

CURTIS RAND  
FIRST SELECTMAN

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TOWN OF SALISBURY  
CONNECTICUT

Christian Williams  
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Selectmen

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**BOS – Minutes – 6.3.2023**

The Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting minutes of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024.

**Present:** Curtis Rand, First Selectman; Christian Williams, Selectman; Katherine Kiefer, Selectman; Emily Egan, Secretary; members of the press and public.

The meeting was **called to order** at 5:00pm.

K. Kiefer made a motion to **approve the agenda**. C. Williams seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

C. Williams made a motion to **approve the minutes of the May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Regular Meeting**. K. Kiefer seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

**First Selectman Report**

a. **Renewed effort to lower speeds, speed cameras and stop unmuffled tractor trailers.**

There has been continued interest in speed reduction particularly in the villages. The Legislature has opened up the possibility of getting speed cameras. Though it may be a lengthy process to get cameras, we hope to get two cameras on state roads. The CTDOT rejected a proposal from the town to install median islands before entering the villages to reduce speed. The Selectmen would like to draft a letter to the CTDOT for another proposal to reduce speed.

Another continued problem is the amount of noise pollution from trucks and tractor trailers having improper or nonexistent muffling systems.

b. **Hydrilla and lake updates**

Twin Lakes Association (TLA) has an application into DEEP to treat the hydrilla in the north cove. DEEP is also working on finding federal funding to get a boat/trailer washing station (closed system).

**New Business**

- a. There will be a **Town Forum on June 6<sup>th</sup>** to inform the public, answer questions and hear feedback on the **Pope Property project**. There will also be a site visit at the Pope Property to orient those to the general areas being proposed for housing and recreational facilities. Phil Barlow, from FHI Studio, will present the conceptual site design. The presentation will be followed by an open question and comment session. **Response to “Save the Trail Rail”** – There is no plan to pave the entire rail trail. The only discussion about paving has been proposed to continue Railroad Street to the Dresser Woods housing development.
- b. Jean McMillen, Town Historian, plans on retiring this fall. She will continue work on the cemeteries.
- c. Historical note RE: Civil War Monument – In a recent issue of *Connecticut Explored* (Vol.22/Number3/Summer 2024), there is an article on Civil War Stories in Stone “*Connecticut & The Civil War: Monuments to Emancipation & Not...*” by Matthew Warshauer. The author mentions the 20-foot-high stone depiction of Freedom, an allegorical toga-clad woman holding aloft a Union shield, standing upon broken shackles that surely speaks to emancipation. The Freedom statue is located on The White Hart green in Salisbury. The author noted that George Bissell (artist and sculptor of this monument) was far beyond progressive thinking during his time, as only three erected monuments in the post-war era offer any commentary on slavery or freedom as a cause or outcome of the war. (See attached article)
- d. The Selectmen motioned, seconded and approved the following tax refunds as recommended by the Tax Collector: June 2024 - **Total \$242.92** (Seck, Adjiaratou/ Fall, Abdoulaye - 2020 GL - \$121.12 & 2021 GL \$121.80).

**Selectmen's Reports**

K. Kiefer is in support of the effort to reduce speeding in the villages. C. Williams wished everyone a Happy Father's Day.

**Citizen Comments:** E. Epperson had a few questions on previous agenda items.

**Adjourn:** 5:25pm

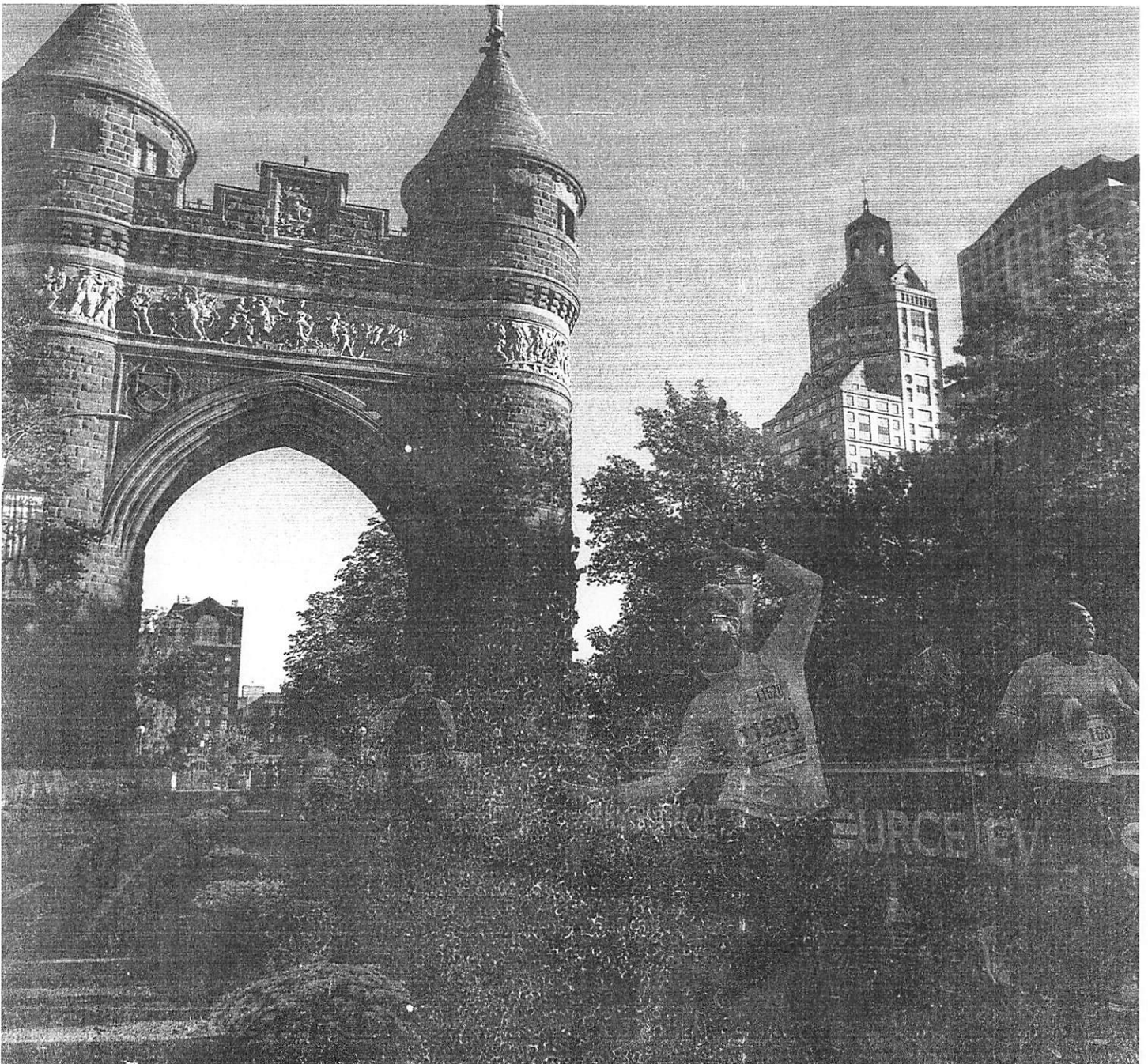
# Connecticut Explored

*Connecticut history, one good story after another*

VOLUME 22/NUMBER 3/SUMMER 2024 \$9.00

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- Remembering John Mason
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# CONNECTICUT & THE CIVIL WAR: MONUMENTS TO EMANCIPATION, & NOT...

By Matthew Warshauer

Connecticut's Civil War monuments call to me. On a given day, a drive in just about any part of the state brings me face-to-face with these stone and bronze tributes to the past. They stand prominently in our busy city centers and quietly on the long, winding roads that stretch into the countryside. They speak to the meaning behind the nation's greatest conflict and why so many fought in America's bloodiest struggle.

According to J. David Hacker's 2011 study, "A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead" (*Civil War History* 57, no. 4), more than 750,000 soldiers perished—the per capita equivalent of 7 million today.

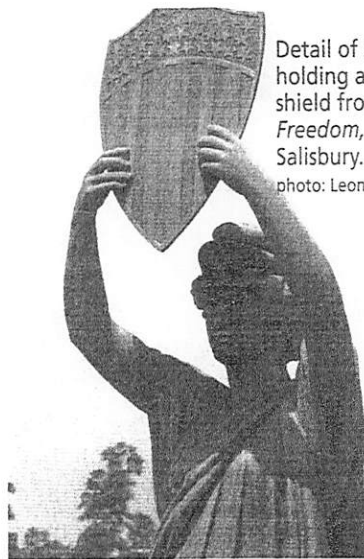
Last spring, I found myself in the far western reaches of the state, in Salisbury, along the New York border. She appeared on the horizon, sunbathed and silhouetted: a 20-foot-high stone depiction of Freedom, an allegorical toga-clad woman holding aloft a large Union shield. I pulled over, hopped out of the car, and snapped a few quick photos, only to notice later in the images that Freedom stood upon broken shackles. This was no minor realization.

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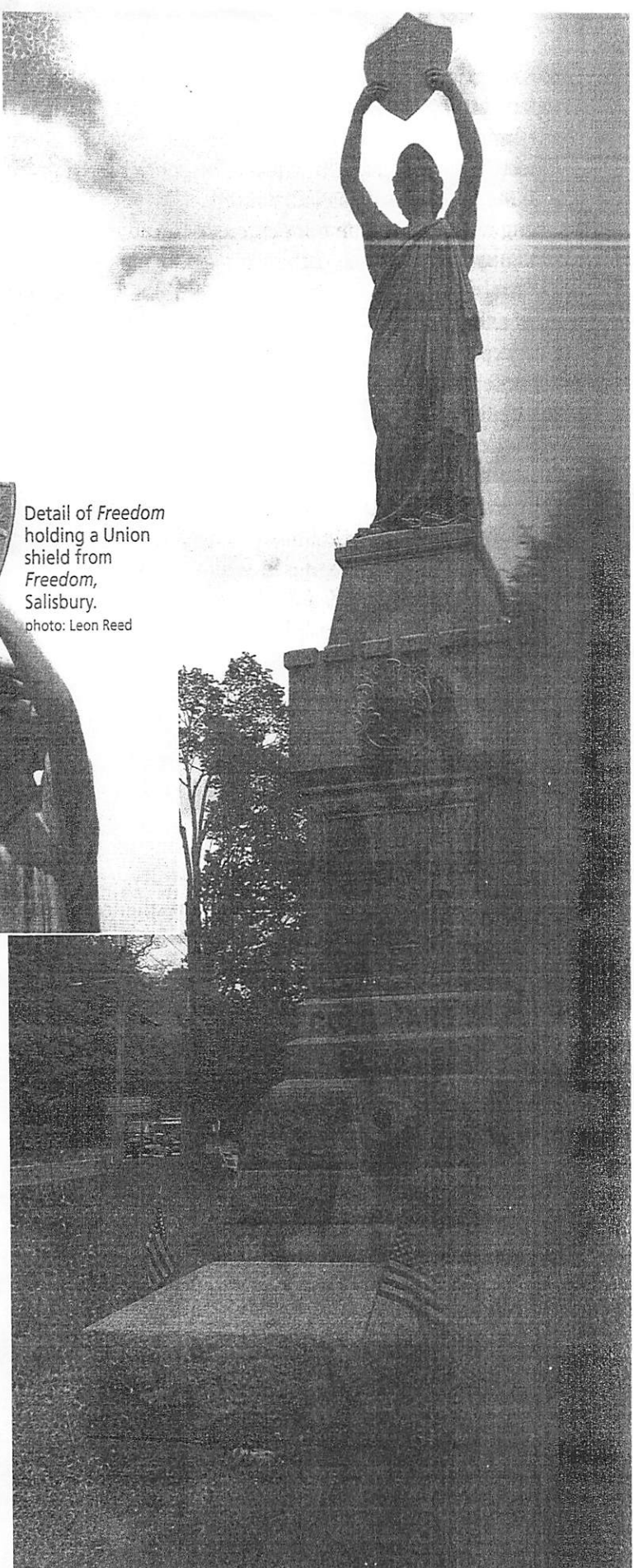
Matthew Warshauer is a history professor at Central Connecticut State University. He is the author of numerous articles and books about Connecticut and the Civil War, and from 2009 to 2015, served as cochair of the state's Sesquicentennial Commission, which organized events and forums to explore Connecticut's involvement in the war.

George E. Bissell, sculptor and supplier, *Freedom*, Civil War Memorial Park, Salisbury Green, Salisbury, Connecticut, dedicated June 17, 1891. photo: Leon Reed

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Detail of *Freedom* holding a Union shield from *Freedom*, Salisbury. photo: Leon Reed



My earlier research, published in *Connecticut in the American Civil War: Slavery, Sacrifice, and Survival* (Wesleyan University Press, 2011), had shown that out of Connecticut's more than 150 Civil War monuments, only two—far more prominent and located in the heart of major cities—included any indication that slavery, Black freedom, and emancipation were the causes of the war. Yet, there on the Salisbury green stood Freedom with her broken shackles.

Though the Civil War ended over 159 years ago, many Americans remain captivated by its too-often meandering legacy. Christopher Collier and James Lincoln Collier noted in their book for young readers, *Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War* (Benchmark Books, 2000), that “perhaps a hundred thousand books have been published about the Civil War.” Historians have debated endlessly over its causes: economics, states’ rights, slavery, or some combination. On March 4, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln touched on this question in his second inaugural address, noting that one-eighth of America’s population was “colored slaves” and that “these slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war.”

Somehow the cause. With its broken shackles under Freedom’s feet, the Salisbury monument surely speaks to Black emancipation, the reason for the war. Yet until that moment, staring at the stone chain, I was aware of only the two other Connecticut monuments. Each pays homage to the idea of emancipation, and each is connected in a way that revealed itself only in writing this story. The monuments, three out of so many, also challenge the now deeply held understanding that slavery is the essential truth of the Civil War.

Waterbury’s Soldiers’ Monument, dedicated in 1884, towers above the west end of the town green on Main Street. At its pinnacle stands a stone, allegorized Victory, her right hand grasping a laurel wreath symbolizing triumph and in her left an olive branch symbolizing peace. At the base of the statue, on each of its four sides, are statuary



right: George E. Bissell, sculptor, designer, and supplier, *Soldiers' Monument*, Waterbury Green, Waterbury, Connecticut, dedicated October 23, 1884. photo: Matthew Warshauer  
 inset: Detail of Freedom and her two students from *Soldiers' Monument*, Waterbury. photo: Matthew Warshauer

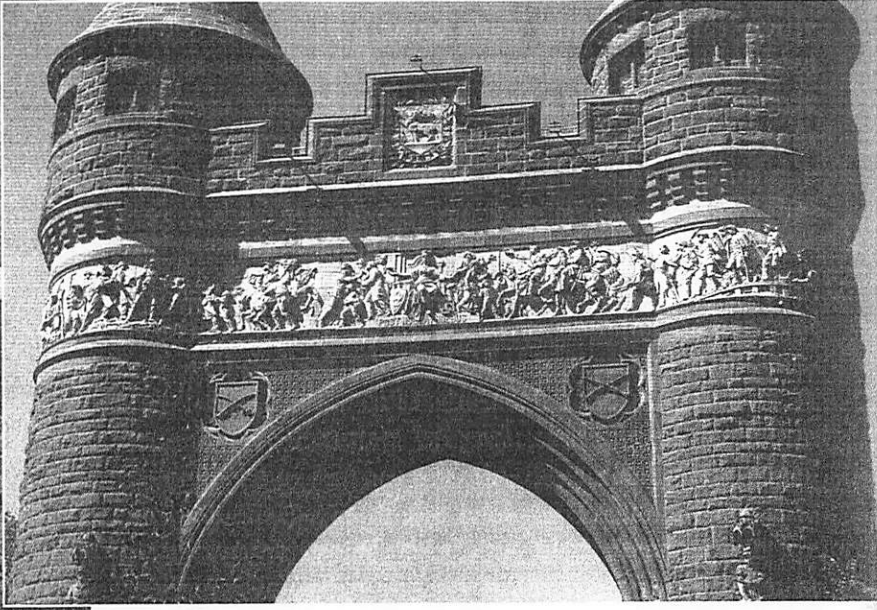






renderings cast in bronze: a youthful mechanic, a weather-beaten farmer, and a grizzled Union veteran seated forlornly at a comrade's grave. The fourth and most intriguing bronze depicts three figures: a classical portrayal of Freedom clad in a toga with a headband holding the Union shield. She sits in a grand chair with her hands gently clasped over a large book. A sword is securely scabbarded in the seat's raised back, just above a wreath with an eagle in the center. In its beak hangs a placard that reads "EMANCIPATION." Freedom's foot rests on a cannon, a broken shackle extending out from below the heavy gun. The statement couldn't be clearer: war ended slavery.

Yet the designer, George Bissell, went much further. Two young boys sit beside Freedom. Standing on her right is a well-dressed white child, his arm and hand outstretched to a Black child whose left hand grasps a hoe. He sits on a bale of cotton, the great cash crop of the South. His right hand reaches out, the fingers delicately edged between the pages of the book on Freedom's lap. The statue unambiguously proclaims Black freedom and the belief that education is a key to the future. It is the most substantial monument in the state to do so, but not the only one to feature these messages.



above: George Keller, architect, *Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch*, Bushnell Park, Hartford, Connecticut, dedicated September 17, 1886.  
photo: Matthew Warshauer

left: One of the six figures decorating the arch's towers depicts a Black man holding a broken shackle in his right hand and a writing slate in his left. *Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch*, Hartford. photo: Matthew Warshauer

Hartford's Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch, dedicated in 1886, stands impressively in the middle of the city's Bushnell Park. In a landmark 1997 study of Connecticut's Civil War monuments for the Connecticut Historical Society (now the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History), David Ransom notes that it was the nation's first permanent triumphal arch. It tells the story of war—of battle, death, and homecoming—of “common” men who left their civilian trades to don soldiers' uniforms. They are depicted in five stone figures that adorn the arch's two great cylindrical columns. Each reveals a man from a different trade: a farmer, a blacksmith, a mason, a student, and a carpenter. The sixth statue was meant to be a merchant, but architect George Keller replaced it with an African American wearing a loincloth, broken shackles hanging from his right hand. In his left hand is a simple slate with “ABC” written in both upper- and lowercase letters. The parallel to Waterbury's monument is obvious.

I felt there had to be a connection between these monuments, dedicated only two years apart. Yet when writing *Connecticut in the American Civil War*, I'd found no link between the monuments' creators. Then came my discovery of Freedom in Salisbury, a third monument in the state that spoke to the issues of slavery and emancipation as the causes of the war. She was erected in 1891, only a few years after Hartford and Waterbury.

## It was only in preparing this essay that I realized the relationship among all three monuments — the BISSELLS.

The artist and sculptor George Bissell created both the Waterbury and Salisbury monuments. His father, Hiram Bissell, worked as a contractor on Keller's arch. David Ransom wrote of the Waterbury monument: “The fact that [George] Bissell grasped the opportunity to address emancipation and education of African Americans in this work as early as 1884 indicates progressive thinking on his part.” Bissell expanded on these themes in *Emancipation*, his celebrated 1893 memorial group in Edinburgh, Scotland, featuring Abraham Lincoln and a freedman (Freeman Henry Morris Murray, *Emancipation and the Freed in American Sculpture*, 1916).

And herein lay the other element of this story. Bissell's thinking was far beyond “progressive”—it was singular. Consider that, of the more than 150 Civil War monuments in Connecticut, only three erected in the immediate post-war era offer any commentary on slavery or Black freedom as a cause or outcome of the war, and all three were connected to one family. Every other Connecticut monument that includes a motivation for or result of the war focuses on duty and preserving the Union.

This is not a trifling matter. Monument designers and the committees that hired them often spent years debating the message and meaning of their tributes. The failure, perhaps the refusal, to include slavery speaks loudly in its silence. In this sense, the Bissells' contributions to Connecticut Civil War remembrance stand in stark contrast to virtually every other monument in the state. Today, Americans increasingly recognize that the deep racial fissures haunting our nation speak to the troubling reality of slavery, that it was *somehow* the cause of the war. But, as I argue in *Connecticut in the American Civil War*, most of Connecticut's Civil War generation didn't think about the war in that way. They marched to defend and preserve the Union, a message later enshrined on the many monuments stretching from city to hamlet.

There were few abolitionists in Connecticut. As the war progressed, some soldiers became emancipationists, meaning they embraced the end of slavery as a means to defeat and punish the South. But that was different from the abolitionist belief in social and political rights for African Americans. There is no doubt that during the war, many Connecticut soldiers encountered the horrors of slavery for the first time, and that influenced their thinking. Perhaps this was George Bissell's experience; he served in the 23rd Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, stationed in Louisiana.

The 2020 murder of George Floyd launched a new racial reckoning that turned our contemporary anguish toward the stone visages of another time and the tearing down of Confederate monuments as vestiges of slavery, Jim Crow, and anti-Black racism. In these bygone statues, we see the “real” causes of the Civil War. Yet a seemingly simple drive through Connecticut and a consideration of the story they do and, importantly, do not tell offer an equally compelling story. ➤