

NATIONAL MONUMENT TO THE FOREFATHERS

Perry Atkinson & John Mittendorf

February 17 & March 10, 2017

INTRODUCTION

If you decided to visit historical sites that are predominant in the northeast portion of this country, you would undoubtedly want to visit Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts, as it is the location of the traditional disembarkation of the Mayflower Pilgrims who then founded Plymouth Colony in 1620. Although the “rock” is an unremarkable and rather dull appearing ten-ton granite boulder that is an essential symbol in the foundation of American history its prominence completely overshadows a nearby and virtually unknown colossal monument that provides a template on how to build a society that is based on liberty, biblical ideals, and the godly worldview of the Pilgrim settlers (recognized as our forefathers). The unique 81-foot tall monument is known as the *National Monument to the Forefathers*, is believed to be the world’s largest solid granite monument, was the first monument erected in America to honor America’s Christian heritage, and can be considered the *original Statue of Liberty*. Interestingly, the monument is only a short distance from Plymouth Rock and is located on a hill that is typically overlooked by people visiting the area as trees and residential structures that were absent during its construction now surround the monument.

The monument is both distinctive and exceptional as it not only honors the ideals of the Mayflower Pilgrims that were later embraced by the United States, but it can also be viewed as a challenge to future generations of this

country *to follow* the principles upon which the Pilgrims founded their Commonwealth. Because of the insightful imagery matrix and great wisdom that is projected by the monument, lets take a tour around the monument and look at its constituent parts and epitaphs to see if its message still applies to modern ideals and times in America.

MONUMENT

The National Monument to the Forefathers is said to be the largest solid granite monument in the world (compare the people at the lower left to the monument in Figure 1) at 81-feet tall and was erected to honor the first English settlers to land in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The monument was designed by



Figure 1. National Monument to the Forefathers

Boston sculptor Hammatt Billings and commissioned through the efforts of the Pilgrim Society (a British-American society established to “promote good-will, good-fellowship, and everlasting peace between the United States and Great Britain”). It was dedicated in 1889, 30 years after the corner-stone was positioned

in 1859, is made from Maine granite, and the weight is estimated to be 180 tons. Although the physical size and initial impression of the monument is extraordinary, it is the simple and profound imagery that vibrantly conveys the following four attributes:

- The gospel message of eternal life
- The five keys of knowledge
- How to build a free society based on the biblical principles of the forefathers
- How to preserve America as a shining light upon a hill as an example of liberty to the world

The following poem was read at the dedication of the monument on August 1, 1889 and aptly summarizes its majesty, message and challenge:

“This Monument, where Virtue, Courage, Law and Learning sit, Calm Faith, above them, grasping Holy Writ (the Bible), white hand upraised o’er beauteous trusting eyes, and pleading finger pointing to the skies”

John Boyle O’Reilly

Unexpectedly, the message of the monument is not a collection of *written* history lessons but a compendium of identifiable stone sculptures and selected inscriptions that collectively act as a testament not only to our forefathers but also as a message and challenge to their descendants. To understand the many aspects of the monument, let’s look at the symbolic sequence of its message that starts at the very top and then travels downward to and around the base.

FAITH

At the top of the monument is a 36-foot centrally positioned towering and majestic figure that is *Faith* (Figure 2). She is a woman who is classically yet eloquently clothed and standing with one foot on Plymouth Rock while facing east remembering from where they had come. She has an open Geneva Bible in her left hand that is well worn from reading and also the Bible read by the Pilgrims. Her right hand is uplifted with a forefinger pointing toward heaven. Located on her forehead is the Star of Wisdom:

- **Faith** signifies that the forefathers of America had faith in the God of the Bible and was the central focus of their liberty. Remember that all civilizations have been founded on some form of religious faith but our faith in God (Jesus Christ as Lord) determines our eternal destiny and the destiny of this nation. As a result, the Pilgrims understood the importance of founding a country on Christian faith and values and is the primary reason why Faith is the central and largest figure of the monument



Figure 2. Faith

- **One foot on Plymouth rock while facing east** depicts the Pilgrims voyage as a result of following the call of God to forsake persecution and trusting God to guide them to a new land where they could freely worship God. Facing east signifies remembering from where they had come
- **Open and worn Geneva Bible** depicts the Bible the Pilgrims brought with them to America. The open and worn Bible also represents a significant past and present usage. The Pilgrims believed that scripture was meant to be applied to every area of life and the determining factor on how to live

- **Star of Wisdom** on her head signifies receiving wisdom from heaven and imparting biblical wisdom to every aspect of life
- **Pointing towards heaven** illustrates giving credence to the power and glory of God. Additionally, the Pilgrims believed that there was only one way to heaven, and that was only through Jesus Christ

On the supporting pedestal where Faith stands are four smaller and seated statues that surround Faith. These statues represent four key biblical virtues and are graphically labeled Morality, Law, Education and Liberty. On a much smaller scale, there is an engraved niche (or carved-relief) on either side of each seat that succinctly reinforces the ideals of the seated statue (only visible from the sides of the statues). Beneath each figure is a bas-relief plaque representing scenes from Pilgrim history, and adjoining these four-seated statues are some Panel Inscriptions that represent ancillary components of the Pilgrims. So, from the front of Faith, let's move around the pedestal in a counterclockwise direction and look at the notable aspects of this intricate monument, starting with the inscription below Faith:

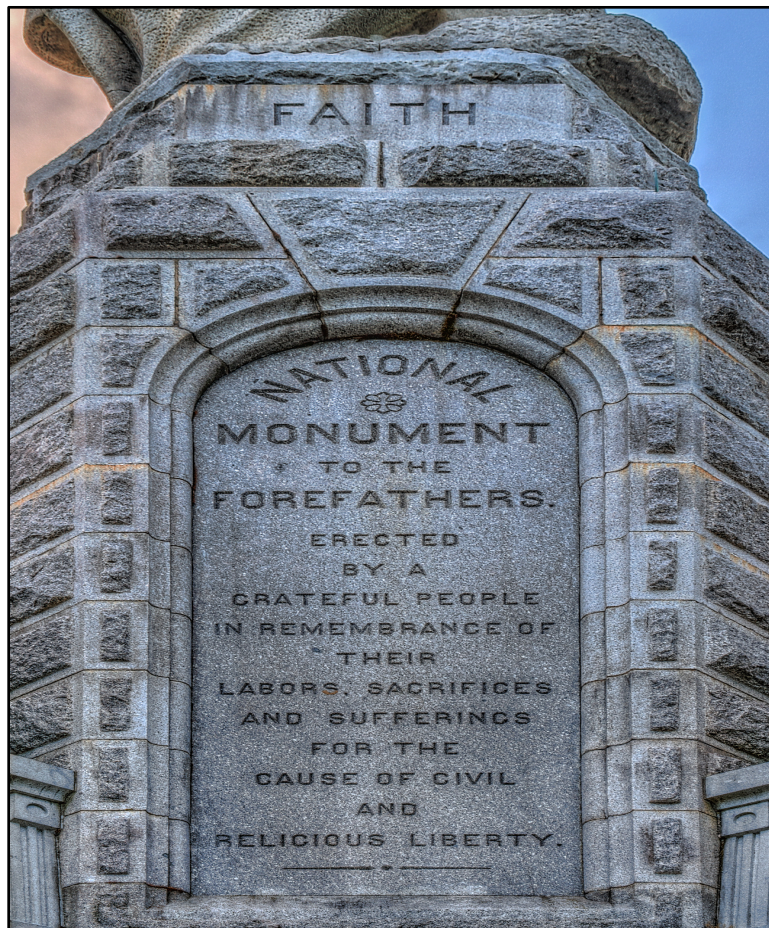


Figure 3. Front Panel Inscription below Faith

FRONT PANEL INSCRIPTION

Just below the word Faith is a Front Panel (Figure 3) with the inscription:

"National Monument to the Forefathers. Erected by a grateful people in remembrance of their labors, sacrifices and sufferings for the cause of civil and religious liberty"

MORALITY

Next, and counterclockwise to the Front Panel inscription is a statue that depicts Morality (Figure 4) as a woman with vacant eyes and wearing a breastplate necklace. Her right hand holds a scroll of The Revelation (of Jesus Christ) and



Figure 4. Morality

her left hand holds the 10 Commandments. On either side of the woman on the seat are two small carved-reliefs of a Prophet and an Evangelist and below Morality is a bas-relief plaque with engravings (Figure 5):

- **Vacant eyes** depicts the woman is looking inward and illustrates that each person must look inward and be responsible for their own morality before there can be external morality
- **Breastplate necklace** represents followers of Christ have direct access to God the ultimate High Priest
- **Scroll of The Revelation** indicates that God is the Alpha and Omega
- **10 Commandments** signifies that God's direction for life is contained in ten absolute laws
- **Carved-relief Prophet** that hears the call of God and follows it
- **Carved-relief Evangelist** that is taking seed from the Bible and sowing it (preaching the message of Christ)

BAS-RELIEF PLAQUE

Just below the base of Morality is a bas-relief plaque depicting the Pilgrims leaving England and landing at Plymouth Rock to start a new life and country (Figure 5):



Figure 5. Embarcation

LAW

Continuing counterclockwise, a Panel Inscription detailing the passengers of the Mayflower, 1620, is encountered and is partially visible on the left side of Figure 6. Continuing on, the next statue that is encountered represents Law represented by a man with a stern and demanding looking face incorporating serious appearing eyes focused in an outward direction. His left hand holds the



Figure 6. Law

10 Commandments. His right hand (broken fingers are due to vandals) is extended in mercy. The seat occupied by Law is flanked by two small carved-reliefs depicting the minor characteristics of Justice and Mercy. On the front of

the pedestal supporting the statue Law is a bas-relief plaque titled Treaty:

- **Stern and demanding look with serious eyes** represents the serious nature of administering the Law with appropriate justice and mercy
- **Left hand holds the 10 Commandments** of which six are directed towards a civil society (Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not covet and Do not bear false testimony)
- **Right hand is extended in mercy** denotes administering civil justice while having God's mercy in view
- **Carved-relief Justice** is a woman holding scales that represents equal justice for all under the law. At her side is a sword that represents God given authority
- **Carved-relief Mercy** is a man with both arms at his side and with palms open and lifted up representing an equitable balance of punishment and fairness
- **Treaty bas-relief plaque** (Figure 7) illustrates the signing of a peace treaty between the Pilgrims and the Native Indians that were indigenous to that area, signifying a desire for mutual kindness and cooperation

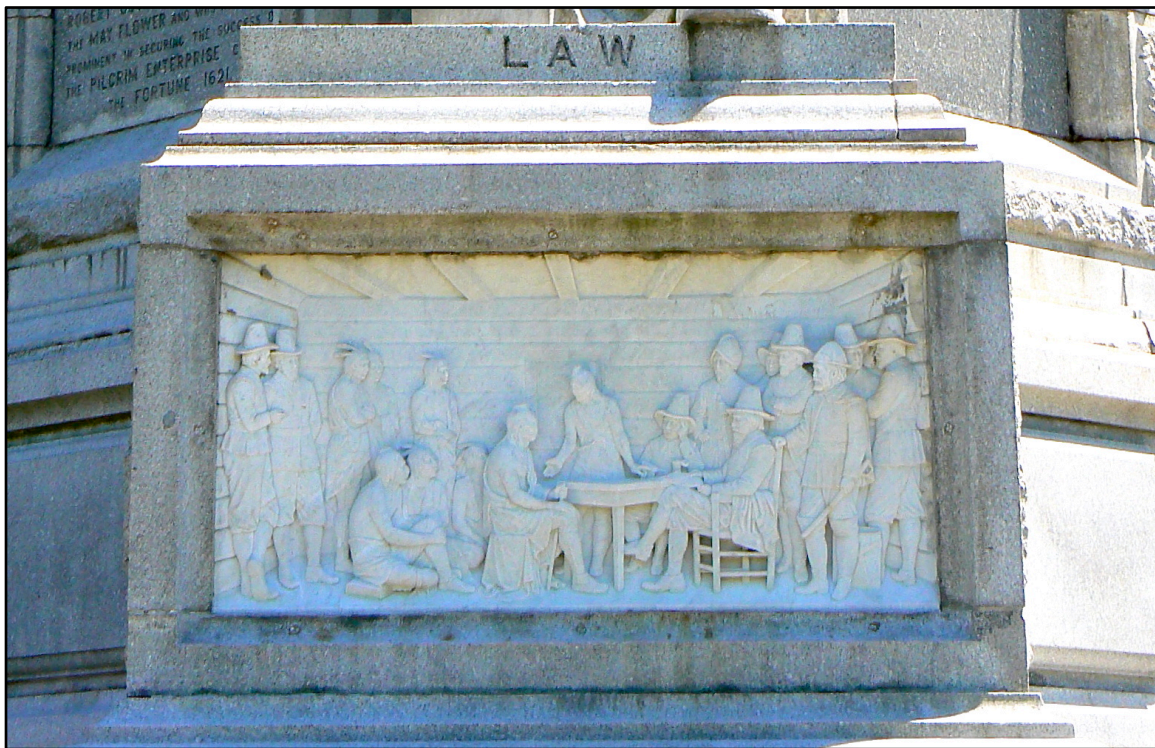


Figure 7. Treaty

PANEL INSCRIPTION

Continuing counterclockwise from the statue representing Law we come to a Panel Inscription that contains a quote from Governor William Bradford of the Plymouth Colony and is partially visible to the left of Figure 8:

"Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things of nothing and gives being to all things that are; and as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone onto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation; let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise"

Governor William Bradford

EDUCATION

Counterclockwise from the previous Panel Inscription is a statue that represents Education (Figure 8), a virtue that was crucial to the Pilgrims. The statue is comprised of a young appearing woman wearing a victor's wreath on her head.

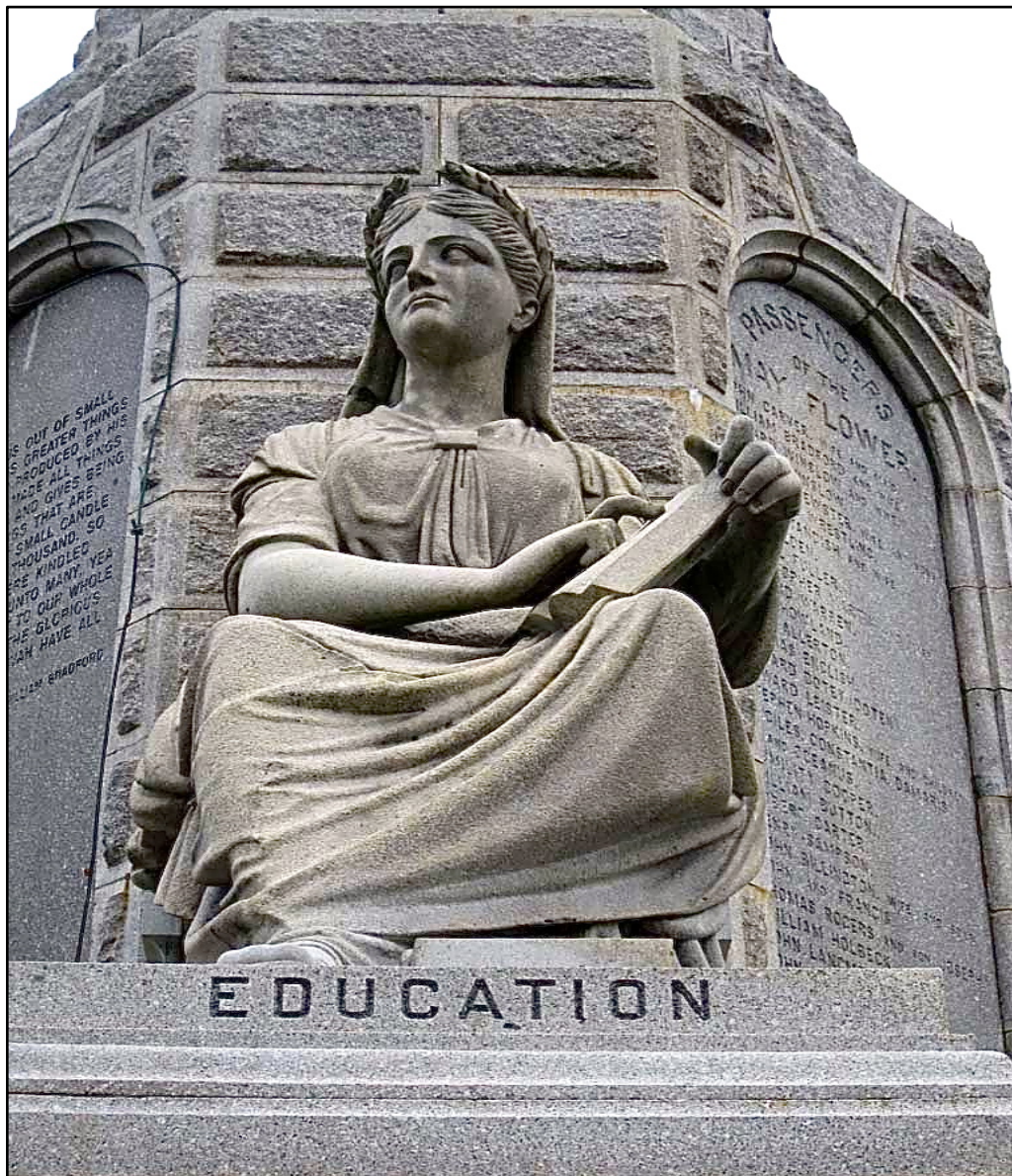


Figure 8. Education

She is holding a Bible on her lap with an index finger pointing to a page. Two carved-reliefs flanking the sides of her seat represents youth and age. The pedestal that supports Education also has a bas-relief plaque of the signing of the Mayflower Compact:

- **Education**, particularly biblical education from a young age, was a central priority to the Pilgrims
- **Young appearing woman** indicates that studying the Word of God should begin at an early age
- **Victors wreath** designates a victory that was obtained from instructing her children in the Lord from an early age
- **Open Bible on her lap** denotes a book of knowledge (Bible) because it is being used. The open book can also denote all books that are based on truth
- **Index finger on a page** can represent two viewpoints:
 - The belief of the Pilgrims that all people must be educated in order to know the truth (God) and that all people should have access to the Bible
 - Indicates that the woman is giving instruction
- **Carved-relief representing Youth** as they also believed that it was the responsibility of the parents to lead their children
- **Carved-relief representing Wisdom** is depicted by a man with three objects at his feet:
 - An open Bible that represents a lamp as a guide for mankind
 - 10 Commandments that is our guidance from God
 - Taking the Great Commission to the world
- **The Mayflower Compact** represents the four forms of government:
 - Individual government – self responsibility
 - Family government – provision, care, education
 - Church government – inspiration and accountability
 - Civil government – justice and protection
- **Compact bas-relief plaque** was the first governing document of the Plymouth Colony and was written by the male passengers of the Mayflower. The document was signed aboard ship on November 11, 1620 by the Pilgrims and was a social contract in which the settlers consented to follow the Compact's rules and regulations (their government) for the sake of survival and order:

"In the name of God, amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts

of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, 1620"

Mayflower Compact, 1620

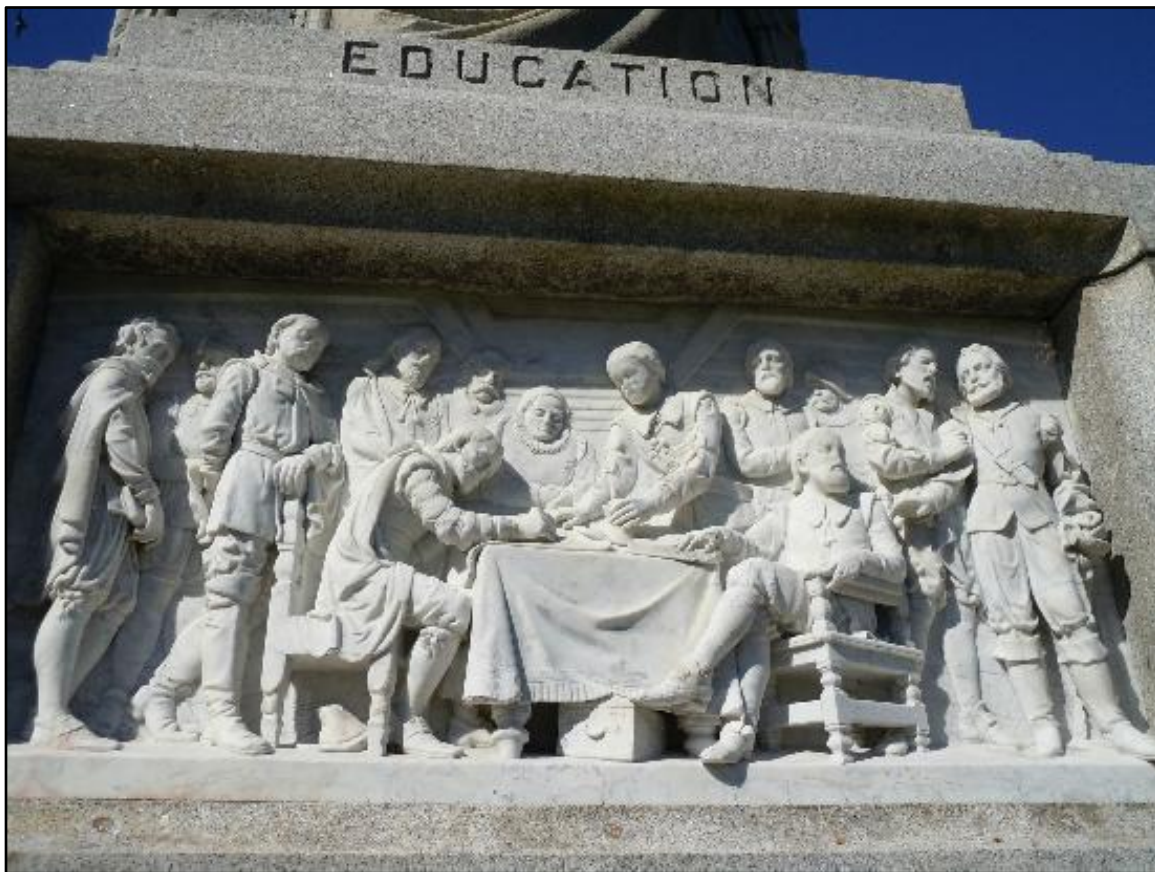


Figure 9: Compact

LIBERTY

Of the four statues below the statue of Faith, the statue that represents the virtue of Liberty (Figure 10) is the most striking and is represented by a muscular and robust Roman soldier with a steady gaze who is a free man holding a broken chain. There is a rising sun on his helmet, his sword is in a sheath in his right hand and he is sitting on a slain lion with its paw on his right shoulder. The pedestal that supports the statue of Liberty has a bas-relief plaque that illustrates

the Pilgrims stepping on to land with their weapons ready to protect their new freedom. There are also two carved reliefs on either side of the seat supporting Liberty that signifies Tyranny and Preservation of peace:



Figure 10: Liberty

- **Muscular and robust roman soldier** symbolizes liberty as he has broken his chains and is now free
- **Steady gaze** is watchful for challenges to liberty
- **Broken chain, yet is a free man** explains that tyranny has been conquered and is now in submission
- **Rising sun on his helmet** demonstrates that through peace, the Pilgrims have left tyranny for liberty and are beginning a new day at Plymouth
- **Sword is in its sheath** is ready to protect liberty and family. Peace comes through strength and not offensive perspectives
- **Sitting on a slain lion** illustrates that liberty has won a great victory. The lion is the spiritual tyranny of England
- **Carved-relief of Tyranny** illustrates a man standing with a raised hand that represents God's strength and a foot on the chest of another man on the ground who portrays a tyrant. The tyrant is kept under control yet is trying to get up to show that tyrants will always try to regain power
- **Carved-relief of Peace** illustrates a standing woman with an olive branch in her right hand as an offering of peace. There is also a cornucopia that implies with peace there is abundance
- **Bas-relief plaque** of the Pilgrims stepping on to land with their weapons ready to protect their new freedom



Figure 11. Landing

CONCLUSION

The Monument to the Forefathers graphically represents (in vivid detail) why our forefather's left England and risked their lives to come to America, bringing their character and values that represented the foundation of their beliefs. As a result, the prominent virtues of justice, equality, self-esteem for life, honor, self-rule and freedom of worship formed the foundation of this country from its humble beginning over 400 years ago. As a result, the Monument to the Forefathers was not only erected as a tribute to our forefathers and the world, but also as a reminder of our true foundation to future generations and the importance of preserving those virtues. Hopefully, its message will act as a challenge to embrace the principles that are depicted on the monument. Quoting George Washington:

The time is near at hand which must determine whether Americans are to be free men or slaves"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Monumental DVD
2012, Kirk Cameron
- Wikipedia
- Pilgrim Society
- Plymouth Compact
- americaismyname.org
- 1618 Leyden Agreement
- Providence Foundation
- The Laws of the Pilgrims
The Book of the General Laws of the Inhabitants of the Jurisdiction of New-Plymouth
Michael Glazier, 1977
- Significant Documents in United States History
Richard Morris
Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1969
- thenewamerican.com
- ctmonuments.net
- kirkcameron.com
- roadsideamerica.com
- seeplymouth.comhistoricaldigression.com