

Report on

**WAR
MEMORIALS**

NATIONAL COMMISSION
OF FINE ARTS

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Washington, D. C.

*Seventy-ninth Congress · Second Session
Senate Document No. 234*

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS, MAY 17, 1910

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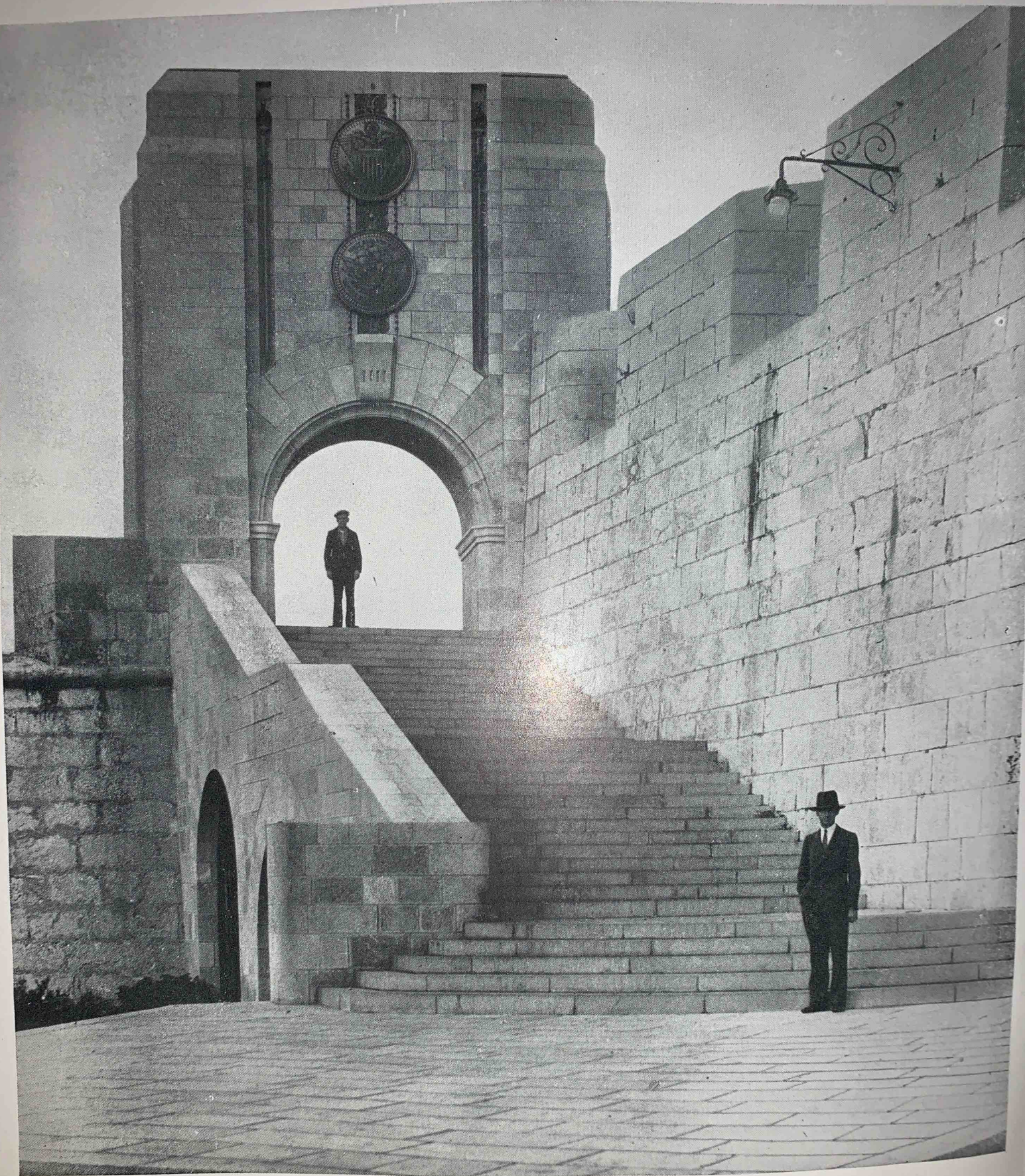
FREDERICK V. MURPHY
LEE LAWRIE

SUBMITTED BY MR. BARKLEY
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
JULY 5, 1946

Ordered, That a report on war memorials, adopted by the National Commission on Fine Arts on May 14, 1946, be printed with illustrations as a Senate document.

Attest:

LESLIE L. BIFFLE,
Secretary.



WAR MEMORIALS

WITH the conclusion of the Second World War, many memorials will be erected in coming years to commemorate the achievements and sacrifices of those who served in the armed forces of the Nation. The building of war memorials is part of the Nation's obligation toward those whose heroic efforts resulted in victory, and the National Commission of Fine Arts is happy to encourage the construction of such memorials, and to call attention to some of the appropriate opportunities available. From time to time the Commission has been consulted in regard to the type, site, and design of such projects, and therefore undertakes to suggest certain suitable considerations of a general nature, to the end that these war memorials may conform to the highest standards of artistic and cultural value.

·I· Purpose

An early resolution of Congress provided a memorial to one of the heroes of the Revolutionary War, "it being," as the resolution said, "not only a tribute to gratitude, justly due the memory of those who have peculiarly distinguished themselves in the glorious cause of liberty, to perpetuate their names by the most durable monuments erected to their honor, but also greatly conducive to inspire posterity with an emulation of their illustrious actions." This statement defines the threefold intention of a war memorial: (a) gratitude, (b) recollection, and (c) inspiration. Any proposed memorial should be judged according to this threefold purpose.

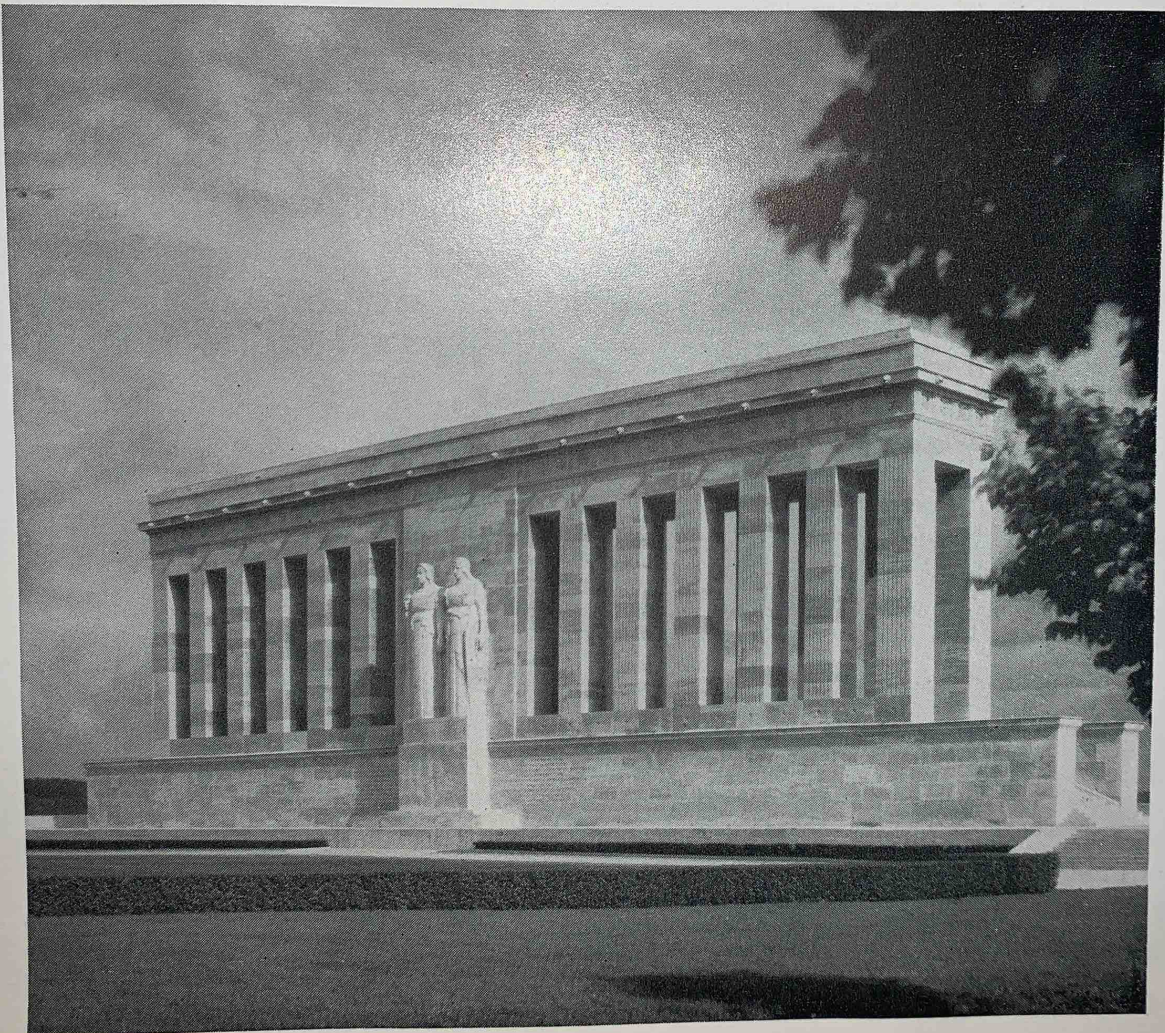
·II· Type

The first question that arises is the proper form or type of memorial best suited to accomplish this purpose. The Commission is of the belief that,



since war memorials are generally the product of community effort, constructed with local funds and materials, the community itself has the responsibility of determining the form of memorial best adapted to its needs. As a matter of practical procedure, a committee representing the best talents of the community may be appointed to formulate the general program. For advice and guidance the nearest art gallery or museum may profitably be consulted, and for additional professional or technical assistance the following: *The American Institute of Architects*, 1741 New York Avenue, Washington, D. C. . . *National Sculpture Society*, 1083 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. . . *American Society of Landscape Architects*, 9 Park Street, Boston, Mass. . . *National Society of Mural Painters*, 115 East Fortieth Street, New York, N. Y. . . *Sculptors Guild*, 96 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

There are many types of memorials appropriate for a modern community, such as arches, bridges, columns, eternal lights, fountains, flagpoles, gateways, medals, monuments, parks, statues, and other work of sculpture, tablets and towers. Additional possibilities are buildings of various types, such as chapels, and memorials in existing buildings, such as tablets and stained glass windows in churches. With this variety of possible forms, every community can select a memorial best suited to the size and resources of the locality. In all cases, however, there is one general principle that should be observed. Whatever form is employed,

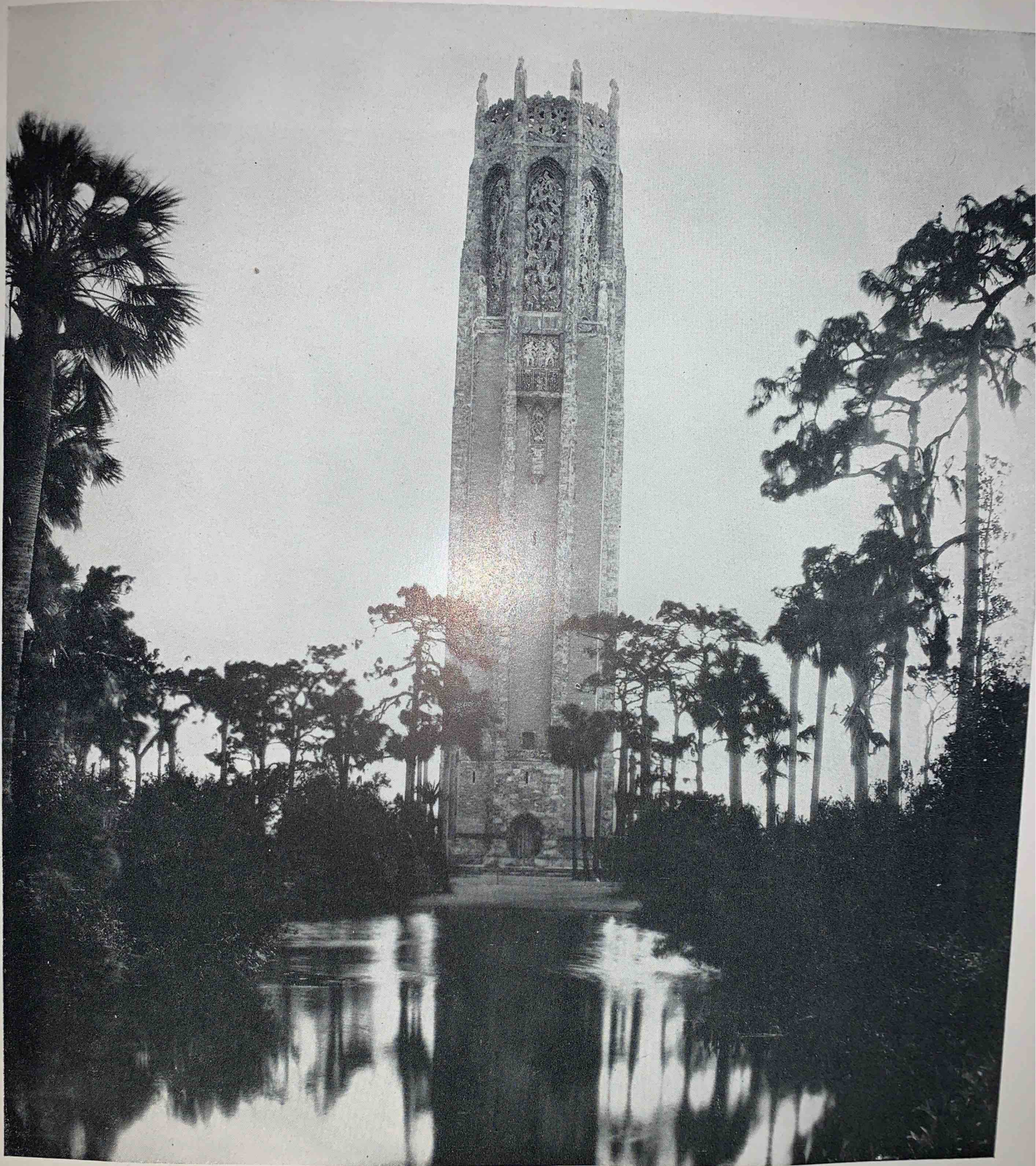


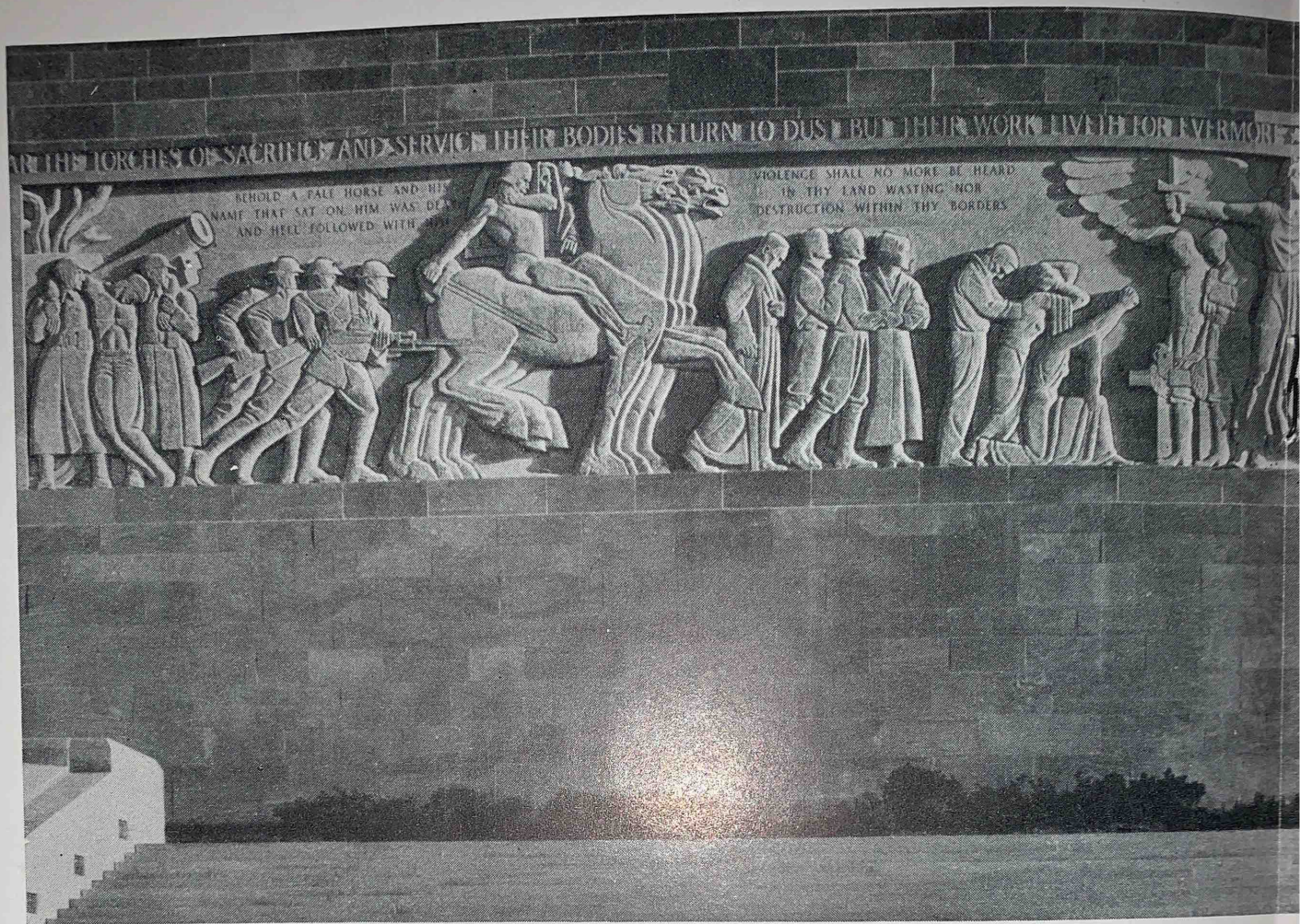
it should provide an effective setting for an annual meeting or act of remembrance, such as the placing of a wreath on Memorial or other commemorative days. In addition, a Book of Remembrance, containing the names and records of those who served in the war, may be maintained.

Regardless of the form employed, the memorial should be obviously and definitely a war memorial, conveying, in the words of the late Paul Cret, formerly a member of the National Commission of Fine Arts, "a clear and arresting expression of the commemorative idea." Some communities have planned war memorials of the civic improvement type, such as playgrounds and recreation centers, clinics for children, music foundations, etc. There is no reason why a memorial may not be useful, provided it unmistakably proclaims the purpose for which it was erected, namely, to keep alive in the memory of this and future generations the heroic deeds of those who fought for their country. If such a memorial is adopted, it should be amply marked with tablets, archways, sculpture or other such accessories, where annual memorial services may be conducted. Moreover, it should be amply financed to ensure its permanence, which is a necessary condition of a memorial.

A type of memorial deserving special consideration is the laying-out of a park area for commemorative purposes. Here the tablet, fountain, column, arch, building, or other such memorial structure may be combined with the general utility of a park area. Architectural and sculptural projects, in an open setting, can be used to express the commemorative intention. Particularly appropriate are groups of sculpture or relief panels in stone or metal, and archways or gateways with memorial inscriptions. An advantage of this type of memorial is that individuals or special groups can be commemorated by tablets, fountains, or monuments erected by relatives or friends.

After a memorial program is decided upon, the Commission recommends that a period of one or two years be allowed to lapse before actual construction work is begun. This will allow added time for the most mature deliberation upon all aspects of the program, and permit alterations contingent upon changed conditions or resources.

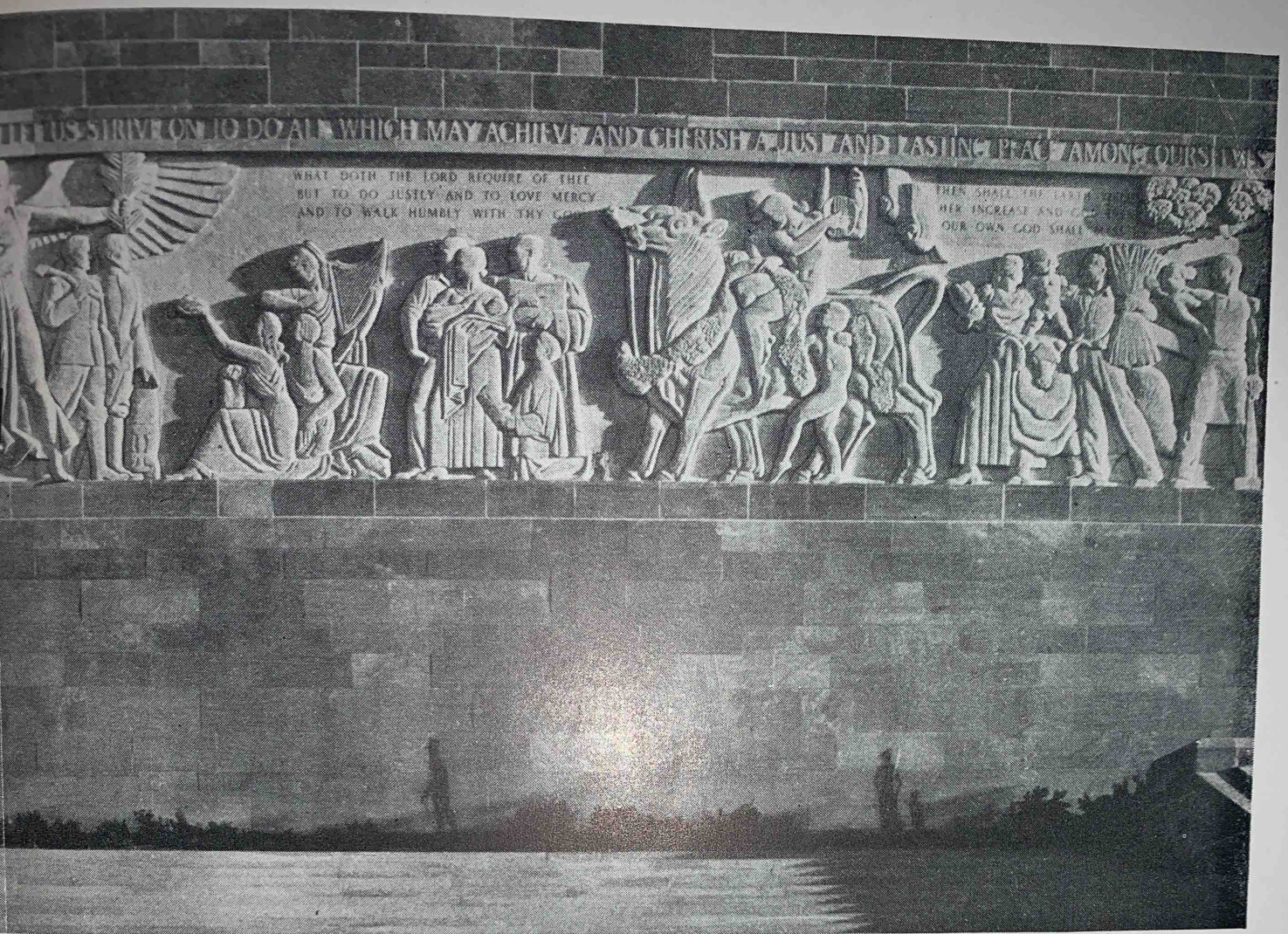




·III· Sites

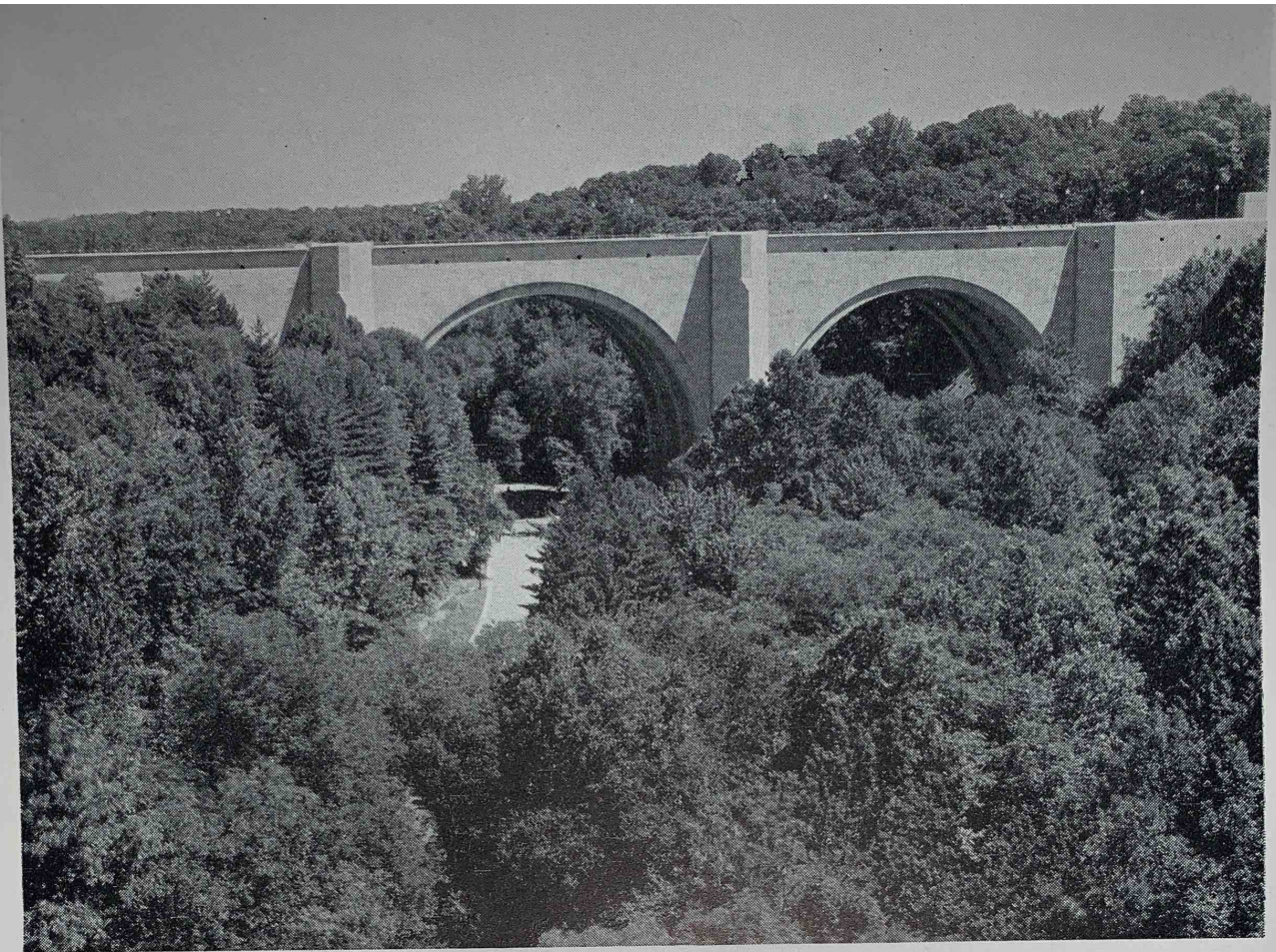
The choice of a site for a memorial structure may be as important as the structure itself. Sites are usually determined by special factors, which vary with each locality. In every community, therefore, careful consideration must be given to the problem of obtaining the most suitable site, where the surroundings will enhance the quality of the memorial itself.

As a general rule the site should be as distinctive as possible, not merely an accidental location. Natural features such as a hilltop, a river bank or a beautiful vista should be utilized where possible. In urban areas



the most favorable sites are public squares, parks and open spaces. A location that may create congestion or traffic problems is to be avoided.

The site itself can be enhanced in various ways with appropriate plantations of trees, and possibly with hedges, shrubbery, and flowers. An avenue of trees or a formal garden may add immensely to the beauty of the surroundings. A site also can be improved in other ways, such as the construction of reflecting pools, stone walls and decorative enclosures. All such planning, of course, should be subordinated to the design of the memorial as a whole. The Commission recommend the employment of a competent landscape architect to collaborate with architect and sculptor in the choice and in the development of the site.



·IV· Design

The ultimate requirement for a war memorial is that it should be a work of art. The greatest memorials are those that fulfill this condition, such as the Winged Victory of Samothrace. Others that may be mentioned are the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, the Lion of Lucerne, the Reformation Monument in Geneva, the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial in Washington, and the standing Lincoln figure in Chicago. Figures in relief such as the Shaw Monument in Boston, are particularly adapted as memorials of modern warfare.

Selection of a competent artist or architect is vital to the success of a memorial. There are many competent artists and architects, whose services can be obtained for projects of this kind, and whose fees are commensurate with their skill and experience. In any case, before select-

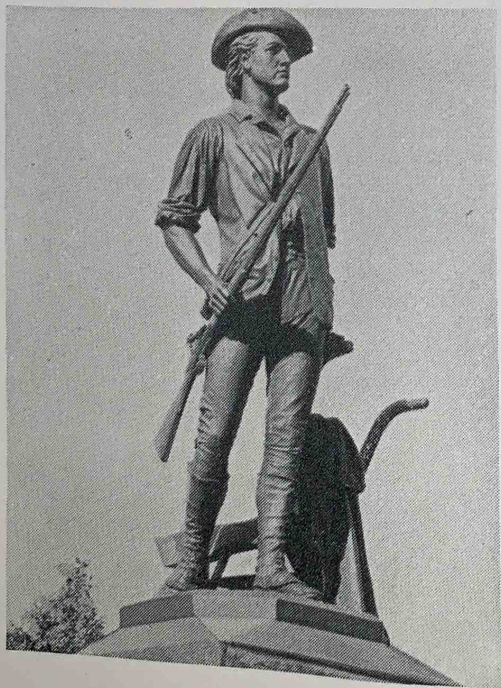


ing an artist, committees should secure able advice from professional sources. Competitions frequently result in obtaining the best possible designs, and are effective if successfully administered with the assistance of competent and impartial judges.

To be avoided at all costs are stereotyped or standardized commercial monuments, such as the cast-iron soldier or a pile of cannon balls. An individual design is to be preferred to a commercial pattern that in all likelihood will be duplicated and seen elsewhere. If circumstances compel the use of a commercial design, the choice should be made with the greatest care and good taste, with special concern for simplicity and dignity.

•V• Inscriptions

Because of the power of words to enhance or detract from a memorial, the wording and lettering of an inscription should receive careful scrutiny. Inscriptions are brief by necessity, and should express the purpose for



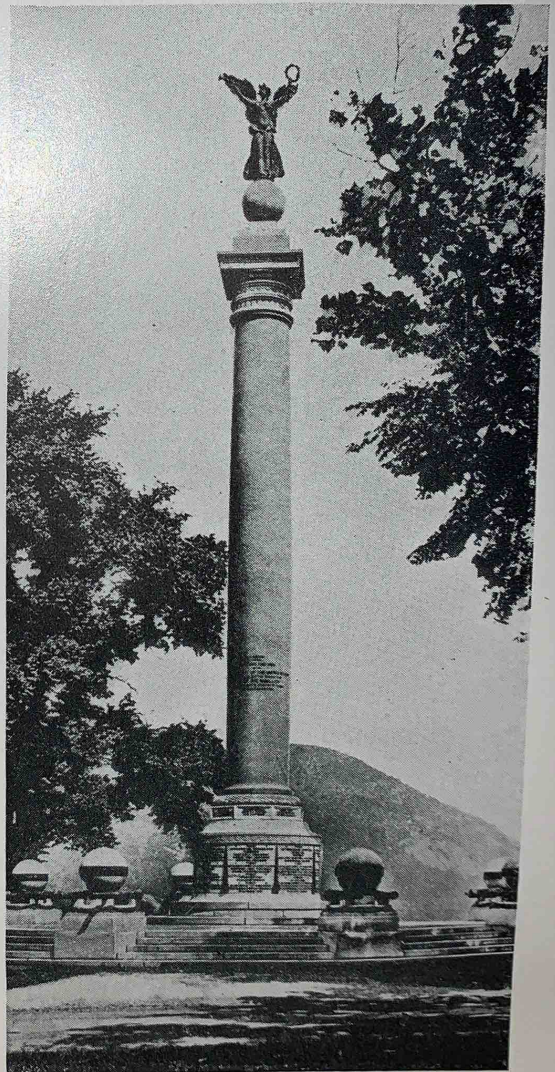
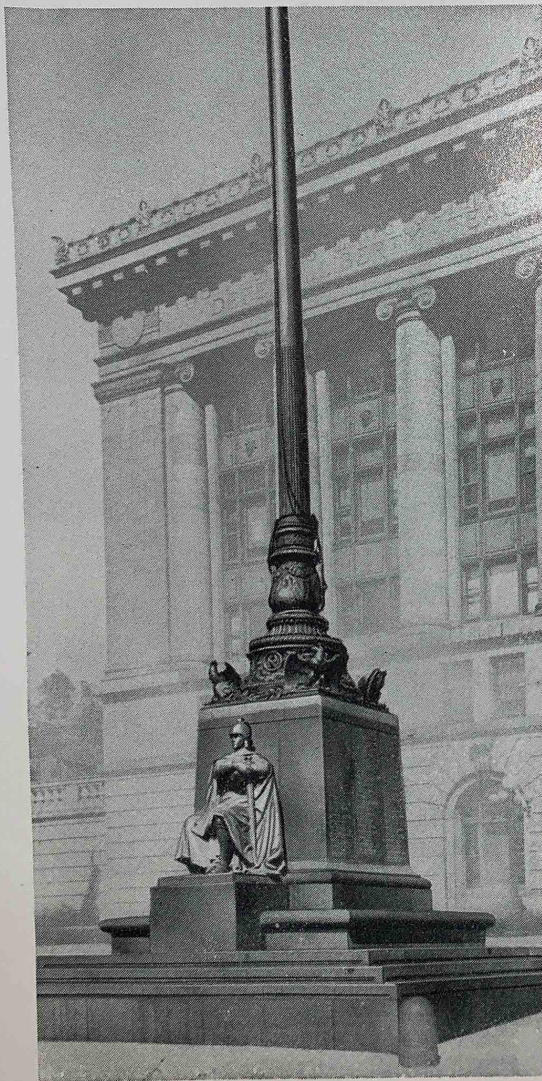


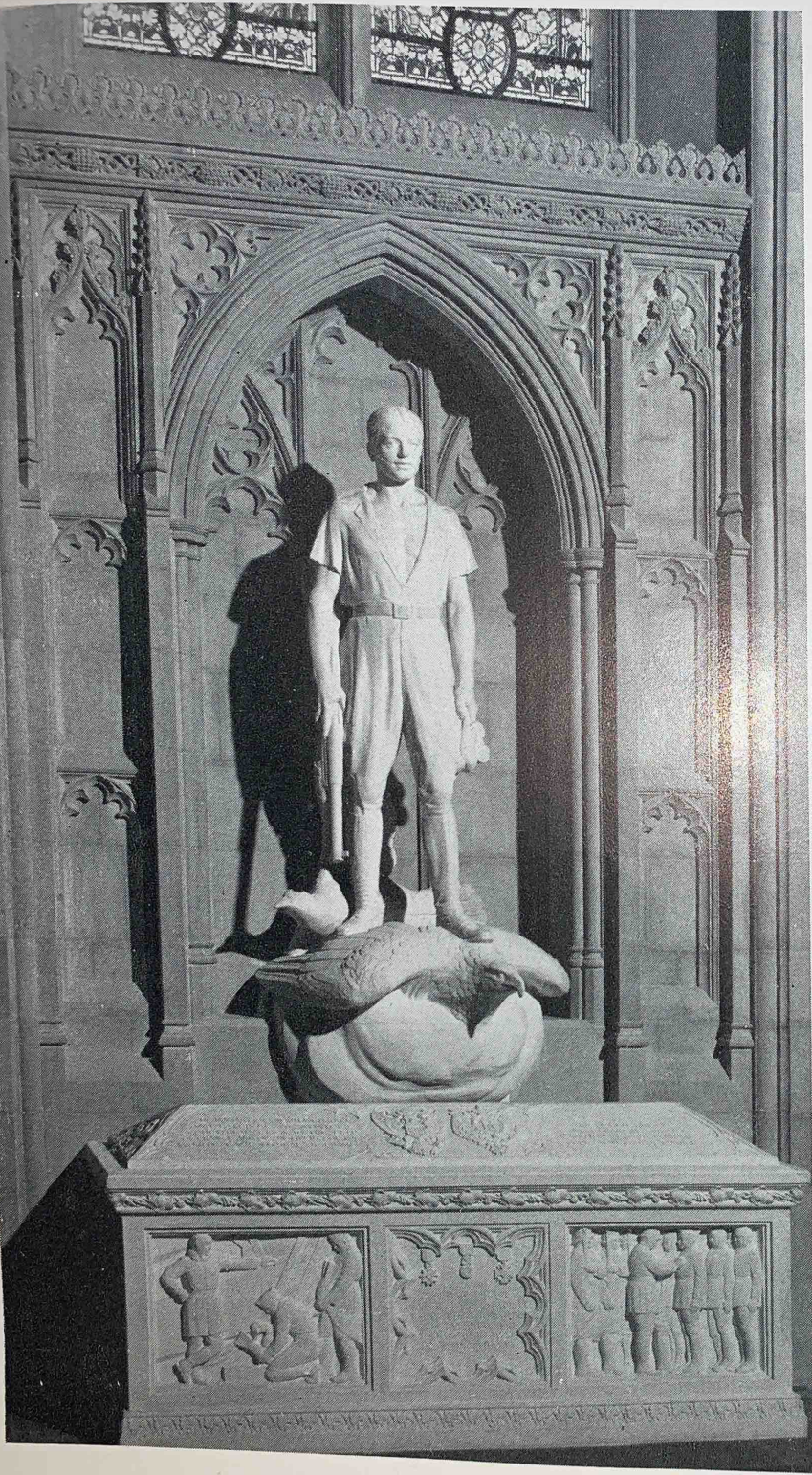
which the memorial was erected, to which some fitting terms of sentiment may be added. The latter may take the form of a quotation, either classical or modern prose or poetry. Greek and Latin sources provide many suitable classical inscriptions, and the latter may be used either in the original or in translation. If an inscription is written specially for the occasion it should be terse, incisive and, if possible, beautiful. Such an inscription is that written by Simonides for the Spartans who fell at Thermopylae:

*"Tell them, passing stranger, we remain,
Keeping faith with Sparta and her laws."*

Another example is an inscription in a London church to the dead of the First World War:

*“They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old,
Time shall not wither them, nor the years condemn;
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning
We shall remember them.”*







ERECTED BY THE MUSEUM
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF THE SERVICES OF

JOHN
PIERPONT
MORGAN

FROM 1871 TO 1913
AS TRUSTEE, BENEFACTOR
AND PRESIDENT

HE WAS IN ALL RESPECTS
A GREAT CITIZEN. HE
HELPED TO MAKE NEW YORK
THE TRUE METROPOLIS
OF AMERICA. HIS INTEREST
IN ART WAS LIFELONG.
HIS GENEROUS DEVOTION
TO IT COMMANDED WORLD-
WIDE APPRECIATION.
HIS WISE AND VICENT GIFTS TO
THE MUSEUM ARE AMONG
ITS CHOICEST TREASURES

VITA PLENA
LABORIS

M C M X X

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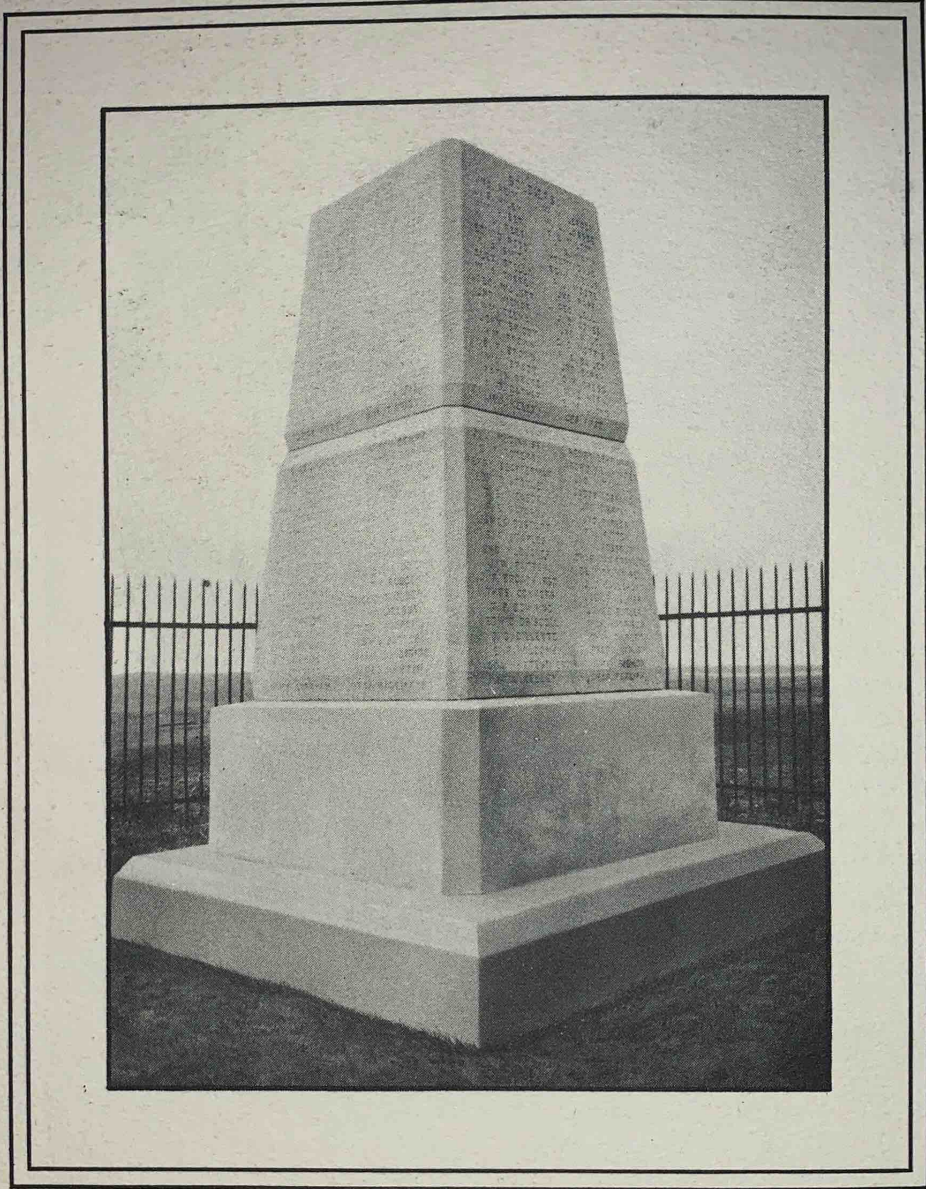
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Memorials



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