

Remarks by Cumberland Town Councilor Steve Moriarty at the dedication of the Veterans Monument on May 31, 2010.

I want to begin by thanking our Veterans Monument Committee, whose names you will find printed on the back of your programs. The committee has been meeting for over a year and has worked hard to make the possibility of a new memorial to our veterans a reality.

I want to particularly thank committee member Glen Hutchins for his vision and imagination, as well as for his tenacity in pursuing his dream. Special thanks also go to Town Manager Bill Shane for his energy and dedication to the project. Finally, we must all thank the over 200 Cumberland residents whose generous contributions brought this project to life. This is, after all, a memorial entirely funded by voluntary donations, which makes it all the more special. This monument is truly a gift from the residents to future generations in honor of our veterans.

Bob Heyner has just spoken about the meaning and importance of Memorial Day. The debt owed to generations of American veterans – particularly those who have seen combat and have given their lives – can never be captured in words. And so we dedicate this monument to express our appreciation in a quiet and dignified way, but with the strength and durability of stone, so that our gratitude can never be forgotten.

All across our country, our veterans have come from the hearts of our communities, whether rural or urban. They have come from high schools and colleges, and from every trade, profession and walk of life. The same is true of Cumberland. Whether farmers, fishermen or trades people, Cumberland citizens have answered the call when the time came. And so, what better place to put a veterans' monument than right here in the geographic heart of our community?

Think of the historical importance of the areas we have just passed on our short parade route. We stopped at the corner of Tuttle and Main, at the Merrill Memorial – erected in honor of veterans of the Civil War. That monument was dedicated exactly 82 years ago yesterday. Let me digress for a moment. On that May morning in 1928, two young Cumberland sisters, Margelia and Barbara Blanchard, stepped forward and laid flowers at the base of the stone. Today, just about half an hour ago, those same two ladies placed bouquets of flowers again in honor of those who served. It was a powerful and emotional moment. Their act of devotion symbolized the timelessness of patriotism, love of country, and participation in the life of a community. I am thrilled to welcome to this celebration our two very special guests of honor, Margelia Potter and Barbara Garsoe.

Moving along our route, we passed the stone marking Cumberland's centennial celebration in 1921. We marched by the Congregational Cemetery which contains gravesites of veterans of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Finally, we passed Greely Institute, built in 1868 and still a vital and functional part of the much larger Greely High School which has grown up around it.

So much of our town's heritage is concentrated in this small area, and as of this moment, our new Veterans Monument proudly takes its place among the town's historical treasures. Here in the heart of our community, this will become a place of rest, reflection, remembrance, and of course, for giving thanks. We accept this gift from our residents and, with joy and pride, dedicate it in honor of the service and sacrifices of all our veterans.

Thank you very much for coming together to join in this celebration of recognition.