those seven years that ultimately brought the country to this moment. The road to the establishment of the memorial was not a simple process; the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the eventual decision regarding what it was going to represent was nuanced, complicated and carefully considered.¹³



Figure 1.1: Vietnam Veterans Memorial¹⁴

Vietnam was America's longest war, and one of its most controversial. There were many reasons for the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War. One of the main reasons was the draft; many believed that the draft was not fairly distributed through the different classes of the population and that minorities and people from the lower middle class were being unjustly selected. Additionally, many people believed that there were moral issues with the war and that the death of so many civilians could not be justified. Others thought that America should have never gotten involved in the first place as it was a Civil War between North and South Vietnam and America was only there for imperialistic reasons.¹⁵ Ultimately, the war was not just

¹³ Robin Wagner-Pacifici, and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 2 (1991): 378.

¹⁴ Smithsonian Channel, *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, December 28, 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/22711505@N05/38705016574>

¹⁵ Christian G Appy, "What Was the Vietnam War About?" *The New York Times*, March 26, 2018.

controversial while it was happening but afterwards as well. The US entered the war under the pretense of stopping the spread of Communism, but exited the war 20 years later having failed at that mission. This made it particularly difficult to try and justify the casualties, and made it hard for the veterans to find peace. It is fitting then, that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was also extremely controversial.

In 1979, Jan Scruggs, a Vietnam veteran, came up with the idea of building a Vietnam veterans memorial to help Americans heal and move on after the war. He started raising funds for it by contributing \$2,800 of his own money, and rallied other veterans around the cause.¹⁶ Together they eventually received Congress' approval to build a memorial on the National Mall near the Lincoln Memorial. In July of 1980 Congress approved the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) to "establish a memorial on public grounds of West Potomac Park in the District of Columbia, in honor and recognition of the men and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War."¹⁷ The Joint Resolution made clear that no funding would come from the government and that it was up to the VVMF to decide who would build the memorial and how it would be funded and constructed. The fact that all of the funding came from the American people and not the government highlighted the fact that it was a citizen led project. It was the citizens themselves that believed that the memorial was necessary, and put in the effort to see it to completion.

Jan Scruggs and the VVMF went on to lead a movement that helped raise \$8.4 million dollars for the creation of the memorial, and created a competition to find a design and architect for it. According to the guidelines the purpose of the memorial was to "recognize and honor

¹⁶ "Jan Scruggs," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund: Founders of the Wall, accessed November 21, 2018, <http://www.vvmf.org/jan-scruggs>

¹⁷ Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Design Competition" (Washington, D.C., November 24, 1980), 2.

those who served and died.”¹⁸ The VVMF believed that the failure to erect a memorial up to that point was an extension of the tragedy and catastrophe that was the Vietnam war. The memorial was to be a symbol of the courage and sacrifice of those that had died, and was to be an expression of the entire nation’s gratefulness and respect. However, it was not to be designed in a way that would make a political statement, but rather be designed in an apolitical manner.¹⁹ The memorial was supposed to be a source of healing and a way for many Americans to move on, and one of its main functions was to help bridge the divisions created by the war. A political memorial would shatter that fantasy. The design contest participants had a daunting task, they were to design a memorial that would “become a symbol of national unity, a focal point for remembering the war’s dead, the veterans, and the lessons learned through a tragic experience.”²⁰ There were some limits on who could submit an entry, and what could or had to be included in the entry. The competition was open to all American designers who were over the age of 18. Finally, the memorial had to include the names of all those who had been killed or went missing during the war.

There were 1,421 entries to the contest, but the design of Maya Lin, a Senior at Yale University, was unanimously chosen by the Commission of Fine Arts.²¹ She created a very simple and clean design. Her proposed memorial was composed of two 246-foot-long black granite walls in the shape of a V. The V-shape came from the fact that Lin wanted one of the walls to point towards the Lincoln memorial, and the other to point towards the Washington Monument in order to anchor the Vietnam Memorial in history.²² The names of all those killed

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²¹ Pacifici and Schwartz, “Commemorating a Difficult Past,” 393.

²² Maya Lin, letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, July 14, 1981.

or missing in action where to be written in chronological order across the two granite walls, each of which was polished as to appear almost mirror like. She designed an interactive memorial, where as you walk across the walls you descend into the ground, at the same time seeing yourself and the park around you mirrored yet distorted by the names. As people walk through the memorial they are surrounded by and acutely aware of all the death that took place; the memorial is simple, but effective. The groundbreaking took place on March 26, 1982, and the monument was completed in October of the same year. The speed with which everything was done showed how important this memorial really was, and the urgency people felt towards its creation. It took a long time for the process of the creation of the memorial to begin, but once begun it became clear just how excited and ready the public, and more importantly the veterans, were. Americans needed a concrete place to go and grieve, and finally they were getting one.

However, that is not to say that there was no controversy regarding the design; and Lin's initial design was slightly altered. Against Lin's wishes, the sponsors decided to add an inscription to the wall. The first part of the inscription which begins before the first name on the right wall reads: "In honor of the men and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order they were taken from us." The second part of the inscription was placed after the last name at the bottom of the left wall and reads: "Our nation honors the courage, sacrifice and devotion to duty and country of its Vietnam veterans. This memorial was built with private contributions from the American people."²³ While this inscription was placed against Lin's wishes as she wanted the message and the takeaway to be vague and up to each individual person, in the end the inscription only ended up furthering her point; the first

²³ Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 276-277.

inscription talks about the people who gave their lives, while the second is about the peoples whose lives were taken. This controversy surrounding the idea of how these soldiers died and what it meant is emphasized in those sentences and really drove home the idea of the memorial being viewed however each individual saw fit.²⁴

Although many Americans, particularly historians, found it important to remember the failures as well as the victories, the huge conflict surrounding this particular war and the continued lack of peace that seemed to follow, made it more important to create a space where people could grieve and move on. Lin created a certain type of space where the meaning of the war and its legacy could be decided by the viewers themselves in how they interacted and responded to the memorial.²⁵ While most national war memorials are in memoriam of the event or at least those who died in relation to it, this memorial varied by just memorializing the people who died without any mention or subtle reference to the war itself. This made sense when looking at the Vietnam war and the job of the memorial. While the war was not something that Americans wanted to remember, the people who died fighting were something Americans never wanted to forget. Although most memorials try to make sure that the legacy of the war lives on due to the victory it signified or the effect it had on the world, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was more than ready to have the war die, while the names of the Americans who died while fighting lived on. John Bender, a long term Park Service volunteer, articulated the message of the memorial clearly, "The memorial says: this is the price we pay. It doesn't say whether it was right, it doesn't say whether it was wrong, it doesn't say whether it was worth it or not. It simply

²⁴ Ibid., 279.

²⁵ Ibid., 267.

says 'this is the cost of war'." Lin created a space where people could come to terms with that and take from it what they wished, paving the way for an ever changing memorial.²⁶

Honoring the legacy of the people who died in the Vietnam War was not the only achievement of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial created a movement, it was a piloting structure that started a movement of memorialization. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was the first real monument to victims; it was not created to glorify the United States or its achievements, but rather to help its suffering nation. The Vietnam War had caused many people to lose faith in America's way of waging war for democracy and made it so that the old ways of commemorating specific war heroes or events would not work. That hopelessness paved the way for a new way of commemoration, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial responded accordingly. The way the viewers responded and participated with the memorial became an integral part of memorials going forward.²⁷ While the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was essential in helping the nation move on after the controversial war, its success begged the question as to why there was no memorial for other veterans of 20th century wars? Ultimately, not only did the Vietnam Veterans Memorial create a space for other war memorials to be erected, but it provided a blue print for how those memorials could be designed.

Korean War Veterans Memorial

The Korean War, or at least the fighting of it, ended in July of 1953 when the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed; this created a demilitarized zone separating North and South

²⁶ Daphne Berdahl, "Voices at the Wall: Discourses of Self, History and National Identity at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *History and Memory* 6, no. 2 (1994): 94.

²⁷ Savage, *Monument Wars*, 266.

Korea. However, no peace treaty was ever signed and some people therefore argued that North and South Korea are still at war. While the Korean War took place right before the start of the Vietnam War, the National Korean War Memorial was constructed after the Vietnam Veterans memorial, as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial highlighted the importance and necessity of memorials. Additionally, both wars took place during the Cold War, and both were extremely contentious; it is then not hard to believe that the construction of the Korean War Memorial was also severely debated.



Figure 1.2: Korean War Veterans Memorial²⁸

The fight for a memorial began in 1979, headed by Hal Baker, the son of a Korean War veteran. Notably, this was the same year that the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial was proposed. However, while the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was completed in 1982, it was only in 1995, almost 20 years after it was originally suggested, that the Korean War Veterans Memorial was finally dedicated. After years of debate, in October of 1986 Public Law 99-572 was passed and the erection of a Korean War Veterans Memorial was authorized. In the same law, a Korean War

²⁸Carol M. Highsmith, *Ariel View of the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.*, September 20, 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aerial_view_of_Korean_War_Veterans_Memorial.jpg

Veterans Memorial advisory board, consisting of 12 veterans of the Korean War, was created.²⁹

One other difference from the onset was that while all of the funds from the Vietnam War Memorial came from private funds, the government gifted the American Battle Monuments Commission, which was overseeing the creation of the memorial, a certain amount of funds for certain aspects of the memorial. Like the Vietnam War Memorial before it, a contest was then announced to find a design for the memorial.

In order to try and avoid the controversy that surrounded the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a board of all veterans were chosen to select the design. There were over 543 submissions, but ultimately a design by Don Leon, John Paul Lucas, Veronica Burns Lucas, and Eliza Pennypacker Oberholtzer, four Penn State professors, was selected.³⁰ Veronica Burns eloquently summarized the goal of the memorial at a ceremony, overseen by President Bush, where the proposed design was unveiled. She said, “For many Americans, both during the war and today, the Korean War is a distant circumstance. For those who served or who lost loved ones in the service to the war, it is a powerful reality. The intent of this memorial is to record and to unify knowledge of the war, to enlighten the uniformed, and to remind those who already know its truth.”³¹ In between World War II and Vietnam, the Korean War became somewhat of an afterthought in the minds of many Americans. The goal of the memorial was to make the war more relevant and tangible. Completely opposite to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the actual war was an integral part of the Korean War Veterans Memorial, and that can be seen in its design.

²⁹ U.S. Congress, *Korean War Memorial Act*, H.R.2205, 99th Congress, 2nd Sess., introduced January 21, 1986.

³⁰ Patrick Hagopian, “The Korean War Veterans Memorial and Problems of Representation,” *Public Art Dialogue*, no. 2. September, 2012: 222.

³¹ Sharon L. Lynch, “President Presents Memorial Plans,” *Daily Collegian*, June 15, 1989.

The original design of the memorial consisted of 38 statues, referencing the 38th parallel ceasefire line that was crossed to begin the war. The statues were representations of soldiers and were to be made out of rough-hewn stone. The statue at the front would be looking towards the American flag, as if it was contemplating the unclear end of the war. The line of soldiers was supposed to represent a timeline of the war with shifts from peace to war and then back to the eventual peace. There would be water rushing around the feet of the statues, but aside from that visitors would be able to walk among the statues freely. The memorial was supposed to represent and pay homage to the terrain of the actual war, and thus there were varying additions to the land's design like the water and harshly clipped trees. At the end visitors would arrive at a marble square with a neighboring pool of water, that would both literally and figuratively be used for reflection. Finally, at the end there would be a wall with faintly engraved figures.³²

While this was the original design that was proposed and which won the competition, this design was not actualized. The project architect for the memorial was Cooper-Lecky, the same firm from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and they were not on board with all aspects of the original design.³³ The original designers and Cooper-Lecky had different views regarding what the memorial should look like and how the war and the veterans should be represented. Both sides brought their dispute to the Commission of Fine Arts for them to decide which one would go forward.³⁴ The original design team was sent back to the drawing board in the hopes that they would alter their design in a way that would garner more approval, but ultimately, after a lot of controversy, the original four designers left the project and Cooper-Lecky took over completely.³⁵

³² Anthony Faiola, and Lena H. Sun, "Out of History, Onto the Mall," *The Washington Post*, July 23, 1995.

³³ Roger K. Lewis, "War Memorial Design Symbol of Controversy," *The Washington Post*, November 17, 1990.

³⁴ Barbara Gamarekian, "Architects Clash Over Korean War Memorial," *The New York Times*, December 15, 1990.

³⁵ Barbara Gamarekian, "Panel Turns Down Plan for Korean War Shrine," *The New York Times*, January 19, 1991.

The final design Cooper-Lecky crafted was based on the original design, as the idea had become the property of the competition and the memorial committee, but with some significant changes. They wanted the statues to be extremely realistic, and therefore decided not to have them made out of stone as they would not be able to portray all of the aspects of the soldiers. Additionally, they wanted to make the memorial more inclusive and went about doing this by making the sculptures more ethnically and racially diverse. In response to some backlash from different groups in the military, the types of soldiers represented became more diverse as well. The water was also removed, and a path, which would stop the public from walking among the statues, was instituted instead. In addition, the memorial design now recognized the other countries that were part of the United Nations Coalition and became a memorial to more than just Americans. The originally proposed wall would stay, but instead of portraying indistinct figures it would be used to create “a mural of faces.”³⁶ Louise Nelson, the mural artist that was chosen, sifted through thousands of photos from the war and then had them sandblasted on to the wall. However, when this final design was brought to the Commission of Fine Arts in 1991, they did not approve it as they believed that 38 statues were excessive. Finally, on January 6, 1992, the memorial having been cut down to 19 statues, was approved.³⁷

The Korean War Veterans Memorial was not just supposed to become a part of American history, but of world history as well. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial which focused on the individuals lost, the Korean War Veterans Memorial mainly conveyed the idea of sacrifice as a whole and the importance of the war on world history. The legacy of the Korean War was lost in between the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War and the celebration that surrounded World War II, and the Korean War Veterans Memorial, after gaining its momentum from the

³⁶ Lewis, “War Memorial Controversy,” 1990.

³⁷ Ibid.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial that preceded it, made sure that the legacy of the Korean War would never be forgotten. As it was written in the stone of the memorial itself, “Freedom Is Not Free.”³⁸ The underlying message of this memorial is that nothing can be overlooked, not the Korean War and not the nation’s freedom.

World War II Memorial



Figure 1.3: World War II Memorial³⁹

While World War II took place before both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the World War II memorial was the last of the three to be erected. World War II officially ended with the surrender of Japan and an Allied victory on September 2, 1945. On May 25, 1993, President Bill Clinton signed Public Law 103-32, which authorized the construction of a memorial that would

³⁸ Ryan Coonerty, *Etched in Stone: Enduring Words from Our Nations Monuments* (Washington D.C., 2007), 75.

³⁹ Carol M Highsmith, *Ariel View of the World War II Memorial, Washington D.C.*, September 20, 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aerial_view_of_National_World_War_II_Memorial.jpg

both honor those who served in World War II, and honor America's participation in the war. The Public Law also called for the creation of a 12-member World War II Advisory Board, where each of the members appointed by the President needed to be either "veterans of World War II, historians of World War II, and representatives of veterans organizations, historical associations, and groups knowledgeable about World War II."⁴⁰ It appeared from this that Congress had learned from their previous mistakes. For the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, they were not particularly specific regarding who would choose the design, while for the Korean War Veterans Memorial they were a little too specific and only allowed veterans to be on the committee; it appeared as though, with the World War II memorial, they finally got it right by selecting a wide variety of people who all had strong connections to the war. The Public Law also stated that the money used for the creation of the memorial would come both from private funds and from federal funds. So the eventual erection of the memorial was finally under way, but how did the country get to this moment? The war had ended in 1945, a little under 50 years before, so why now? Who had been the impetus, civilians or the government?

It all began in 1987 when Roger Durbin, a veteran of World War II, asked Representative Marcy Kaptur if a memorial could be constructed. Kaptur, over the span of a couple of years proposed a bill for the creation of the memorial, but it was not until his fourth try in March of 1993 that the bill was approved and became a law. In May of 1993 President Clinton signed the act into law, and the 12-person committee that was created by the law, together with the American Battle Monuments Commission, began planning. The first order of business was finding a suitable location for the momentous memorial. On October 5, 1995, the Rainbow Pool was chosen as the site for the new memorial. This location was centrally located on the National

⁴⁰U.S. Congress, *Public Law 103-32*, 103rd Congress, May 25, 1993.

Mall in between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, and this caused considerable controversy. This would be the first huge change to the central landscape of the mall since 1901. The Rainbow Pool was the center of the National Mall, “the most symbolically charged national space imaginable.”⁴¹ People opposed to the use of the Rainbow Pool believed that the memorial would forever change the nature of the space. Ultimately, the US Congress became involved, and passed legislation in 2001 preventing future lawsuits from delaying the memorial’s construction.⁴²

On November 11, 1995, Veterans Day, President Clinton dedicated the Rainbow Pool site for the World War II Memorial. During the President’s remarks he said, “we dedicate this site to ensure that we will never forget.”⁴³ He continued by saying, “It was...the coming of age not only for many Americans but for America, the moment that we understood that we could save the world for freedom and only we could save the world for freedom, and so we had to do it.”⁴⁴ The purpose of this memorial extended past the people and war that it was remembering, but was also a reminder to the world at large of America’s greatness, and a reminder to Americans of their country’s values and what it was they stood for. While the dedication of the site had taken place, it was not until May 22, 2001, that Congress officially approved the use of that space and put an end to the controversy surrounding it.⁴⁵ Additionally, there was still no design for the memorial. As a result, the board, like memorial boards before it, created a competition to find a design.

⁴¹ Savage, *Monument Wars*, 300.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 300.

⁴³ William J. Clinton, “Remarks at the Dedication of the World War II Memorial Site, November 20, 1995,” in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents Volume 31, Issue 46* (November 20, 1995) 2007.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2007.

⁴⁵ U.S. Congress, *Public Law 107-11*, 107th Congress, May 28, 2001.

A little over 400 submissions were reviewed, but ultimately the design of architect Friedrich St. Florian was chosen. The focus of his design was to rebuild the Rainbow Pool and lower it seven feet into the ground so that it would be able to appropriately frame the architecture that would tell the story of the war, at least the story as America wanted it to be remembered. The two main components of the memorial design were the pool and the plaza, as they helped to connect all the other elements. The entrance to the memorial at 17th Street was signified and bordered by two flagpoles. Steps and ramps then led from the entrance to the plaza. The announcement stone for the memorial was also located at this entrance. The announcement stone helped connect the memorial to the other structures commemorating history in the park and made the significance of the memorial even more pronounced for the people who visit it. Twenty-four bronze panels along the entrance illustrated the war effort both at home and overseas. Additionally, there were paths at the North and South sides of the plaza for people who wanted to approach the memorial from the Lincoln Memorial or Washington Monument, which helped to connect the war to other parts of America's history. Two 43-foot arches, one named Atlantic and one named Pacific, a nod to the two main fronts of the war, were on the North and South sides of the plaza. The plaza was surround by two semicircles of 17-foot granite pillars; there were 56 pillars in total, one for each of the then 48 states, District of Columbia and U.S. territories in order to represent the unity that America showed during the war. Finally, on the western side of the memorial was located a commemorative area. It recognized the sacrifices made by that generation of Americans, in addition to acknowledging the contributions and sacrifices made by America's allies. During the war the golden star symbolized a families' sacrifice, so the architect found it only fitting that 4,000 sculpted gold stars representing the 400,000 Americans who sacrificed their lives, was placed on the Freedom Wall in the

memorial.⁴⁶ As one could tell from this description, the World War II memorial was one of the more complex memorials. The World War II Memorial could also be seen in connection to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that made way for it. It could be seen as a response to the criticism of Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial; while the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was criticized for being black since the color black is associated with death and loss, this memorial was constructed using white granite. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial used the power of silence and contemplation, and the World War II memorial used noise from both the viewers and the flowing water. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was simplistic, while the World War II Memorial was overflowing with quotes and images and differing components. Most importantly, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial left the message up to the viewer and did not make any final decisions about the war, while the World War II Memorial emphasized its message of unity and freedom in any way it could.⁴⁷

There were so many aspects of the war that people wanted to remember and convey, unlike memorials that came before it. One example of this can be seen with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where only the people who had sacrificed their lives were remembered. The name itself furthered that message, the memorial is called the World War II Memorial, not the World War II Veterans Memorial. There was a lot to say, and it took many years to learn how to say it, but finally an idea for the memorial had been completed. Fifty-nine years after the war had ended, on May 29, 2004, the World War II memorial was dedicated. While in name it was a National War Memorial, in practice its goal was to be a world memorial. It highlighted the unity of America with its allies while artfully announcing America's superiority and significance.

⁴⁶ "Memorial Design," Friends of the National WWII Memorial, accessed November 21, 2018, <http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org/design/>

⁴⁷ Savage, *Monument Wars*, 299-300.

Conclusion

Ultimately, while the names of the war memorials may originally have seemed somewhat generic, they are in fact an indicator of the memorials' intended purpose. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was created to honor and remember those that were killed in the war and wanted to memorialize nothing related to the war itself. The Korean War Veterans Memorial wanted to remember those who had sacrificed their lives, along with those who were still living; additionally, the designers did not want the war to be forgotten or 'lost', but rather they wanted the peace that it created to live on. Finally, the World War II Memorial was bigger than any individual person or idea. It conveyed the greatness of America and the effect America had on other countries and history; it refused to have its name confined to one specific idea. Over time, no matter what else may have changed concerning the memorials, their names would stay constant and would anchor back to the memorials' original purpose.

Each of the memorials claimed different memories and ideas as significant to publicize and remember, and the political climate and status of the nation at the time played a huge role in the decision making process. Careful consideration was given to each memorials' design process in order to make it best suited for each time period and situation. Together, the memorials help tell a story of unity, freedom, and redemption. However, even during their creation, the memorials were riddled with controversy. From the beginning, people had differing views regarding what they wanted the memorials to portray. The next chapter will show that once memorials are erected they leave the jurisdiction of the designers and acquire a new meaning and direction; they become susceptible to change by the masses.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

II. Dedication and Reception: The Life of a Memorial

The erection of the National War Memorials was just the beginning. Once they were constructed, their immediate reception was crucial in determining their impact and how they might be altered. Once built they were not done, they were constantly being amended over time. Even at the opening ceremony, they were already moving away from the exact vision the architectural team had in mind. The memorials themselves are in some sense living memorials, they are not complete. It is interesting to look at what the public has taken from the memorials, and this chapter hopes to highlight that. There were many ways the memorials could be received. Some provided healing and resolution, while others instilled a sense of pride or unity. Additionally, some were more controversially received than others. However, ironically, what stays constant is the fact that they are all endlessly changing both in meaning and in form.

Important decisions tend to lead to competing opinions. It is therefore not surprising that decisions regarding how major wars should be portrayed were controversial. This chapter will explore the responses to the memorials and how those responses affected their trajectories.⁴⁹ Due to the differing responses to the memorials, additional elements have been added to them. An analysis of these new elements will hopefully shed light on how the memorials adapted to changing times. Finally, this chapter will show how visitors of the memorials can make their own marks, and add to the growing legacy of these amazing memorials. Everyone has the ability to be part of the memorials' legacies, and in doing so impact the nation's war memory.

⁴⁹ Judith Dupré, *Monuments: America's History in Art and Memory* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007), xiv.

Reception

The immediate reception of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was controversial, which is only fitting given the fact the Vietnam War and the design process of the memorial were both extremely contentious. Critics had many issues with the design of the memorial. Mainly, they did not approve of the fact that it was below ground and not above ground, that it was black and not white, and that it did not explicitly identify the soldiers as heroes as the alternative of that was to be seen as victims.⁵⁰ Some even called it a "black gash of shame," or "an insult to those it intends to memorialize."⁵¹ As a result of these criticisms, the memorial design was slightly altered, which will be seen later in this chapter.

The dedication ceremony for the memorial was supposed to take place on Veterans Day 1982, but due to the aforementioned controversy, it did not take place until two years later. However, on November 13, 1982 the memorial still opened to the public, and on November 14th, Vietnam veterans paraded across Washington. While the parade was cathartic for many of the veterans, it was not the arms wide open 'thank you' and 'welcome home' that they were looking for. According to a New York Times article from that day, "long sections of the viewing stand were half empty, and some blocks along the 10-block parade route had but a single broken line of spectators on each side."⁵² The 150,000 people who showed up to support the veterans, while a large number of people, was significantly below the expected turnout. Even at a celebration for the veterans, old arguments over the war broke out. While the healing may have at that point begun, there was still a long way to go.

⁵⁰ Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 267.

⁵¹ Daphne Berdahl, "Voices at the Wall: Discourses of Self, History and National Identity at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *History and Memory* 6, no. 2 (1994): 92.

⁵² Philip M. Boffey, "Vietnam Veterans' Parade a Belated Welcome Home," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1982.

The Korean War Veterans Memorial had a more positive reception; this might be due to the fact that from the outset it was more accepted. President George H. W. Bush spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Korean War Veterans Memorial that took place on June 14, 1992. He began by saying that the memorial was for the “veterans whose courage lives on in history.”⁵³ He apologized for the fact that it took so long to create the Memorial, but that the soldiers who might have been forgotten in the “lost war” would now be memorialized forever. The memorial Bush said was “not a memorial to war, but a memorial to the peace America has always fought for.”⁵⁴ The soldiers were not the only ones that would be honored and remembered by this memorial, but the peace that it created would be remembered as well. The effects of the war were also being remembered; this was a memorial for the event as well as the people. Towards the end of his speech President Bush said, “I believe that the Korean War showed that ours would not be the land of the free if it were not the home of the brave,”⁵⁵ highlighting the war and the people that died, but also what that said about America and its priorities.

The completion of the memorial finally took place three years later in 1995, and at the dedication on July 27, 1995, President Bill Clinton spoke. While he emphasized many of the same points that President Bush had spoken about three years prior, he focused on one more significant aspect of the memorial as well. During his remarks he said, “this memorial also commemorates those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we might live free...pause for a moment of silence in honor of those from the United States, our U.N. allies, and from our friends

⁵³ George H. W. Bush, “Remarks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Korean War Veterans Memorial, June 14, 1992,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George H. W. Bush (1992, Book I)*, 934.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 934.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 934.

in the Republic of Korea who lost their lives in the Korean war.”⁵⁶ It was not just a memorial for Americans but for all who sacrificed their lives in the war. Regardless of the ending of the war, America’s brave mentality and the people who fought for it were celebrated; this was a recognition that the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial did not immediately receive. The Korean War Veterans Memorial interacted with the Vietnam Memorial in other less positive ways as well. Included behind the 19 soldiers in the Korean memorial, is a black granite wall that mirrors Maya Lin’s Vietnam Memorial design. There were some critics that believed that this in turn lessened the power of Lin’s simple design, and compromised the design of the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Reception of the Memorial, while overall positive, was complicated and in no way uniform.⁵⁷

The reception of the World War II Memorial was more in line with that of the Korean War Veteran’s Memorial than the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. May 29, 2004 marked the dedication of the World War II Memorial. While the other two memorial dedications came in the midst of controversy surrounding those wars, World War II was overwhelmingly seen as a U.S. victory and was not such a subject of contention. Nevertheless, the dedication took place while a severe division over the Iraq war existed. The celebration brought together people from both sides, and highlighted an earlier time where the country was united and communally supportive of their troops abroad. President Bush was the Keynote speaker where he addressed the more than 100,000 attendees.⁵⁸ In his speech, Bush spoke about how the American soldiers during the war “saved our country and thereby saved the liberty of mankind.”⁵⁹ This statement reinforced

⁵⁶William J. Clinton, “Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Korean War Veterans Memorial, July 27, 1995,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton* (1995, Book II), 1161.

⁵⁷ Deborah K. Dietsch, “Compromised Commemoration,” *Architecture* 84, no. 9 (09, 1995): 15.

⁵⁸ Michael Janofsky, “Veterans Gather to Dedicate World War II Memorial,” *The New York Times*, May 30, 2004.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2004.

the goal of the memorial which was to highlight the greatness of that generation and how they really brought the world together. The fact that the memorial dedication helped unite Americans that were divided over Iraq, while not the memorial's intended goal, went hand in hand with the memorial's vision of unity. This specific instance emphasized how the memorials were not erected in a bubble. They were connected to and influenced by both the memorials that came before them, as well as current political tensions and debates in the U.S. at the time of their creation and dedication.

Changes to the Memorials

For some memorials, like the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, from the outset it was clear that something had to be changed or added to the memorial due to the initial criticism. For other memorials, like the Korean War Veteran's Memorial or the World War II Memorial, the need for change emerged over time. In 1984, two years after the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the unveiling of an addition to the memorial and the official dedication of the memorial occurred. This new addition consisted of "The Three Soldiers" statue, which is comprised of one white, one black, and one ambiguously ethnic infantryman in uniform carrying weapons and a flagstaff. At the unveiling, Everett Alvarez Jr., a Navy fighter pilot in Vietnam, made the comment that "As a nation we are finally coming to grips with Vietnam, and much of that adjustment has occurred in the two years since this memorial opened."⁶⁰ This spoke to the impact of the memorial and how necessary it was. Additionally, it highlighted the fact that the main goal of the memorial, to heal the nation, was being realized. According to the veterans, the bronze statue was added to dismiss the 'myth' that Vietnam veterans were outsiders at home, and

⁶⁰ Ben A. Franklin, "Statue Completes Vietnam Memorial," *The New York Times*, November 10, 1984.

finally that might have been true. The original memorial was created without any direct reference to the war or to the living veterans since that was what was necessary at the time. However, the nation had begun to heal and a more thorough representation of those who had fought in the war was needed. “The Three Soldiers” was created to fill that gap and make a space for the veterans who were now rejoining society.



Figure 2.1: The Three Soldiers⁶¹

Two days after the unveiling of the new statue and the official dedication of the Memorial, President Reagan formally accepted the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for the nation. In addition, ownership of the memorial was transferred from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to the National Park Service.⁶² In his speech at the ceremony President Reagan called the memorial a symbol of healing. Another interesting aspect of the memorial that the President noted in his speech, and which I personally noticed when I visited the memorial, was that each

⁶¹ Lee Bennett, *Three Soldier statue at Vietnam War Memorial*, October 22, 2000, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lee Bennett/8440424535>

⁶² Ben A. Franklin, “President Accepts Vietnam Memorial,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 1984.

visitor's reflection could be seen in the polished marble of the memorial, and made it look like the names were being given new life. This was an effect that contributed to the feeling of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial being a living memorial and trying to heal the people who visited it. Jan Scruggs wanted the memorial to be one of healing, for all of the veterans who were rejected by society when they returned and for the nation as a whole which had been severely split. President Reagan's speech confirmed that Scruggs' vision succeeded. But what ultimately exhibited the success of the memorial was what Reagan said to the gathered veterans towards the end of his speech. President Reagan remarked, "when you returned home, you brought solace to the loved ones of those who fell, but little solace was given to you."⁶³ He went even further and said that some people were unable to distinguish between their dislike for war and those who had perhaps fought in it but who had also suffered its effects. Reagan finished by saying that the nation was now finally officially saying thank you to the veterans.⁶⁴ The memorial had helped the nation heal in unimaginable ways. The addition of "The Three Soldiers" statue made Americans evaluate the impact of the memorial, and brought its success to life.

The procession at the opening of the Memorial two years prior did not meet expectations, but the success with the official ceremony and dedication two years later showed how much the Memorial had healed the nation. Nevertheless, no addition to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial could come about without some contention. Some veterans who had been in favor of adding the statues and flagstaff had desired for them to be in the middle of the two walls, in front of the V-shape, rather than on the side. Ultimately, those in favor of having it on the side prevailed in the debate, with the Government's Fine Art Commission voting unanimously in their favor. The decision was made due to the fact that the Fine Arts Commission believed that putting it on the

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

side would create a, “front door, the major entrance, the first impression,” and would have the greatest impact in changing the memorial in a way that would be accepted by the greatest amount of people. The memorial is a focal point for so many people; therefore, no matter what, some people will disagree with the decisions made regarding it. However, that is also what causes it to be constantly evolving.



Figure 2.2: Vietnam Women's Memorial⁶⁵

Unsurprisingly, another addition to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial came in the form of a Women's Memorial in 1993. The Vietnam Memorial wall had 58,000 names, but only eight of them were uniformed nurses.⁶⁶ The Women's Memorial would act as a memorial for the 256,000 military women who helped with the war effort, and the 10,000 women who were stationed in Vietnam.⁶⁷ The memorial was designed by sculptor Glenna Goodacre, and consisted of three uniformed women and a wounded soldier. Like the memorial it joined, the statue did not celebrate war, but rather highlighted the realities of it. It was created to honor the women who

⁶⁵ Tracy Lee Carroll, *The Vietnam Women's Memorial*, April 26, 2006, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tracylee/136987939>

⁶⁶ AP, “Senate Approves New Statue of Nurse for War Memorial,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 1988.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

participated in the Vietnam War and attempted to show how much they sacrificed for their country. The viewer sees the women in action and is hoping for their individual success, not necessarily the success of the cause as a whole.⁶⁸ While the sculpture succeeded in recognizing the women veterans and their contribution, and in turn aided in the process of healing that the memorial intended to create, many people argued that it did not add anything specifically powerful to the memorial as a whole. They believed that the statue could in fact act as a distraction to the simplicity of the wall. However, due to the designs carefully calculated placement slightly hidden from the rest of the wall, it succeeded in interfering only marginally with the wall's design.⁶⁹ This was not just a momentous occasion for the women of Vietnam, but for the women's movement as a whole. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was having a domino effect that was not perceptible to the original architects, but nevertheless played into their vision. The memorial started a conversation that was helping to heal both veterans and non-veterans alike in numerous and previously unforeseeable ways.

While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the only one of the three with actualized additions, both the Korean War Veteran's Memorial and the World War II Memorial have changes that are underway. This can be attributed to the fact that while from the beginning additions were in the works for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the other two originally received overwhelmingly positive reviews. It therefore took longer for the need or want for changes to be realized. On October 7, 2016, President Barack Obama signed into law Public Law No: 114-230, which authorized the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation to build a Wall of Remembrance to be added to the current Korean War Veterans Memorial.⁷⁰ This addition was

⁶⁸ Benjamin Forgey, "One Monument Too Many," *The Washington Post*, November 6, 1993.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ U.S. Congress, *Korean War Memorial Wall of Remembrance Act*, H.R.1475, 114th Congress, introduced October 7, 2016.

requested in order to better convey the magnitude of the sacrifice of the 36,574 American soldiers killed, the 103,284 wounded, and the 8,177 missing in action.⁷¹ The proposal called for the wall to be made out of laminated glass and for it to encircle the back half of the reflection pool at the memorial. Similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, all the names of those who gave their lives in the war, in addition to the number of U.S. servicemen who were wounded, missing in action, or prisoners of war, were to be etched into it. However, given the fact that the memorial was not just supposed to be a part of American history, but rather world history as a whole, the members of the South Korean military and the U.N. soldiers would also be honored. This would be done by listing the number of soldiers who were killed, wounded, or who went missing during the war.⁷² This addition clearly came from the success of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, but at the same time, the design made sure to incorporate the essence of the Korean War Veterans Memorial as well.

The World War II Memorial was the most well received of the three, and is also the one undergoing the least physical change. However, as the Vietnam and Korean Memorials have highlighted, memorials are living and do not stay static. The World War II Memorial Prayer Act of 2013, U.S. Public Law 123, was passed by Congress.⁷³ It allowed the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to incorporate a plaque or inscription into the memorial with the prayer that President Roosevelt shared with the nation on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The bill was unanimously passed just before the 70th anniversary of D-Day.⁷⁴ Although the memorial itself was not controversial, the Memorial Prayer Act turned out to be. Religious freedom and diversity are key component of the

⁷¹ “Wall of Remembrance,” Korean War Veterans Memorial, accessed November 21, 2018, <http://www.koreanwarvetsememorial.org/wall-of-remembrance/>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ U.S. Congress, *World War II Memorial Prayer Act of 2013*, S.1044, 113th Congress, introduced June 30, 2014.

⁷⁴ Religion News Service, “Prayer Plaque at National WWII Memorial Unanimously Approved by Senate,” *Huffpost*, June 6, 2014.

American way of life, and many different groups, like the American Civil Liberties Union and the Interfaith Alliance, argued that adding a prayer that promoted “Judeo-Christian heritage and values,” was betraying those values.⁷⁵ The stated purpose of the World War II memorial was national - and global - unity, and these groups argued that this prayer would be contrary to those values. And while the bill was unanimously passed, the plaque has yet to be incorporated into the memorial. All of these different additions and possible additions to the memorials show that the memorials are not stationary, and that the debates surrounding them are constantly ebbing and flowing. However, change is important as it mirrors the issues and ideas that are prevalent at that specific time, and they are what continue to make the memorials, and the history they are representing, relevant.

Additions That Go Beyond the Memorials Themselves

John Devitt, a veteran of the Vietnam War visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for the first time in 1982. Before he visited it he thought he would hate it, "it's a gravestone. That's the way I felt about it before I walked up to it. It was black, it was in the ground, it wasn't designed by a Vietnam vet. Symbolically, I didn't like it."⁷⁶ However, when he saw it all his previous notions regarding the memorial disappeared, and he was left in awe. He was finally able to process how many 58,000 lives were, and respected how the memorial was able to portray that. From that moment on he made it his mission to make it possible for all veterans to see the wall. Seeing the wall was the first time that John Devitt had felt pride since coming home from Vietnam, and he wanted every other veteran to feel that pride and be able to begin their process

⁷⁵ American Civil Liberties Union, “Letter to Chairman Udall and Ranking Member Portman” (Washington, D.C., July 29, 2013) 1-2.

⁷⁶Wayne King, “Our Towns; Vietnam Veteran Moves the Wall Across the Land,” *The New York Times*, August 22, 1989.

of healing as well.⁷⁷ Devitt realized the purpose of the memorial, "it's not a statement about war. It's a statement about sacrifice and service."⁷⁸ The goal of the memorial was being realized, and had made such an impact that visitors began trying to do something that had not been attempted before. While the memorials had been changed since their original conception, for the first time in their existence they would be moved. Together with a couple of his Vietnam veteran friends, Devitt built a half-scale replica of the memorial that he named "the Moving Wall."⁷⁹ He has over the years taken the moving memorial to hundreds of towns around the country, and it has been seen by millions of people. By imposing this model wall into neighborhoods all over the country, many people were finally able to comprehend the enormity of the loss of life. The Vietnam Wall was reaching corners of the country that it had originally not even deemed possible. "The Moving Wall" demonstrated how additions to the memorial cannon could come in many different forms, and did not necessarily have to be attached to the memorials themselves. The reach of the memorials is not set in stone, and visitors can have an impact on them in numerous ways.

Visitors additions can be seen in other forms as well. Over the years, more than 400,000 items have been left by people at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.⁸⁰ The National Park Service then collects many of the items left, and they become part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial collection. The items that are collected are separated into six categories: personal artifacts, Vietnam military service items, protest and advocacy pieces, public tribute items, architectural

⁷⁷ King, "Vietnam Veteran Moves the Wall."

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Items Left at The Wall," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed November 21, 2018, <http://www.vvmf.org/items/>.

elements, and site history items.⁸¹ While these additions to the memorial may at first have appeared temporary, their collection had the effect of ingraining them into the narrative of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This collection is housed at the National Park Service Capitol Region Museum Resource Center, however the entirety of the collection is not open to the public.⁸² While the collection as a whole is not currently on display for the public, there is an online database where a large portion of the collection has been catalogued and can be seen by the masses.⁸³ The items left continue telling the story of Vietnam, and contribute vastly to the efforts of the wall itself.

In 2016 a documentary exploring some of the items left at the memorial was created.⁸⁴ The items catalogued help paint fuller stories of many different aspects of the war, from the war itself to the continued feeling of loss felt by relatives of those killed. One example is the large collection of veteran “countdown calendars” that has been amassed. These personalized calendars help people today understand the daily lives of veterans during the war. One countdown calendar had July 20, 1969 marked as the first time a man landed on the moon. Even during the war, the soldiers were still just people trying to keep up with the outside world, and that is something that could sometimes be lost when looking at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with its 58,000 names. Americans today sometimes tend to associate veterans and those killed during the Vietnam War as part of a bubble that just existed in relation to the war, but that is not true and many of the items left at the wall help Americans realize that. Additionally, some items left at the wall have even contributed to the nation’s knowledge of the Vietnam War and what

⁸¹ “Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection,” National Park Service, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1802/vive.htm>.

⁸² Jay Korff and Kevin Drennen, “Left Behind: The Stories Behind the Items Left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall,” *ABC7 WJLA*, November 10, 2016, <https://wjla.com/news/local/left-behind-the-stories-behind-the-items-left-at-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial-wall>.

⁸³ Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, “Items Left at The Wall.”

⁸⁴ Korff and Kevin, “Left Behind,” 2016.

took place on the battle field. One such item was a 1/4th inch magnetic reel sent from a pilot in Vietnam to his fiancé, which contains some vocal recordings from the war zone.⁸⁵ These are just a couple of the items left at the wall, and together all the items help tell a story of loss and healing that would not be fully understood without them. That there is still a steady stream of items left at the wall today speaks volumes to the continued importance of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.⁸⁶ While items left at the wall may have originally signified the end of a chapter for some people, the collection of the items insures that those memories will never be forgotten and in fact helps contribute to the telling of a whole new story.

Conclusion

The memorials and what they stand for can change in many different and unexpected ways, and as historian Marvin Trachtenberg believes, memorials are a way for different generations to connect. However, when connecting, the newer generations might make some additions to the memorials in order to better understand and relate to their ancestors.⁸⁷ As the previous chapter explored thoroughly, the World War II Memorial has the Rainbow Pool as one of its central element. When visiting the memorial in 2019, I found that signs had been put up around the pool. The signs read "sitting with your feet in the water is ok," while it also made sure to say that, "walking in the water is not ok." The sign then went further and explained the distinction, "At the end of WWII, troops celebrated in the fountains of Europe. In honor of that time, you may sit with your feet in the Rainbow Pool, but you may not walk, swim, or sit in the water." The original architects of the memorial did not have this in mind. Who added it and what

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Leslie Allen, "Offerings at The Wall," *American Heritage*, February/March 1995.

⁸⁷ Marvin Trachtenberg, *The Statue of Liberty* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1976), 15.

gave them the right to do so? While it might not seem like a huge change, this altered the integrity of the memorial by showing that change could be applied without massive legislation and debate. The memorials are not immune to everyday alterations, and the whims of those overseeing them day-to-day. This emphasizes the impact of individuals on the memorials, and how the memorials really adjust with the times.

This idea can be further seen by the work of Franklin Davis. During the government shutdown Davis, a homeless veteran, took it upon himself to clean the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and to keep it up to par for all visitors.⁸⁸ When visiting it myself, I bumped into Franklin Davis, who was now unfortunately diagnosed with cancer, maintaining the memorial. As I was walking by him he was talking to another gentleman, and from what I heard it appeared that the gentleman was a doctor who was offering to see if he could help Davis in any way. Once again, whether directly or indirectly, the memorial was bringing the veterans the help they needed. The purposes of the memorials changed immediately after their unveiling, and continue to change even today. One of the most prominent ways their legacy can be seen is through the sudden push for new war memorials. The most notable new memorial on the horizon commemorates World War I.

⁸⁸ Nathan Francis, "Viral Photo Shows Homeless Vietnam Vet, Franklin Davis, Sweeping The Vietnam Veterans Memorial During Shutdown," *Inquisitr*, January 12, 2019, <https://www.inquisitr.com/5247172/viral-photo-shows-homeless-vietnam-vet-franklin-davis-sweeping-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial-during-shutdown/>.

III. The Creation of a World War I Memorial?

On the heels of the success of the three other national war memorials - the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, and the World War II Memorial – the conversation surrounding the erection of a World War I Memorial began. The question was now how far this push for memorialization would go? Was 1918 too far back? At the same time, World War I in some ways led to all the other wars, so how could all the more recent wars be memorialized without the original catalyst? All these threads lead to the underlying question of what the point of the memorials were, and as seen in the previous chapters, each of their goals was slightly different. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was designed to heal the nation, the Korean War Veterans Memorial was created to remind the nation of the peace that they helped spread, and the World War II Memorial was to remind the people of their unity and greatness. But what is the purpose of a memorial for a war where all of its veterans are dead? What kind of job could a memorial like that have, and would it be worth the trouble of creating it? However, what would not designing it mean? All of the recent major wars have National War Memorials dedicated to them, so not dedicating one for World War I would perhaps be sending a certain message about that war and its lack of importance.⁸⁹ This chapter will try to summarize the debate surrounding the formation of the memorial and, once it was approved, the process of its conception. Additionally, it will tie together ideas and themes seen in previous memorials and show how they effected the National World War I Memorial, or more specifically, the plan for it. Some have called World War I, the “most forgotten war.”⁹⁰ Is that due to the fact that it has no

⁸⁹ David Montgomery, “A Wave of War Memorials is Coming to Washington. Are We at Peace With That?,” *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2018.

⁹⁰ Jason Farago, “How to Remember a War Without Glory?” *The New York Times*, November 10, 2017.

National War Memorial to honor it? Or, is the reason it has no memorial to commemorate it because it is the “most forgotten war?”

The Fight for a World War I Memorial

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the World War I Memorial would be drastically different from the others. The other memorials, while in different forms, were all for the peace of mind of the nation and for the veterans who had fought in the wars. However, the last World War I U.S. veteran, Frank Buckles, died in 2011.⁹¹ Once there were no more veterans alive to appreciate the memorial what really was its purpose? This brought into focus the question of who are these memorials for? If they are mainly for the veterans then it would make sense for there to be no World War I Memorial at this point. Conversely, if they serve an important function for the nation as a whole and for the generations that were not present at the time of the conflict, then the memorial would still be crucial. Additionally, while the veterans might no longer be alive, they still have family members that are. What does it mean if the nation decides that their struggles and their sacrifices are not worth remembering? Subsequently, as discussed with the other existing memorials, the function, and sometimes even the design of the memorials changed over time to fit the needs of the current generation and people appreciating the memorials at the time. Therefore, a World War I Memorial would actually be extremely important as it would be used to inform all future generations. Ultimately, that was the conclusion that many politicians came to, as there was a drive by many to create a memorial. However, it was a long and drawn out process that has no final resolution to this day.

⁹¹ Montgomery, “Wave of War Memorials,” 2018.

It was actually Jan Scruggs, the Chief executive officer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and a huge advocate for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that suggested the first location for the World War I Memorial. In 2000, Scruggs suggested the use of the District of Columbia War Memorial, which commemorated the citizens of the District of Columbia who had died in World War I, as a national memorial for World War I. However, nothing came of that attempt. Edwin Fountain, the Founding Director of the World War I Memorial Foundation, then began raising funds and awareness furthering the cause.⁹² At the same time, Representative Ted Poe introduced the Frank Buckles World War I Memorial Act, which requested that the District of Columbia War Memorial be turned into the National World War I Memorial, or that a National World War I Memorial be built at a different location.⁹³ Ultimately, the bill died after Missouri senators were wary that the new memorial would interfere with the Liberty Memorial in Kansas that already honored those that had died in World War I. Those senators proposed that the Liberty Memorial become the National Memorial instead.⁹⁴ However, numerous bills and plans all died in congress. With the other war memorials, the government felt pressured to come up with solutions in a timely manner, but when it came to the World War I Memorial the war it was commemorating had already ended around a century earlier; any sense of time pressure was long gone. The only time constraint was the possible completion of a memorial by the end of the war's centennial - though at the time of those debates, the centennial was still a decade away. Little did they know that a decade later the centennial would come and go with no memorial in sight.

⁹² John Kelly, "D.C.'s WWI Memorial Causes 21st Century Fight," *The Washington Post*, March 31, 2011.

⁹³ U.S. Congress, *Frank Buckles World War I Memorial Act*, HR 6696, 110 Congress., 2nd Sess, July, 31, 2008.

⁹⁴ The Associated Press, "Kansas City's WWI Memorial Might Be the National Memorial," *Missourian*, October 23, 2008, https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/kansas-city-s-wwi-memorial-might-be-the-national-memorial/article_f3ea8c2a-5aaa-5065-b3b7-025ab43b8b3b.html.

In 2012, a compromise had still yet to be reached and the beginning of the centennial of World War I was just two years away. On September 10, 2012, the World War I Centennial Commission Act was introduced, and on December 21, 2012 it was passed.⁹⁵ While the Act did not end the controversy surrounding what exactly would happen with the National World War I Memorial, it did go a long way in creating some sort of legacy by which World War I could be better remembered. First, it formed the World War I Centennial Commission. This commission was set up to complete many different duties. It was designed to “plan, develop, and execute programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I.”⁹⁶ Additionally, it was meant to encourage private organizations and state and local governments to plan and take part in commemoration activities, including ones that the commission would construct around the United States. And finally, its last mission was to spread information about plans for the centennial of World War I and to come up with recommendations for Congress and the President to commemorate World War I’s centennial.⁹⁷ The four year centennial, from 2014-2018, would be an opportunity for the American government to raise awareness and educate people regarding World War I and the 4.7 million people who served in it, giving special attention to the 204,000 wounded Americans and the 116,516 Americans that never came home.⁹⁸ The bill also made the Liberty Memorial “America’s National World War I Museum,” which would create some form of closure regarding the existence of a National War Memorial until a final resolution was reached.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ U.S. Congress, *World War I Centennial Commission Act*. HR 6364, 112 Congress., *Public Law*, 112-272, December 21, 2012.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ “National World War I Memorial, Washington D.C.,” The United States World War One Centennial Commission, accessed March 5, 2019, https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/honor/national-wwi-memorial.html?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIm9262sPX4AIV7qGzCh0_swNrEAAYASABEGLyAPD_BwE.

⁹⁹ U.S. Congress, *World War I Centennial Commission Act*.

After the World War I Centennial Commission Act passed, debate surrounding the location and precise details of the National World War I Memorial again gained momentum. The new frontrunner proposal was the creation of a memorial on the National Mall, just like all the National War Memorials before it. However, due to the fact that Commemorative Works Clarification and Revision Act of 2003 had passed, construction of new memorials on the National Mall had been greatly limited. Due to this, support for that plan quickly died and a push for the new memorial to be built in Pershing Park in Washington D.C., a location already dedicated to the memorialization of the war, was supported. Finally, after years and years of debate, on December 19, 2014, the World War I Memorial Act of 2014 was signed into law by President Obama. The Act accomplished two main things, first, it labeled the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City as the “National World War I Museum and memorial,” and second, it designated Pershing Park as “The World War I Memorial.”¹⁰⁰ Pershing Park would become a National War Memorial to honor those American soldiers who served in World War I by the construction of “an appropriate sculpture and other elements, including landscaping,” that would help enhance the park.¹⁰¹

Once Pershing Park was decided on as the location of the design, the controversy was far from over. Pershing Park was built in 1981 as a way to revive Pennsylvania Avenue. It consisted of many trees, a central fountain, and a statue of General Pershing, a commander of the American Expeditionary Forces on the Western Frontier during World War I. Unfortunately, over the years Pershing Park fell into disrepair; the fountain was turned off, the steps around the fountain began to crumble, and the statue of General Pershing was the only thing that was left

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Congress, *World War I Memorial Act of 2014*, HR 4489, 113 Congress., 2nd sess., *House Report* 113-648 Part 1. December, 8, 2014.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

standing.¹⁰² Paul Friedberg, the architect of the park, believed that the park failed due to the fact that it was neglected by the Park Service, and that if any other park was neglected it would also become rundown. As he explained, “if you let Central Park go to seed, it would be a failed park, too.”¹⁰³ So while building a National War Memorial is never easy, the World War I Memorial now had the extra hurdle of integrating the original design of the park together with the design of the new memorial. The other war memorials were built from scratch. What does it mean for the legacy of the World War I National War Memorial that it would be fashioned from an already existing memorial? One could argue that it lessens the potential impact of the memorial. Part of the appeal of the other memorials was that they created something from nothing, they were a new addition to the memorial landscape where nothing had existed before. In order to gather a big enough following to accomplish its goal of educating the nation about World War I, the memorial would now have the added obstacle of becoming enough of a new entity to garner discussion and crowds. The World War I Memorial, more than the other memorials, would need to draw attention. Other memorials had goals like healing veterans, which would draw people to the memorial regardless. The World War I National War Memorial would have the more difficult job of attracting people who had forgotten about the war entirely, and would therefore need to find a way to stand out.

Design Competition and Design Debate

Despite the controversy still surrounding the chosen location, like the many war memorials before it, a design competition was created to find an architect and design for the

¹⁰² Emily Cochrane, “Lines Are Drawn Over Design for a National World War I Memorial.” *The New York Times*, November 8, 2017.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

World War I Memorial. Unlike the other recent war memorials where veterans were included in the judging committee in order to get many perspectives, when it came to the World War I Memorial everyone on the committee, barring one historian, was an architect.¹⁰⁴ This seemed to be a step back in the memorial movement as a whole. The argument could be made that since no World War I veterans were alive at the time that the committee was formed, the committee was unable to have a veteran's approval, and that that freed up seats on the committee. However, what about the veterans' relatives? They could have participated with the veterans' interests in mind. Additionally, there was only one historian on the committee. Why was there not a balanced number of architects and historians? One simple answer is that it was a mistake, and that the composition of the committee was not sufficiently thought through. Another more satisfying explanation is that since the memorial was being planned on an already existing memorial, the architectural aspects were more difficult and the committee therefore needed more architects. Either way, the heavy concentration of architects could result in the design of the memorial being more architecturally pleasing than historically accurate.

In May of 2015 a two-stage design competition was announced. While it was catered towards submission from any international professional or university student, anyone who was interested could submit a design. It was also similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial process in that it was open to everyone.¹⁰⁵ As stated by the World War I Centennial Commission, the objective of the design was to “transform Pershing Park from a park that happens to contain a memorial to a site that is primarily a national World War I Memorial,” while reviving the park in

¹⁰⁴ “Competition Officials,” The United States World War One Centennial Commission, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/competition-officials-visible.html>

¹⁰⁵ Karissa Rosenfield, “Open Call: US Launches Competition for National World War I Memorial,” *ArchDaily*, May 21, 2015, <https://www.archdaily.com/633693/open-call-us-launches-competition-for-national-world-war-i-memorial>.

a way that complimented the job of the memorial and attracted people to visit it.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, according to the guidelines the design had to be able to seamlessly connect to the streets and architectural landmarks surrounding the site. While those were the design regulations for the memorial, there were also some aspects that the design committee wanted the different entries to convey. Most important was that the memorial would fit in with the memorials and monuments located around it by tastefully commemorating “the service of American forces in World War I with sufficient scale and gravity.”¹⁰⁷ The first round of the competition ended with 350 submissions.¹⁰⁸ In the second round there were five finalists, and the winner in the final round was Joseph Weishaar’s “The Weight of Sacrifice.”¹⁰⁹

“The Weight of Sacrifice” was designed by 25-year-old architect Joe Weishaar, and sculptor Sabin Howard. The design used relief sculptures, soldiers’ quotations, and a freestanding sculpture to “stress the glorification of humanity and enduring spirit over the glorification of war.”¹¹⁰ The memorial design highlighted all of the losses of the war, while at the same time showing what those losses were all for: freedom. In the original design the memorial consisted of seven different components: the Pershing Memorial, the Wall of Remembrance, the Brothers-In-Arms Relief, the Wheels of Humanity Sculpture, a Central lawn, a Civic Plaza, and

¹⁰⁶ “World War I Memorial Design Competition,” The United States World War One Centennial Commission, accessed March 5, 2019, https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/competition-overview.html?utm_medium=website&utm_source=archdaily.com.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Rosenfield, “US Launches Competition for National World War I Memorial,” 2015 ; Blake Paterson, “Washington’s Battle for a World War I Memorial,” *Politico Magazine*, May 28, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/28/washington-world-war-i-memorial-218543>.

¹⁰⁹ Bob Niedt, “Commission Unveils Design Finalists for World War I Memorial,” *Washington Business Journal*, August 19, 2015, <https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2015/08/19/commission-unveils-design-finalists-for-world-war.html>.

¹¹⁰ Sabrina Santos, “Winning Design Selected for the World War I Memorial in DC,” *ArchDaily*, January 28, 2016, <https://www.archdaily.com/781125/winning-design-for-the-world-war-i-memorial-in-dc-announced> ; “The Weight of Sacrifice,” The United States World War One Centennial Commission, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/stage-ii-design-development/the-weight-of-sacrifice.html>.

an Allee.¹¹¹ The central lawn would be framed by “The Wall of Remembrance” which would contain bronze relief sculptures, and “Wheels of Humanity” would be in the center of the lawn. Additionally, the statue of General Pershing that was already present on the site, would be preserved.¹¹² These different elements were reminiscent of aspects of the other war memorials - whether it be the 137-foot-long remembrance walls that disappeared into the ground like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or the sculpted faces that resembled the ones seen on the 19 statues in the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Aspects of the other war memorials were constantly making appearance throughout the design process of the World War I Memorial.



Figure 3.1: Original Design Idea for the World War I Memorial¹¹³

Notably absent from the World War I Memorial were the names of those Americans who had lost their lives or were injured during World War I. This could be due to two very different reasons. The first was that a century later the United States no longer had the ability to accumulate and know the names of all those who were killed or injured. However, if that had

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Santos, “Winning Design Selected for the World War I Memorial in DC.”

¹¹³ “The Weight of Sacrifice.”

been the case then there would still be some sort of section dedicated to them. An example of this can be seen in the World War II Memorial, where gold stars are used to commemorate soldiers who gave their lives for freedom. A more plausible reason would be that no such instillation existed since that was not the point of the memorial. The war's status as the "forgotten war," and the fact that no American veterans of the war were still alive made the use of an instillation of people lost, unlike the memorials that came before it, less necessary. The memorial would focus more on the war as a whole, and less on the individual people who made sacrifices during it. This break in tradition highlights that the timing of the memorial's conception is integral when it comes to what it will represent. In half a century both the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the World War I Memorial would be far in the past, yet the two wars would be remembered very differently due to when each of their memorials were erected.

Not long after the original design was chosen, a debate surrounding the elements it included quickly began. Numerous different entities had authority over Pershing Park and the World War I Memorial design, and they were all bound to have differing opinions.¹¹⁴ One of the most noteworthy - and problem causing - entities, was the National Park Service. They were exploring whether it was possible to add Pershing Park to the National Register of Historic Places, which would greatly alter the original design by making it extremely difficult to alter the park site.¹¹⁵ Additionally, Friedberg, the architect of the original design of Pershing Park, did not agree with the ways the new memorial was changing the existing park and thought that the new design was, "conservative, obvious and single-minded."¹¹⁶ He even mentioned the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and how Maya Lin's design taught the nation that a memorial can be subtle

¹¹⁴ Nicholas Fandos, "National World War I Proposal is Unveiled." *The New York Times*, January 26, 2016.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Cochrane, "Lines Are Drawn," 2017.

and powerful, and thus a memorial does not need to be so forward and literal in order to progress its message.¹¹⁷ However, in line with the World War II Memorial's need to draw attention, perhaps the designers did not believe that subtlety was the correct way to go.

Conclusion

After numerous changes, the most recent design approved by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts on July 19, 2018, is a little simpler than the original design, and maintains more of the structure of the original Pershing Park. The current design consists of a pool of water in the middle with steps all around leading down to it. From the middle of the pool, there is a raised platform where visitors can stand and look at the Wall of Remembrance which is present on only one side of the pool. The Wall of Remembrance consists of a wall with protruding sculptures depicting scenes from the war coming out of it. When facing the wall, to the right of it there is an American flag, and unsurprisingly the statue of General Pershing survived the revisions as well.¹¹⁸ What the new approved design does is revamp the already existing elements of the park. The only two new additions would be the Wall of Remembrance and the flag pole, which would replace a dilapidated and no longer functional concession kiosk. While this design is the most recently approved, the memorial is still a long way away from actually being completed.

The lack of agreement did not deter the government from moving forward with the groundbreaking a half a year earlier on November 9, 2017. The original intended opening date for the memorial was November 11 2018, Veterans Day and the centennial of World War I. However, due to all the controversy, it became clear that that opening date was no longer realistic and proponents of the memorial believed that breaking ground might move the process

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ "National World War I Memorial, Washington D.C."

along. It is now predicted that the memorial will not be finished until 2021. That said, now that the centennial has passed and with continuing uncertainty, will World War I remain “the forgotten war” and not receive a D.C. National memorial of its own? Or, is the fact that due to all of the debate and controversy surrounding the memorial the war is more known than ever a success?

On November 11th 2018, the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day, 150 people donated to the fund for the creation of the World War I Memorial, and according to many that is a victory.¹¹⁹ The donations show that at least some people are aware of the fight for a World War I Memorial and are invested in seeing the memorial to fruition. Therefore, some momentum exists to build the memorial, but how far can it go? Even if the memorial is erected, who would visit it? There are no veterans to visit it, and very few Americans today feel a need for closure from the effects of World War I. Additionally, the memorial is not on the National Mall together with all of the other National War Memorials, so visitors to the other more known memorials will not then be automatically drawn to visit the World War I Memorial as well. Therefore, considerable questions still exist regarding whether there is sufficient will in the United States to establish a World War I Memorial in Pershing Park.

¹¹⁹ Mikaela Lefrak, “Why A National World War I Memorial Still Doesn’t Exist in Washington,” *Wamu*88.5: *American University Radio*, November 12, 2018, <https://wamu.org/story/18/11/12/why-a-national-world-war-i-memorial-still-doesnt-exist-in-washington/>.

Conclusion

As this thesis shows, the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982 started a memorial movement that continues until today. This thesis highlights the importance of looking at the memorials as a cohesive unit and not as individual memorials. The possibility of a World War I Memorial more than 100 years after the end of that war is the ultimate example of the success of the other three National War Memorials. The only reason the World War I Memorial is a possibility is because of the success of the other memorials to major 20th Century wars. Looking at the memorials in isolation prevents one from seeing the momentum and continuum in the process of memorialization. Ultimately, only by looking at the memorials collectively can one understand the arc of America's 20th Century war memorialization, and how each individual memorial has impacted the nation in specific ways.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was revolutionary. It was subtle and used the public to tell its story. The Vietnam War was a dividing time for the country, and the memorial was commissioned to honor the veterans who had fought in the war, and unite the country that had been divided by it. It was a restorative memorial, and was one of the first memorials designed for victims and not victors. The memorial does not even have the word 'war' in its name, as the point of it was not to remember the 'war' but rather the 'veterans'. It helped heal the veterans and those around them by incorporating them into the design both in seen and unforeseen ways. As one walks by the memorial their reflection, disfigured by the names on the wall, stares back at them ingraining them into the narrative; they are no longer observers, but are rather part of the story.

However, visitors became part of the memorial in other unplanned ways as well. Since its creation hundreds of thousands of items that have been left behind at the wall have been gathered

and made into a collection of their own. The memorial had the power to change the veterans' perception of themselves both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the nation. One veteran who had originally felt ashamed and alone and who had been afraid to see the memorial himself, ended up creating a replica of the memorial to transport around the country so that every veteran could feel pride once again and begin their healing process just as he had. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial prevented the Vietnam War and those who sacrificed their lives for it from being hidden in the recesses of history. It not only formed an area where the veterans could be remembered, but it also created a space where new stories could continuously be told through the items left behind.

By its title, it quickly became clear that the Korean War Veterans Memorial would have a different approach to help the nation. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial wanted the war to be remembered. One of the main goals of the memorial was to prevent the Korean War from fading into oblivion. The Korean War's legacy was being overshadowed by the celebration of World War II and the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War. Additionally, the memorial not only reminded the American people about the war that was fought for freedom and the people that sacrificed their lives for it, but it was also a reminder to the world at large that there is a price to freedom. In the case of the Korean War Veterans Memorial the nation was not dwelling enough on the price of war, so the memorial was a reminder of the reasons the nation was free and thriving.

The main messages of the World War II Memorial were more in line with those of the Korean War Veterans Memorial than the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Its main goal was the promotion of unity between America and its allies, and the proliferation of the idea of America as a superior power. The memorial was supposed to focus on the war as a whole, and not on

specific individuals. World War II was an undisputable victory for the United States and the memorial was created so that no one would ever be able to forget that. Unlike the subtlety of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the World War II Memorial was loud and proud and used every opportunity to highlight the war and Americas large contribution to the Allies victory. The ability of each of the memorials to be singular and tell distinctive stories is a crucial aspect of their success.

The deliberations and debates that went into each of the memorials was necessary in order to make the memorial exactly what the country needed at the time, but the capability of the memorial to then change with the times is just as integral. A tiny shift in a memorial could end up retelling a completely different history, and as this thesis highlights, sometimes changes are incorporated into memorials in order to show the shifting needs of the time. An example of this is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and how originally its apolitical nature made it possible for the nation to reunite after the Vietnam War had left the nation shattered. Later on however, “The Three Servicemen” statue was added in order to give recognition to the veterans that were then trying to incorporate themselves back into American society. The ability of the National War Memorials to be living memorials guarantees that they will never become outdated and irrelevant.

Finally, the planned World War I Memorial is a testament to the accomplishments of the other memorials. This success is seen both in the conception of the World War I Memorial and in its contention. The fact that its creation was desired means that other memorials to overlooked or forgotten wars, like the Korean War, were successful. Additionally, the controversy stresses the fact that so many entities wanted to take credit for the memorial and control what it would look

like and represent, since they had seen the long term positive effects of the war memorials before it.

Interestingly, what the creation of the memorials as a whole showed was that not only do the memorials have the ability to impact Americans and their memories, but individual Americans have the ability to change the memory of the masses by fighting for the creation of these memorials. Each of the National War Memorials discussed were produced due to the hard work of American citizens, not the American government. These memorials truly show the impact individual citizens can have on the nation's memory. It was veterans and American citizens who were the ones to first request each of the National War Memorials, and it was also American citizens who then went and helped fund each of them. While Americans are still contributing to the different wars memories by adding elements to the war memorials – like the collection of items left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial – it is important to remember that the formation of the memorials and their ensuing legacies were initiated by ordinary citizens. It is a powerful message that individual Americans have the ability to influence history and how it is remembered.

However, Judith Dupré believes that the impact of these memorials may be temporary. She believes that memorials could in fact be created in order to forget; that once they are created it is “much like filing away a paper in a cabinet, erecting a monument can reinforce the slim illusion that the memories associated with it can be retrieved when desired at some later date.”¹²⁰ The National War Memorials explored in this thesis prove that that is not true. They are not only maintaining memories in the forefront of people's minds, but they are creating new memories as well. The Korean War Veterans Memorial and the World War I Memorial directly challenge

¹²⁰ Judith Dupré, *Monuments: America's History in Art and Memory* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007), xii.

Dupré's statement by creating a space for forgotten wars to be remembered. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial negates it by assisting the nation in coming to terms with what had happened, and in helping them stop avoiding a topic that had created so much contention. Finally, the World War II Memorial disproved this statement by making America's success in the war even greater and more well-known so that no one would ever be able to forget or refute it.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial – the first of the memorials – created a momentum. One memorial then led to another, and each of the memorials cannot be fully understood without first understanding what came before it. Yet, each memorial is also a product of a particular time and history, and constantly evolves as it refracts new events and changing attitudes.

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