

DAMAGED GETTYSBURG MONUMENTS ARE FINALLY REPAIRED

RESOLUTION WILL COME YEARS
AFTER THE WORST NIGHT OF
BATTLEFIELD VANDALISM IN MEMORY

By TIM PRUDENTE
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HANOVER, PA -- It has taken six years but soon the wounds will be healed. The shattered granite arm will be replaced. The soldier's hand will be repaired and the curved sword reattached. The 11th Massachusetts Infantry monument will be the last restored after a night of wreckage on the Gettysburg Battlefield, Feb. 16, 2006. Another few months and the final traces of the damage will be gone.



The 11th Massachusetts monument lies toppled after a night of vandalism in February, 2006.



The 11th Massachusetts monument before the vandalism.

Efforts to rebuild the 11th Massachusetts monument have proven a challenge. Photographs sent in by the public were among the final pieces of the puzzle. From those pictures, the exact scale of the 127-year-old sculpture, the proper size and orientation can be reproduced in clay.

Even now, employees at the National Park Service are searching for original stone, Westerly granite, from the quarry on the southern tip of Rhode Island. They expect the monument to be restored by the end of summer, finally putting to rest lingering anger over the damage.

The vandalism that night is still considered the worst in memory. The 114th Pennsylvania monument was toppled and

vandals tore free the 500-pound statue of a Zouave infantryman. That same night, the 4th New York

Battery statue was dragged 162 feet across the road and the head of the bronze gunner carried off. The 11th Massachusetts monument was ripped from its base, the sculpted arm broken and the sword stolen. All three of the monuments had been dedicated in the 1880s by Civil War veterans and speculation spread that the vandals were youths who didn't understand the significance.



The 114th Pennsylvania monument as it looked before it was vandalized.

The 4th New York, known as Smith's Battery, after commander Lt. James Smith, honors the cannoneers who protected the left flank of the Union army at Gettysburg. Positioned on Houck's Ridge above Devil's Den, the battery was eventually overrun by the Rebels and three cannons were captured. Although his battery held on as long as possible, and no one ever faulted his performance in battle, Smith was forever haunted by the loss of the guns.

The monument to the 11th Massachusetts stands along Emmitsburg Road, just north of Sickles Avenue. Twice the 11th Massachusetts repulsed charges from the Confederates, fighting long into the evening. Out of 286 men, 23 were killed, 96 wounded and 10 were listed as missing.

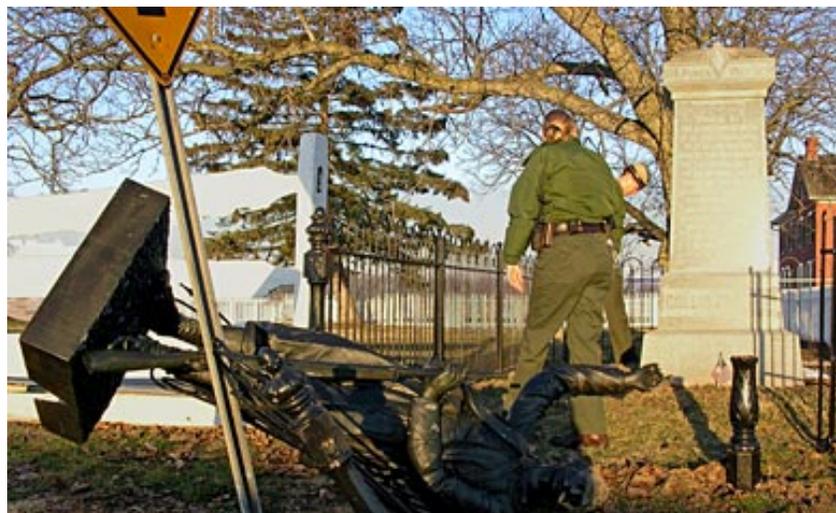
The men of the 114th Pennsylvania suffered one of the worst cannonades of the Civil War. They were driven from the Peach Orchard, losing nearly 60 percent of their men in the process. The monument stands in their honor by Emmitsburg Road, in front of the Sherfy house.

The veterans who commemorated the battlefield called for these monuments to be cast in bronze and sculpted in granite to withstand

decades of rain and wind. And they endured, for more than a century.

Despite a reward of more than \$35,000, the vandals have never been caught. A partnership led by the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, now the Gettysburg Foundation, offered \$30,000 for information leading to a conviction. Gettysburg businessman David LeVan added \$5,000 to the reward. But there are still no suspects according to the Park Service.

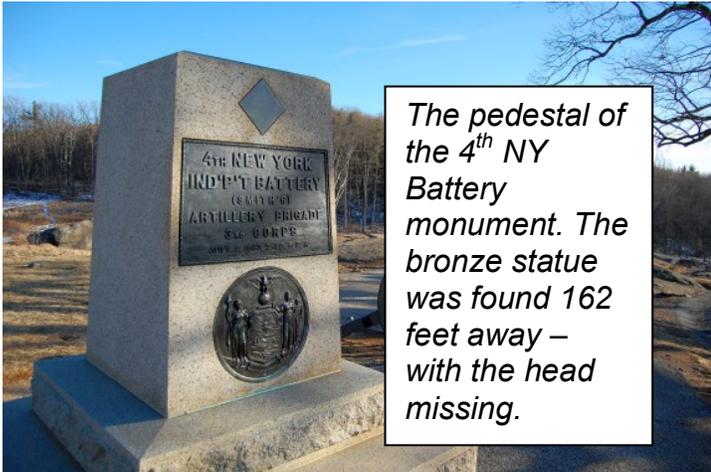
Within a month, the life-sized bronze sculpture atop the 114th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry was repaired and hoisted by crane back atop its base on Emmitsburg Road. The effort cost \$5,800 and money was raised by state Rep. Harry Readshaw, D-Allegheny County, an advocate for battlefield preservation who raises money for Pennsylvania monuments.



The bronze soldier lies toppled from its' pedestal the morning after vandals attacked the monument to the 114th Pennsylvania Infantry.

The 4th New York Monument proved more of a challenge to repair. It proved a challenging task, requiring an artist to sculpt a new head from old photographs. But eventually the park received word that a second statue cast from the same mold stood atop a fountain in a park in Manchester N H

Park staff spent days standing on ladders in the drained fountain, casting a mold of the head, from which an exact replica of the original was cast. The effort cost about \$20,000, the work was completed three months ago, and the statue reinstalled above Devil's Den. A dozen battlefield enthusiasts watched the work.



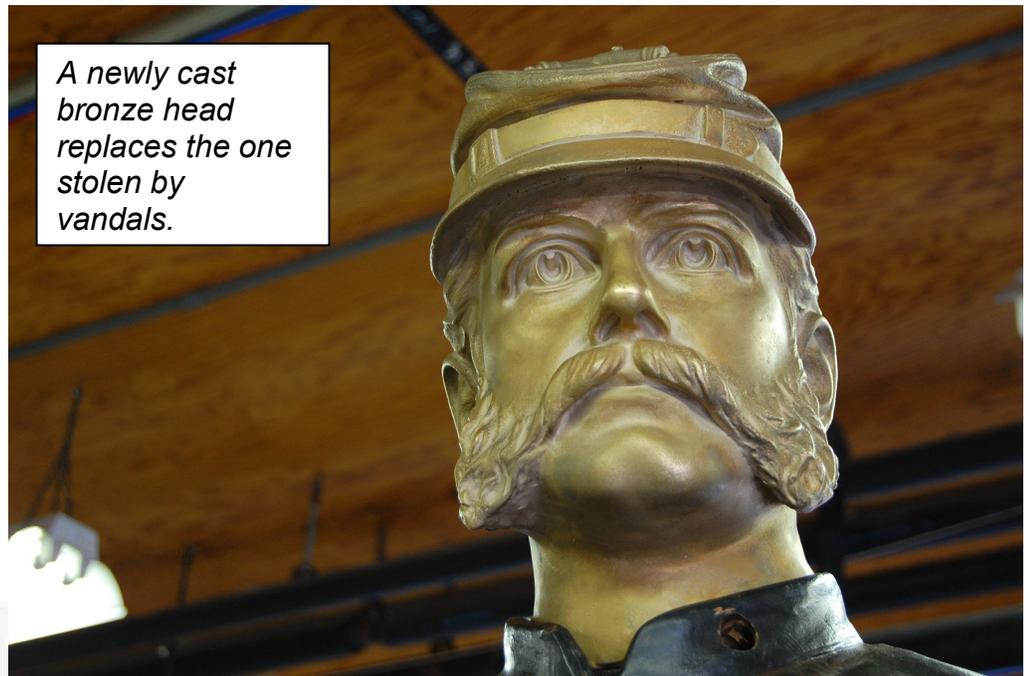
The pedestal of the 4th NY Battery monument. The bronze statue was found 162 feet away – with the head missing.

Such incidents have prompted battlefield officials to increase security measures. Fifty volunteers have been added to the ranks of the Park Watch, which field day and night. Surveillance equipment has been installed throughout the park. And law-enforcement rangers continuously monitor the 6,000 acres of battlefield. When an act of vandalism does occur, the restoration effort is tedious and taxing on staff.

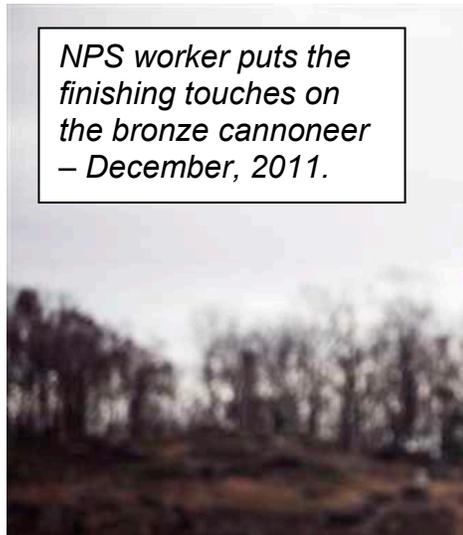
The park's monument-preservation crew maintains about 1,320 monuments and 410 cannons, the largest outdoor sculpture collection in the world, meaning endless waxing and

cleaning. Still, their efforts are bolstered by public support.

There were the officials at the New Hampshire park who heard of the vandalism and were prompted to help and all the people who sent in photographs of the 11th Massachusetts. A Boston man read of the vandalism and was also stirred to act. He searched the records and unearthed the quarry in Westerly, R.I., from which the original granite was cut. Across the country, people have pitched in, working to again make the battlefield



A newly cast bronze head replaces the one stolen by vandals.



NPS worker puts the finishing touches on the bronze cannoneer – December, 2011.

whole and restore the symbols of the men who fought there.

These monuments have been called icons of freedom, Readshaw said. To see them broken and cracked is like a blow to the American spirit. But if there's a bright side, he added, it rests in the outpouring of support. Perhaps it's when the symbols are threatened that we're most reminded of their meaning.