

Monument: 'Sentinel' of city getting a face-lift

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Visible from Interstate 91 and many streets throughout the city, the monument is a constant reminder of the New Haven residents who served in four wars — the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War and the Civil War. Bronze tablets adorning the northwest and southeast sides of the monument list more than 500 names of soldiers and sailors who died during the Civil War.

Dedicated June 17, 1887, just one year from the laying of the cornerstone, the bronze "Angel of Peace" sculpture topped the 110-foot monument and more than 100,000 spectators were said by historians to have been on hand for the dedication. Bronze tablets were added seven years later, completing the monument on May 30, 1894.

DeStefano referred to the monument as a marker on top of the pedestal of East Rock.

"The monument wouldn't be what it (is) without the rock," DeStefano said. "(Both) are pieces that mark the city."

Sculptors Moffit and Doyle created the designs for the monument, originally intended to be constructed on the city Green. The tower and pedestal are made of red granite. There are five small windows along the tower, which offered views of New Haven Harbor and Long Island



Peter Hvizdak/Register

Tarquino Gomez of G&L Capasso Restoration works on the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in New Haven Friday.

Sound, and an observation level at the top.

Four reliefs depict Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendering to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox; Gen. Lord Charles Cornwallis surrendering to Maj. Gen. George Washington at Yorktown; Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry at Lake Erie; and Gen. Winfield Scott entering Mexico City. Four bronze statues adorn the pedestal representing History, Patriotism, Victory and Prosperity.

The interior of the tower is made of brick, housing two marble plaques and remnants of the iron spiral staircase that once led to the top of the monument.

According to Gary Sorge of Vollmer Associates LLP, designers for the project, the restoration

will take place in five phases. Phases one and two, which have already begun, include cleaning the interior of the monument by removing the iron staircase and providing access for workers, and completing exterior repairs by restoring the Angel of Peace first and working down the tower.

Carmine Capasso of G&L Capasso Restoration Inc., said the mortar will be replaced to preserve the bricks and the statue at the top will be stabilized. He said the base where the angel is attached is completely deteriorated.

"It has held up very well for the lack of work done to it," Capasso said.

Since it is not known when the iron staircase was closed off

to the public, Capasso said no one would know that there are concrete seats under the windows of the tower overlooking the city.

Francis Miller, a sculpture conservator from ConservArt LLC in Hamden, said pollutants and acid rain have eroded the surfaces of the bronze sculptures, which now have a greenish color with deep pitting. When restored, he said the sculptures will be a darker green, but will never return to their original bronze state.

"We need to stabilize the structure by getting a protective coating on it," Miller said. "(That) should last about 15 to 20 years."

The first two phases are scheduled to be completed by September.

The estimated cost of the project is close to \$750,000, said Derek Slap, director of public information for DeStefano. The initial work is covered by \$250,000 from city funding, but he said other funding will have to come from grants, public money and private funding or donations.

Future phases of the project include replication of the original doors, step restoration, exterior landscaping and a memorial garden.

For more information about the history of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, go to www.chs.org/ransom/074.htm.

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