Navigating Space and Feeling at The Flight 93 National Memorial:
A History of the Memorial, Its Role in Somerset County, and Its Significance in the National and Local Narratives of September 11.

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION AND THANKS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION I - THE CREATION OF THE FLIGHT 93 NATIONAL MEMORIAL</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION II - SOMERSET COUNTY AND 9/11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION III - PATRIOTIC REMEMBRANCE AND WAR</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION IV - SACRED SPACE AND CONSTRAINED IMPACT</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

This thesis analyzes the cultural memory, historical narrative, and political meaning of the Flight 93 National Memorial in Somerset County. It examines the memorial’s creation, its relationship to the local community, and the legacy of Flight 93 imbued in local and national narratives surrounding 9/11. To address this complex history, a variety of primary sources have been evaluated, including minutes of the Flight 93 Advisory Committee meetings, publications of the Daily American (the local Somerset County newspaper), photos of the site, and a range of historiographical texts dealing with commemoration, cultural memory, and American memorialization. Secondary sources include Peter Novick’s discussions on the politicization of history and Kirk Savage’s thorough examinations of American monuments, which provide a framework to understand the Flight 93 site in terms of the politicized construction of historical memory. This thesis will explore how the legacy of Flight 93 became redefined in terms of the Bush Administration’s war on terror and military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

This thesis demonstrates that, through its many physical aspects and presentation of history both in narration and visualization, the Flight 93 National Memorial embodies a unique, patriotic commemoration of an indisputably tragic event. This commemoration relates the site to Somerset County, and also connects it to both the local and national narratives and politics surrounding 9/11 by creating a unique site of pilgrimage to pay homage and respect to the history of Flight 93.
Dedication and Thanks

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of the 40 innocent passengers and crew of Flight 93, who lost their lives on September 11. I hope that through such study of public memorials like the Flight 93 National Memorial, a new light can be shed on the different perspectives and insight concerning the memorial and its still developing history.

I want to thank the Haverford History Department for all of its support in helping my research and writing process. More specifically, I thank my first reader, Professor Linda Gerstein, for her guidance and insight, and her willingness to push me to pursue a deeper understanding of my thesis and its themes (not to mention all of her stylistic help). I thank Professor James Krippner, who served as my second reader and helped guide this thesis from its conception at the start of the year in History 400a to its final form. Many thanks go to my former Professors for pointing me to this subject and the study of public space in relation to cultural memory and identity. To Professor Paul Farber, I owe you a debt of gratitude for exposing me to the study of memorials in my 300-level seminar (How to Build a Monument), and for nursing my historical curiosity and critical eye for such profound sites of memory. To Professor Alexander Kitroeff, I am forever indebted to you for serving as my major advisor, navigating me through the rigors of the major and the study of history, and for exposing me to the theory of nationalism, which benefitted the trajectory of this thesis. Finally, I thank Margaret Schaus of the Haverford College Library for helping me to navigate Haverford’s collections and to compile my list of sources.
**Introduction**

The Flight 93 National Memorial commemorates the death of the 40 passengers and crewmembers of United Flight 93, who lost their lives in an attempt to retake the hijacked aircraft on September 11, 2001. On that fateful morning, United Flight 93 experienced delays in its departure from Newark International Airport. The delay put it in the air at 8:42am about four minutes before American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.\(^1\) This critical delay enabled the passengers on board Flight 93 to receive news from the ground of the crashes at the World Trade Center through cellphones and seatback phones after the 4 hijackers had taken control of the plane. Armed with the news of their impending fate, the passengers deliberated amongst themselves, and decided to attempt taking back the plane instead of passively allowing the hijackers to use the plane to attack another target. No one knows exactly what happened between the last phone calls and the scrambled black box recordings of the struggle to regain control of the cockpit, but at 10:03am, Flight 93 spiraled out of the air and crashed, killing all 44 people onboard.

The plane erupted in a fireball on a grove near the town of Shanksville in Somerset County, Pennsylvania—scarring the land and leaving a void in the lives of the families of the deceased. This historical moment impacted both the local and national communities through its tragic loss of life and disruption of national security. The crash site and its peer sites in Manhattan and the Pentagon have all had memorials erected to speak to that traumatic day and its effect upon America. Unlike the others, which are in America’s main urban center and the American military headquarters respectively, the Flight 93 National Memorial sits atop the hilly countryside of southwestern Pennsylvania within the rust belt, far from centers of advanced

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technology and lucrative commerce. This thesis will analyze the meaning of United Flight 93 in America’s cultural memory, and its implications as a national memorial within Somerset County, a region known for its conservative politics.

The region skyrocketed to national and global attention after 9/11. Despite harboring the often-visited memorial dedicated to commemorating the patriotic heroism of those 40 brave souls, Somerset County is a region that endures the difficult economic and political realities of contemporary rural America. The memorial evokes many historical questions: Why was it built? How does the memorial communicate a historical narrative of September 11 through its design? What do the design and mission statement of the memorial say about Somerset County’s relationship to September 11, but also about the larger American narrative of remembering the events of September 11? How does the patriotic theme of the memorial relate to politically conservative ideology and also to the larger American community? In what ways has the memorial affected Somerset County, beyond increased tourism, intense initial media attention, and the placement of a symbol of patriotic fervor in this politically conservative area?

To answer these questions, this thesis will explore a variety of historical issues, including cultural memory, public memory, and the narrativization of the history surrounding this public memorial. Through traumatic moments, cultural memory initially and rapidly changes due to the impact of societal pain by means of media, language, and individuals’ reactions, then evolves more slowly over time as other considerations shape memory debates. Public memory of United Flight 93 in the United States is linked to the evolution of the discourse of 9/11 during the years since that fateful day. The main issues explored in this thesis will concern the successes and limitations of commemorating 9/11 at the Flight 93 National Memorial. Insights can be gained by looking at the history of the memorial, the local community’s relationship to the memorial
and 9/11, and the heroic, patriotic theme of the memorial. Through its many physical aspects, and presentation of history both in narration and visualization, the Flight 93 National Memorial embodies a patriotic narrative of remembrance of the tragic event, which relates the memorial to Somerset County. These aspects also connect it to both the local and national narratives and politics surrounding September 11 by creating a site of pilgrimage to pay homage and respect to the history of Flight 93.

The Flight 93 National Memorial exists today due to the need to commemorate history in the physical manifestation of a memorial. As a site of public historical commemoration, it provides a useful example to test a variety of theoretical points concerning the development of cultural memory. First, it is important to note that as a nation state the United States enjoys an implicit, shared sense of community built upon the notion of the population’s shared language and ideals. This relationship makes a nation state an imagined community, and this connection creates a fraternity that is deep and horizontal regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in the nation state.² At times, this connection leads members of the community to sacrifice their lives to protect the very ideals shared in the imagined sense, and in the context of Flight 93 the passengers and crew died to preserve many American lives and thwart the hijackers intended malicious actions. This sacrifice became elevated in both the political and historical narratives of America due to the impact of September 11, but also because of the apparent idealism and patriotic heroism of the passengers and crew.

This narrative of Flight 93 became a social memory shared by the populace of the United States, and in the reasoning of Paul Connerton, a nation conveys and sustains this social memory

through habitual, commemorative ceremonies. The annual ceremonies of remembering the tragedy of 9/11 act as the habitual action, and the creation of the physical memorial is driven by the people’s need to fill the void of loss. In his sweeping discussion of WWI memorials in Europe, Jay Winter analyzes the impact of the loss of life upon the psyche of people and how messages of commemoration are conveyed in the various memorials to the war. These memorials become sites of memory and mourning needed by the nation to garner understanding from the trauma and loss. Winter also asserts that the ability to convey simple messages through memorials to the dead became increasingly difficult following WWII, and this complication stems from the development of modernism with its fragmentation, irony, and incoherence that has shaped the post war period. This new era of developing thought about trauma and commemoration changed how memorials conveyed their political and historical messages to their guests. The Flight 93 National Memorial exists in this post-WWII era and more specifically, in a post-Maya Lin era of memorialization. Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial broke from the tradition of glorifying patriotic death with tall white marble, employing instead dark stone cut into the ground to demonstrate the solemn, painful nature of the Vietnam War. The Vietnam Memorial will be discussed further in Section IV, but it is worth noting that it and the Flight 93 National Memorial exist in a much more interpretive period of cultural memory and memorialization.

Theorist Erika Doss claims that public feeling plays a large role in understanding contemporary American’s obsession with memorials. According to Doss, following moments of public feeling such as the pain and fear of 9/11, Americans turn to the creation of memorials to

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express their sentiments and find a sense of solace. This theory seems self-explanatory, but
Doss drives it home through the coupling of this sentiment to many examples of commemoration
of events of tragedy, pain, and victory experienced across the American landscape. Fitting this
mold, the Flight 93 National Memorial came into existence to fill these various needs, and its
themes reflect a politically conservative stance on the narrative of 9/11 in glorifying the deaths of
the 40 heroes. This relation benefits from the site’s role as a pilgrimage site for Americans to
visit and reflect.

Before continuing, it is necessary to define the term conservative in regards to its primary
usage in this thesis. As a political term conservative means: a political philosophy based on
tradition and social stability, stressing established institutions, and preferring gradual
development to abrupt change. In the 21st century American context this basic definition also
includes an emphasis on national defense, immigration regulation, and economic development
that assists the domestic economy by limiting federal government interaction in the free market.
Throughout this thesis, I use the term in regards to the politically conservative tradition when
speaking to historical narratives and political sentiments of Somerset County and the United
States.

Given the politically charged and sensitive nature of this commemoration of a recent
event, I wish to acknowledge my own perspective before providing a brief synopsis of my thesis.
First and foremost, I respect the memory of the sacrifice and loss of life that occurred on
September 11, and in particular, I do not mean to denigrate the memory of the 40 passengers and
crew aboard Flight 93 through this study. I am fortunate not to be directly connected to the web

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5 Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago
of loss and pain created on that fateful day. I am merely analyzing the various facts and evidence in relation to established theories of monuments and historical commemoration to derive a few conclusions that will hopefully contribute to the study of Flight 93, its memorial, and 9/11 commemoration. It is also important to note that I am not a member of the Somerset community, so I am an outsider attempting to study the community.

I will conclude this introduction with a brief overview of my thesis. This thesis will be comprised of four sections to conduct this study of the history of the Flight 93 National Memorial across its various topics. Section I: “The Creation of the Flight 93 National Memorial” explores the entire process of creating the memorial from its founding moments in legislation to the continued construction of its various physical elements. Section II: “Somerset County and 9/11” considers the political and economic aspects of Somerset County and the community’s relationship to the legacy of Flight 93 and the memorial. Section III: “Patriotic Remembrance and War” looks at the connection between the legacy of Flight 93 and America’s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq following September 11. Section IV: “Sacred Space and Constrained Impact” analyzes the memorial’s space in regard to its politically conservative themes and the visitor’s experience. Through these sections, I hope to convey a portion of this memorial’s history and impact on both the local and national communities, and its role in the historical narrative of 9/11.
Section I: The Creation of the Flight 93 National Memorial

The Flight 93 National Memorial is still under construction, and has faced a myriad of obstacles and delays on its journey to completion. How did this memorial become a site of significance in the American landscape? Why was this memorial made? What measures were taken by the national and local communities to ensure its completion? How did it acquire its overt themes of patriotism and remembrance? Kirk Savage offers a way to answer these questions in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*: “We must investigate who were the people represented in and by monumental space, and how they competed to construct a history in the language of sculpture and in the spotlight of the public sphere.”

The inherent desire of the nation to commemorate the tragic events of September 11 was especially poignant at the impact sites, which took on a sacred, revered meaning in the aftermath of the attacks. This rhetoric came from the inherent gravity of these sites after so many people died in the violent destruction. Savage speaks to the art of placing a “history” into the very structure of the memorial that resides in a monumental space, which will exist forever in the public eye.

The need for commemoration of Flight 93 arose almost instantly. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, the impact site became an FBI crime scene as agents scoured the terrain for parts of the plane, evidence, and remains of the 44 individuals who perished in the flames. Even as the complicated process unfolded, a small memorial constructed of hay barrels donated by a dairy farmer was erected on a slope in the field overlooking the impact site. The volunteers and first responders stacked the hay in steps, like an altar, and individuals began to leave flowers.

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wreaths, American flags, and personal items. This practice of commemoration is not a uniquely American practice, as it has long existed in other regions. For example, in Catholicism (and other traditions in South-Eastern Asia), people practice votive offerings. This practice has existed for thousands of years, and involves people leaving objects of tribute to saints in places of importance. In this context, Americans left significant and personal objects at the impact site to pay respect to the dead. Doss notes that leaving items at a memorial speaks to “the material culture of grief [which] embodies the faith that Americans place in things to negotiate complex moments and events, such as traumatic death.”

There has been a recent uptick in this practice in America that may reflect the rise of material culture in contemporary American commemoration. This practice is very evident at the Flight 93 site, not only at the temporary memorial in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, but also currently at the permanent memorial site. Over the years and to this day, visitors to the site continue to leave items behind to pay tribute to the fallen, but also to negotiate the complex pain of loss—the loss of American lives with each death leaving a web of mourning people. The tributes show a reverence for the moment of national pain derived from the heroism and sacrifice of those onboard the flight.

The hay bales eventually transformed into the temporary memorial that acted as the monument for Flight 93 until the permanent memorial was finally opened to the public in 2011. The permanent memorial came into existence as an idea and program with the passing of Public Law 107-226 by Congress on September 24, 2002. This bill created the Flight 93 Advisory Commission and Flight 93 Task Force to facilitate the search and selection of a memorial design and placed the site and future memorial under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS). By passing this law, the Federal Government sought to ensure appropriate national

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9 Thompson, *From Memory to Memorial*, 33.
assistance in the effort to make the site a national memorial. This bill also gives birth to the symbolism of the site by declaring it “a profound symbol of American patriotism” that will “honor the passengers and crew of Flight 93.” With these measures and orders, the important task of creating the memorial began. This work fell to many people, but the three main groups were the Advisory Commission, the Task Force, and Families of Flight 93.

The creation of any major memorial features a multitude of steps. The first step is determining the need for the memorial and having a group take initiative to create it. Congress took this measure by creating organizations to ensure the project became a reality with House Representative John Murtha of Pennsylvania’s 12th District and Senator Arlen Specter leading the way in the House and Senate respectively. Murtha was a longtime Democratic representative of the Pennsylvania’s 12th District, north of Somerset County, which itself is included in the 13th district. Specter was a moderate Republican, who had worked on both sides of the party line. Both politicians did not have direct roots in the local community of Somerset, but used their clout and connections to pass this bill and create the necessary administrative infrastructure for its construction. The Advisory Commission and Task Force then had to write the memorial’s mission statement, conduct a design search and selection, and produce a management plan for the future national park. These organizations accomplished these tasks while establishing a capital campaign, and land acquisition plan. They also fielded the various concerns, opinions, and input of the American public, Families of Flight 93, and the community of Somerset. Finally, after the major actors completed all these steps, the construction of the memorial began and was completed over time until each part of the entire design came into existence at the site to commemorate and honor Flight 93. The Advisory Commission broke this process into four

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phases during their first meeting on November 14, 2003: Phase I- Creating a Vision, Phase II-
Choosing a Design, Phase III- Preparing the Management Plan, and Phase IV-Implementing the
Recommendations.\textsuperscript{12} The Advisory Commission sought to complete the first three phases by the
start of 2006 to receive the proper federal funding, and provide time to acquire the land and
funds needed to complete the project before the 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of September 11. The site’s
transition to a patriotic pilgrimage site can be seen through an analysis of the first two phases of
the Memorial’s construction, the Commission’s placement of a patriotic theme, and the elevation
of the site’s heroic aura.

The Mission Statement of the Flight 93 National Memorial captures the basis of the
memorial’s goal, and represents a major step to completing the memorial. The Advisory
Commission approved the final version of the Statement on July 30, 2004 and it reads:

\begin{quote}
“A common field one day. A field of honor forever.” May all who visit this place remember the collective acts of courage and sacrifice of the passengers and crew, revere this hallowed ground as the final resting place of those heroes, and reflect on the power of individuals who choose to make a difference.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

The first line in quotation marks is the description of the site given by Captain Stephen Ruda of
the Los Angeles Fire Department, which was included on a quilt sent to the Temporary
Memorial. From this line, the rest of the Mission Statement takes shape, showing the focus of
the memorial on conveying the sacrifice of the passengers and crew made to the greater safety of
America by deciding to combat the terrorists instead of allowing them to use the plane as an
instrument of violence towards other American lives. This act of heroism made the impact site
“hallowed ground” due to their actions, but also due to the sheer destruction of the crash, which
limited the amount of human remains. After all the efforts to collect remains from the crash site,

Wallace Miller, the Somerset County coroner at the time, stated that his team could only identify a miniscule amount as 92% of the total remains had vaporized in the impact.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, the ground truly became a graveyard of the 40 passengers and crew, which the memorial aimed to protect and acknowledge through its design.

The terrorists’ remains also rest in this same place, but the legislation for the Flight 93 National Memorial states that their memory should not be included in the number of passengers and crew to be commemorated by the site. This wording and reasoning makes sense as the memorial speaks on behalf of the victimized nation, but demonstrates the inherent limitations of memorials to speak only from the perspective of their creators and not the totality of the subject. For even though the hijackers did this horrible crime, it is important to understand that the four hijackers were people too, who presumably saw their sacrifice as a step to weakening a pillar of Western domination of their homeland. This does not condone or justify their malicious actions or misguided cause, but does highlight the broad spectrum of opinions and perspectives people may share over the same site.

The selection process for the final design of the Flight 93 National Memorial was an international public competition open to any individuals who wanted to immortalize the Mission Statement in physical form. To ensure that the potential designs faced the proper amount of scrutiny from professionals, family members, and Somerset community members, the Advisory Commission and Task Force established two juries for each stage of the selection. The Stage I Jury comprised six design/architectural experts, two family members, and the Associate Regional Director of Professional Service of the NPS.\textsuperscript{15} The Stage II Jury comprised fifteen

\textsuperscript{15} “Flight 93 National Memorial International Design Competition- Stage I Jury,” \textit{National Park Service}. 
individuals including six family members, four design and art professionals, and five community and national leaders. The diversity of each stage’s jury membership allowed a wide range of opinions and voices to determine the winner by sifting through the plethora of entries in a structured manner at each stage. Moreover, each stage’s jury released a report detailing their findings, and these reports revealed the need to create a total visitor experience that would pay tribute to the legacy of Flight 93 and also the region where the plane crashed. This development arose as it became increasingly evident that the memorial had to speak to the inseparable bond between Somerset County and the legacy of Flight 93—a bond born on that day that will last forever.

The first report details the evolution of the memorial into a more intricate experience for future guests to best experience and understand the significance of Flight 93. The Stage I Jury examined the 1,011 entries submitted by a wide range of people, from flight attendants to architectural firms. The Jury convened in Somerset for three days in January 2005 to go through the various designs and select five finalists to continue onto Stage II. To complete this task the jury worked intensively the first day to select 26 designs before spending the next day visiting the site and watching a video detailing the history of Somerset County at the historic center. Though the Stage II Jury would replicate the same three-day experience of exposure and education, the Stage I Jury’s work in narrowing the field of designs revealed two important aspects for the desired memorial experience. First, the Jury noted that: “the design must not only respond to the mission statement, but also be respectful of the land and its history.”

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and patriotism of Flight 93, and also incorporate the natural and cultural aspects of the region where the plane crashed. This latter aspect arose from the bond between Flight 93 and the local land, and the Jury saw fit to facilitate the relationship in parts of the memorial. Second, the Jury realized that “major aspects of the story do not lend themselves to the ‘memorial expression’ alone, but require interpretations and presentation that would best be done in an interpretive center.” The sheer magnitude and reverence associated with the impact site and Flight 93’s legacy were too much for simple memorial expression, and the Jury saw the need for a visitor center to help tell the story of the 40 and 9/11.

The Stage II Jury met in Somerset during the first week of August 2005 to complete the selection process and announced their decision in September 2005. The Stage II Jury report set the conditions that ensured that the memorial would become a place of commemoration and reflection by ensuring the Mission Statement lived on in the design’s aesthetics and ideas. The Jury’s report stated that their main goal was to select a memorial that would “appropriately memorialize and celebrate the lives and resolve of the passengers and crew members of Flight 93 [and] continue to inform future generations of the collective action of that day.” This may seem trivial and obvious, but the implications of ensuring that a memorial actually captures its mission statement in its final design cannot be overlooked. Judith Dupré, an art historian, states that memorials “are made visible…[only] the best are redemptive, allowing us to understand the past in a way that is meaningful in the present.” Dupré implies in this point that many memorials often fail to achieve this due to limited depth and attention to important factors in

their design. The Jury achieved this form of visible redemption by placing themselves in the shoes of future visitors, exposing themselves to the proposed space, and receiving an abridged history of Somerset County. The Jury needed to do this in order to immerse themselves in the history that the future memorial had to capture, and to see how the memorial could speak to future guests. Through these actions, they saw how the design must fill the space, and expand upon the inherent reverence that made the Temporary Memorial a pilgrimage site. The Jury also acknowledged that the memorial must speak for the lives lost on United 93, and not get sidetracked by trying to speak for the other three planes that crashed. The lives of those lost had to be celebrated in the design, not just remembered, and in this unique redemptive memorial the Jury also realized that “no one design may meet all expectations, but the power of the site encompasses all. The Memorial must speak, and be understood by, the common citizen.”

The sacrifice of the 40 people aboard that plane speaks to all Americans who understand the pain and tragedy of 9/11, and this memorial needed to speak to that pain—for all those who come to seek knowledge, reflection, and meaning.

The Stage II Jury chose Paul Murdoch’s entry “The Crescent of Embrace” as the winner. The Report explains why the Jury chose Murdoch’s design, as the Jury placed great importance on how “the design addresses and resolves each step of the visitor experience, from entry to the point of arrival [with] the gentle slope and [and walkway] bridging over multiple ecological zones [that] provides not only a singular journey but also multiple pathways to the Sacred Ground.” The fusion of natural renewal and freedom of movement provided the visitor the chance to forge their own path to the Sacred Ground (the location of the impact site) by giving the visitor space to find their bearings. The Jury also commented on how the design “focuses the

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22 “Stage II Jury Report,” 12.
visitor in the empty meadow—the elegance of the void."\textsuperscript{23} Why do these attributes matter so much in the creation of a successful memorial to Flight 93? The Mission Statement includes a line stating that the memorial must “revere this hallowed ground as the final resting place of heroes.”\textsuperscript{24} For visitors to revere the place they must navigate its walkways and look upon a piece of land where all 40 heroes perished in a giant fireball. This fireball destroyed the bodies of those lost, and left no survivors. Referring to the AIDS Quilt and Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Marita Sturken comments that: “the presence of bodies is essential to the production of cultural memory.”\textsuperscript{25} There are no bodies of the perished, only the family members and the millions of visitors who will come to visit this space. Without the bodies of the dead or any survivors, the memorial must speak for the dead and relate to people affected by the moment. But, none of the affected people or visitors will ever experience the trauma of the terror attack that the memorial commemorates. Thus, the Jury realized that the memorial must accomplish more in its utilization of natural space in order to encourage the visitor to recognize the void left behind by the event, and to find beauty in this emptiness.

With a design selected, the Commission and Task Force continued their plan to complete the memorial project by completing Phase III with the submission of the General Management Plan for the future park. Upon completion of these steps, the Commission and Task Force advanced to Phase IV of their agenda, which constituted raising funds, navigating roadblocks, finalizing the memorial’s message, and bringing the design to physical form. The fundraising for the memorial came from public funding from Congress, the State and the NPS reaching over $20 million, and from a private Capital Fund, which worked to secure private donations in a variety

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 12.  
\textsuperscript{24} “Mission Statement,” 4.  
\textsuperscript{25} Marita Sturken, \textit{Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering}, (Berkeley: U of California, 1997) 12.
of forms and amounts reaching over $30 million. This expansive campaign aimed to act upon the shared patriotic sentiment of Americans towards Flight 93, and to educate people about the progress of the memorial and its amazing story. Aside from large donations from big companies and industry, the Capital Fund worked to create programs that appealed to a large audience with initiatives such as a “text to donate program” and “93 Cents for Flight 93.” Both programs demonstrate how the Commission utilized the inherent aura of Flight 93’s legacy of heroism to appeal to the American public, and to garner funding and support for the project. The texting program aimed to make small donations from the general public easy to accomplish, while the Cents program aimed to engage younger students into the effort by having schools teach the story and incorporate the program. Along with these efforts, the Fund and Communications unit built upon the idea of this location being a pilgrimage site by adding it to stops for bike and motorcycle rides such as Ride the 40 and America’s 9/11 Ride. Both groups aimed to cover large tracts of the country to pay tribute to the tragic event while raising funds and awareness for the cause of creating permanent memorials for the crash sites in Shanksville, Manhattan, and the Pentagon. By raising funds for each site, these groups sought to contribute and help each site construct its own memorial with its own, unique narrative appropriate for the local community. These initiatives showed how the memorial gained traction and funding, based on the theme of patriotism, to enable its completion.

Despite such momentum and the evident desire to create a physical memorial, the Flight 93 National Memorial did face two major roadblocks that slowed its progress and completion.

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26 Lauren Ingle, “Families of Flight 93 Heroes Call for Additional Funding,” Fox News, 30 March 2011.
The first hindrance came in the acquisition of the lands needed for the construction of the memorial, which required the joint effort of Task Force, NPS, Families of 93, and the Department of the Interior to acquire the eight parcels of land from the eight local owners. Though this problem seems trivial, it is important to note that continued resistance to the acquisition of the lands escalated from 2006-2009, particularly with Svonavec Inc., the owner of the 275-acre parcel that included the impact site. The local coal company proved to embody American greed and opportunity by seeking $23 million dollars for the land due to its monetary value and the possibility of making a profit from a memorial on the site.\(^{29}\) This friction led to the Temporary Memorial being moved farther away from the site in July 2008, and the NPS threatening to condemn the land.\(^{30}\) With patience wearing thin and the 10\(^{th}\) anniversary of September 11 getting closer, the Families of 93 and the Commission looked to the Department of Interior to resolve the issue. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar came to Somerset in the summer of 2009 and negotiated with all eight parties to come to agreements, including Svonavec, who agreed to defer to federal court to determine their compensation for the land.\(^{31}\)

The second roadblock came in the form of right wing bloggers and some family members arguing that Murdoch’s design was a tribute to Islam. This anti-Islam controversy came into the public sphere in 2006, and gained momentum in the far right due to the efforts of Alec Rawls, a radical right wing blogger.\(^{32}\) Rawls called the design “the Crescent of Betrayal” and stated the design looked like the crescent and star found on many Islamic nations’ flags, incorporated

\(^{32}\) Ironically, Alec is the son of noted liberal philosopher John Rawls, though the younger Rawls has not gained the same level of respect and universal acclaim.
geometric symmetry found in mosques, and pointed towards Mecca. These claims sparked outrage and gained more traction as Tom Burnett Sr. (the father of passenger Tom Burnett Jr. who served on the Stage II Jury) voiced his own disdain for the design due to its similarity to the crescent and star. With these claims, Murdoch changed the name of the bowl’s design to the “Field of Honor” thus removing the word crescent from the memorial, and the NPS funded and released a comprehensive rebuttal of Rawls’ claims. Released in 2007, this “White Sheet” included a summary of the efforts to select an appropriate design, defended Murdoch’s design, and included statements from a geospatial professor at the University of Texas at Austin, religion professor at the Indiana University Bloomington, and a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that thoroughly refute each of Rawls’ claims. These professors condemned Rawls’ report at multiple junctures by showing that his calculations were not conclusive or unique to the memorial’s orientation, stating that the crescent is not a universal sign of Islam, and calling his report “quite racist.” Rawls’ claims fed a divisive fight amongst those supporting and contesting Murdoch’s design despite these measures, culminating in a fiery exchange at the public forums of the Commission meeting on August 8, 2008. Rawls attended this meeting to confront the NPS and Commission over his claims in a last attempt to stop the design’s future construction.

Joanne Hanley, who was the NPS Superintendent of Western Pennsylvania, set the tone for the forum by responding to threats against her and accusations of her tainting the legacy of Flight 93 to which she replied: “we have nothing to hide; we are built on a strong foundation”

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33 Alec Rawls, “The Crescent of Betrayal: Dishonoring the Heroes of Flight 93.”
that came from taking years to come together before choosing the design. Building on this powerful claim, Carole O’Hare, a family member who served on the Stage I Jury, remarked that Rawls reminded her of the French proverb: he who seeks evil will find it. Given the NPS report and thorough efforts of the Juries to select an appropriate design, Rawls’ claims seemed to come from a place of ignorance and hatred of Muslims. Two other family members gave powerful rebuttals to these hateful claims. David Beamer spoke out directly against Rawls’ obsessive behavior in undermining the beautiful design. He lamented that even though their sons stood united on that fateful morning, the two of them stood opposed to one another in the moment because Burnett stood opposed to the design and progress due to toxic reasoning from the ignorant rhetoric prescribed by Rawls. Christine Fraser concluded the forum by lamenting this harmful perspective, and the escalation of misplaced hate. These statements paint the difficulty of commemoration in the modern era where conspirators and hateful people can gain traction due to the ease of communication. Moreover, the Rawls’ controversy gave right wing zealots the opportunity to expand upon the rising Islamophobia sentiment in the United States towards 2010, and gave rise to a radical front that attached itself to the new wave of nationalism that culminated in the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Despite these roadblocks the memorial continued its journey to completion, but its legacy will be partly shaped by related headlines found in the national media.

The design process continued following the end of the controversy and acquisition of the lands needed to construct the memorial. The groundbreaking began with a formal ceremony on November 7, 2009. This ceremony officially launched the Commission’s three-phase plan to ensure the completion of the project in a timely manner to meet the 10th and 15th anniversaries of

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September 11. The plan broke the first phase into three subcategories: 1A-Sacred Ground and Field of Honor with needed roads and parking, 1B-Portal Walls/Flight Path, Overlook, 40 Groves, Exhibits, Visitor Center, and 1C-Route 30 Intersection, Entrance, and main Approach Road. The second phase consisted of the Walkway around the Field of Honor, Tower of Voices, and Reforestation/Succession Planting. The third and final phase would complete more roadways to assist with traffic flow to and from the Sacred Ground. Features of the first phase were completed for the 10th anniversary, including the parts around the impact site delineating the Sacred Ground. The Visitor Center and Flight Path were completed by the 15th anniversary, and the Tower of Voices is currently under construction. This slow, methodical development of the memorial has led to a labored unfolding of the entire visitor experience, which both the Stage I and Stage II Juries found to be essential to capturing the total message of Flight 93’s legacy. Namely, this slow development allowed the Commission to conduct a study that created the major themes of the exhibits and presentation of the NPS staff and visitor center to ensure the total experience spoke to patriotic sacrifice, rather than only emphasizing the tragic loss of life.

The Commission had launched efforts to capture data from a large audience in a variety of forms to best help determine the themes of the memorial. These efforts included the Oral History project intended to record interviews with family members, first responders, and community members; conversation circles with visitors to the Temporary Memorial; the collection of Tribute Comment Cards left at the Temporary Memorial; and meaning-making conversations with Ambassadors of the Temporary Memorial. Each of these sources provided

38 The Ambassadors served an important role in helping tell the story of Flight 93 at the Temporary Memorial and consisted of volunteers from the local community and volunteer Park Rangers.
insight into how the public and individuals closest to the tragedy related to the site and history of September 11 and Flight 93. The study took random samplings from the mass collections to establish the themes: 10% of the Oral Histories, 24 conversation circles representing 3% of visitors during four days in 2008, 11% of the cards collected between 2003-2007, and 2 focus groups representing half the ambassadors who attended an event in 2007. With this wide sampling, the study determined the main interpretive themes were: Larger Disaster Averted, Heroism, Exemplary Response, and Patriotism. The sub themes were: Shock, Sadness and Trauma, Coming Together, Never Forget, and Collective Vulnerability and Loss. All of these themes lend to the commemoration and legacy of Flight 93, and this study cemented their role in both the exhibit’s spaces and in the language of the Park Rangers’ planned presentations at the Sacred Ground. These themes provide the following narrative to the memorial: The passengers and crew gave their lives heroically to protect America in an act of true patriotism to which the community and nation responded in an exemplary manner. And from that moment, the American people came together from their shared shock and trauma, and will never forget the pain and heroism of that time. With the themes included in the memorial, the site has become a destination for more and more tourists seeking to understand the history of Flight 93, and to pay tribute to those heroes.

The creation of the permanent memorial and its imminent completion speaks to the efforts of countless people to secure the legacy of Flight 93. This effort created the desired emphasis upon the implicit importance and weight of the impact site to help teach the thousands of Americans who visit the site. At one of the closing meetings of the Commission in 2012, a

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report stated that nearly 1,900,000 people had visited the site since 2001, with close to 900,000 of these guests coming to visit the Temporary Memorial.\textsuperscript{41} This desire to visit the site comes from a reverence of the heroes of Flight 93. Former Superintendent Hanley stated that it is “the purity of this pilgrimage that testifies so eloquently to the strength of these peaceful fields” of the site.\textsuperscript{42} This pilgrimage to the Flight 93 National Memorial brings thousands of people to the local community of Somerset County and the town of Shanksville. This community is connected to the legacy of Flight 93 in a unique manner, and shares a bond with the memorial to this day.

Section II- Somerset County and 9/11

Driving along Route 30 from the town of Somerset to the Flight 93 National Memorial, one sees an eye-catching billboard. The sign depicts an airplane flying over Jesus Christ, with an American flag backdrop of stars and strips, and reads: “Flight 93 Born Hero’s Gave Their Lives to Save Lives/ Life is a Precious Gift, Save God’s UnBorn Hero’s/ America Must End the Terror of Abortion.” The billboard is riddled with grammatical and spelling errors, and bears no organization’s name. In fact it appears improvised and hand painted—sculpted out of wood with unrefined shaping. Moreover, its message of pro-life rhetoric is clear. The wording of the phrase combines the legacy of Flight 93’s patriotic heroism with a very Christian viewpoint on the debate about abortion by equating the act of abortion to terrorism, and juxtaposing the imagery of Jesus, Flight 93, and American symbolism. Moreover, implied in this viewpoint is that such ‘terrorism’ against life deprives the world of unborn heroes, people who could grow to act in the same way the passengers and crew of Flight 93 did.

This type of billboard does not exist on the roads leading to the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum in Manhattan or on the road to view the 9/11 Memorial at the Pentagon. This type of politically and emotionally driven message is seen in such a prominent place in a county defined by its rural, middle-America values and postindustrial landscape where progressive ideals do not appeal to the majority of the populace. This billboard evokes many questions surrounding the legacy of Flight 93 in relation to conservative political rhetoric, but also about Somerset County itself: How did 9/11 affect the community? How does the community relate to the legacy of Flight 93 and the National Memorial? And how does the community’s conservative ideals and current political and economic atmosphere shape its relationship to 9/11?

43 Appendix, Image I.
Before answering these questions, it is important to return to the definition of conservative expressed in the introduction. This usage of the word connects to the ideals of American political conservatism that have become synonymous with the Republican Party in the contemporary era, and Somerset County Pennsylvania has become a “red” county. United Flight 93 crashed in a field near the town of Shanksville, which is in Stonycreek Township of Somerset County. It is important to note how this town relates to the crash, but the town has a population of only about 300 people so the data must be taken from the surrounding county. Somerset County itself rests in the southwestern part of the state in rolling hills and mountains touching the Maryland border, and Pittsburgh is the closest metropolitan center. The county seat is in the town of Somerset, which straddles Interstate 76, with a large plaza of motels and fast food restaurants that service the droves of travelers and truckers making their trips across the state.

The census data of Somerset County reveals its nature as a stronghold of conservative values and postindustrial America. With a population of 76,617 people, the county is sparsely populated, and with a median age of 45, a 0.1% reduction in the annual employment rate, and a population that is 95% Caucasian, Somerset County fits the description of a rust belt county. The average age in the county is about five years above that of the rest of the state (40) and almost eight years above the national average (37.8), which suggests a flight of the younger population in the face of adverse economic opportunity. The aging county’s main sources of employment rest in healthcare and social assistance (17%), manufacturing (12%), and retail trade (12%) with the traditional employment centers of mining (3%) and agriculture (3%) having waned in the region and nation as whole. These factors have helped lead the county to grasp

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44 Data-USA, “Somerset County, PA/ USA/ Pennsylvania Comparison,” Data-USA. 2018.
45 Ibid.
on to conservative ideals in the hope of returning to the economic successes and comforts of the
mid-to-late 20th century.

The county also has a large population of veterans from the Vietnam War (2,368) plus a
decent number from the Korean War (683) and the ongoing campaigns in the Middle East (650).
These numbers speak to the former ideal of blue collar towns sending generations of young men
to fight America’s campaigns across the globe, and is evidenced by the numerous memorials to
former American wars that surround the county courthouse (built in 1906) in downtown
Somerset, including memorials to the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.46 These
memorials riddle the front green space of the courthouse and reflect the generations of men from
the area who served and lost their lives for their country. There is also an armory and National
Guard center near the regional Somerset County airport that underlines the ongoing commitment
of the population to defending the nation, and finding escape and economic gain through this
military service. This tradition of military service and adherence to conservative ideals makes
Somerset County an ideal location for the site of patriotic pilgrimage as it has embraced the
theme of the Flight 93 National Memorial.

Somerset County not only fits the description of a red county through its various census
statistics, but also in its election record from the past four presidential elections, wherein the
entire county voted in favor of the Republican candidate. In 2004 the county voted in favor of
George W. Bush (65%),47 in 2008 for John McCain (62%),48 in 2012 for Mitt Romney
(70.7%),49 and in 2016 for Donald J. Trump (76.5%).50 These results favoring the Republican

46 Appendix, Images 2-5
47 Cable News Network, “2004 Presidential Election Results,” CNN.
49 Politico, "Pennsylvania Election Results 2012: President Live Map by County, Real-Time
Voting Updates," Election Hub, Politico.
candidates increased over time as more progressive political agendas shaped the economic climate and interest shifted more towards clean energy and the development of jobs in other markets, as the former coal mining centers declined. The people of Somerset County voiced their opinion through their vote, and the local newspaper, The *Daily American*, captured the sentiment of the community in the aftermath of the elections. Following the 2008 and 2012 victories by Barack Obama, the paper ran stories calling into question the validity of the electoral college in regards to fairly capturing the will of the American voter, and a piece calling for action from elected officials in Congress and the White House. When Donald Trump won, the newspaper ran two pieces titled: “Silent Majority” and “Higher Turnout Favors GOP.” The first short piece reflects the sentiment of the rust belt and the political environment following the shocking victory by Trump, highlighting the power of Trump to overcome his critics and appeal to a large audience of voters with his promises to undo the hindrances in the government. The piece cites in particular, the frustrations felt by the local “silent majority” in response to the government’s perceived handcuffing of the coal industry. The second article simply emphasizes the GOP’s dominance of the Election Day and the County’s attachment to the Republican ideology. Based on these numbers and opinions, it is clear that Somerset County is red, but the resulting, thus far muted, influence of the Trump administration upon the coal industry reveals how the County is still defined and hamstrung by its overwhelming economic challenges.

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51 The *Daily American* is the main local newspaper of Somerset County with a circulation of 12,724 within the county. While driving around the area, I noticed many yellow *Daily American* paper boxes attached to mailbox posts such as in Appendix Image 6. The paper will be used further to provide insight into the public feeling and opinion of the county.
President Trump’s promises to reinvent the coal industry and provide new jobs for counties like Somerset have been mostly hollow, and serve to undermine the reality of the situation. For example, the Acosta Deep Mine opened in the first year of the Trump administration, and is the first mine to open in six years. This mine harkens back to the former period of resounding success of the coal industry, and gave President Trump a victory wherein he proclaimed: “To the miners of Somerset, I want you to know…as long as I am the president of your great country…I am fighting for you.” However, the true economic impact of this mine is relatively small, as it will only produce 70 new jobs according to the parent company, Costa Coal, and Pennsylvania contributed $3 million to the total $15 million dollars needed to open the operation. Moreover, 85 percent of the coal extracted will not be sent to domestic steel production, but instead to India, Korea, Europe, and the Middle East. This mine does not represent the future of change, or a return to the true stability and lucrative nature of domestic coal and steel production of the 20th century. Instead it speaks to the continuing pain of the county, where the young population is still fleeing to find opportunities to work. The average income per house is approximately $44,750, about $11,000 below the national average, and the prospect of new job creation appears to be bleak at best. In contrast to the return of coal, a wind turbine farm launched in 2011, and began operation in 2012 with a promise of $12 million dollars to be paid to state, local townships, and 4 local school districts. But, this 68-wind turbine farm only provides 11 full-time jobs for operation and maintenance, and bears no promise of further expansion in the future.

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56 Ibid.
57 Data-USA, “Somerset County, 2018.”
Thus, Somerset County is not a major economic powerhouse, or a place of significant political or cultural importance on its own merit. It has been, for the most part, a place for travelers to stop on their journeys to other destinations, and one of gradual economic decline, or a place where people seek a quieter, rural life. When Flight 93 crashed into a field and grove of trees right outside Shanksville, this part of the country became the topic of prominent national and international discussion, and the community changed forever due to its inseparable bond with the tragedy. The impact site, now the location of the permanent memorial, was a former strip mine and failed farm, and the wind farm is now visible along the horizon from the memorial. The history of the County and the history of Flight 93 are interlaced, and as noted in Section I, the design of the permanent memorial had to account for this bond. This relationship arose from the community’s willingness to help during the tragedy, to attach itself to the commemoration effort, and to now exist in tandem with the Flight 93 National Memorial.

The immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 drastically changed the local landscape and mindset of the community. The *Daily American*’s front page on September 11, 2001 featured articles discussing an upgrade of the Somerset school’s communication system, a joining of water authorities, and citizen’s concerns about public sewerage.58 The concerns of this community were synonymous with small town America, with each little town functioning within their realm of reality: new local government developments, schools changing, and citizens voicing their concern over small happenings. The same front page features a scenic photo of a small barn and trees turning to yellow and orange with the caption ‘The Start of Autumn.’ This picture captures the true serenity of this part of the world—concerned with its own local issues, the environment still hinged on its rural, quiet roots. The next day the *Daily American*’s front page featured articles discussing an upgrade of the Somerset school’s communication system, a joining of water authorities, and citizen’s concerns about public sewerage.

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page transformed drastically with the headlines reading: “America Under Siege,” “Terror Touches Somerset County,” and “Terrorists Attack NY, Pentagon.” Articles also pointed to the attacks as a foreign assault that had to be avenged, with stories speaking to President’s Bush desire to seek justice, the case being formed around Osama Bin Laden, and the need to accept the threat of foreign terrorism as the norm of life. These stories come from a place of pain and panic in the haze of the local damage and impact following the incident, and feed into the community’s understanding of the attack.

More importantly, these *Daily American* issues speak to the impact on the local community and its response. The attacks caused local businesses and schools around Somerset to close, and also invoked a large national investigation that involved the efforts of local volunteers and first responders to provide support in securing and searching the crash site. An article detailing the “outpouring” of community service ran on September 13, 2001, and speaks to the various efforts by the local Shanksville Fire Department and Somerset Chamber of Commerce in wanting to assist the families of victims with food, shelter, etc. to reinforce that Somerset is a “caring community.” The community did rise to the challenge, with tremendous care and tact in the face of the tragedy, assisting the efforts at the crash site and supporting the mourning families.

The Somerset community embraced their duty and showed great poise in handling the traumatic event, and Dr. Glenn J. Kashurba captured a large number of first hand accounts that demonstrated the true patriotism of the place. Kashurba was a member of the community at the time, and worked as a psychologist in the region when he decided he needed to collect

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information from people to honor this transformative period of American history. Kashurba’s book is titled *Courage After the Crash* and was published in 2002, including a wide range of oral and pictorial accounts from the Somerset community dealing with the tragedy of Flight 93. Kashurba dedicated the book to the remembrance of the actions of the flight and crew of Flight 93, to the efforts of Somerset County, and to remind readers that “the first battle of the war on terrorism did not take place in Afghanistan, it took place over the skies of Pennsylvania.”61 Filled with the rich accounts of first responders, citizens, and prominent members of the community, the book displays how the community absorbed the trauma and worked to demonstrate its strength. On September 14, 2001, the community held a memorial service at the Somerset County courthouse, where five thousand people came to show respect for the sacrifice of the heroes and in support of their families. Somerset County Judge Kim Gibson recalled that after the ceremony he “felt proud of our community. Even though it was a terrible occurrence, it really showed how people here care about other people, and how they care about our county. This is a very patriotic area.”62

Judge Gibson captures the sentiment of the community in these words by reflecting on the united work in helping to quell the trauma and show patriotic strength, both themes indicative of the legacy of Flight 93. The members of the community also harbored hatred towards the terrorists and their legacy by wishing vengeance for the families of the lost heroes. John Peters of the Somerset Community Planning Commission wished “each one of these people (the family) could get a hold of one of these terrorists.”63 Peters wished the family could channel his own hate and anger through physical violence against terrorists. Aside from communal feelings

62 Ibid., 76.
63 Ibid., 77.
of unity, patriotism and hate, the county did see many individuals perform above and beyond the expected in the goal of helping the families in the aftermath of the crash. There may be no better example than Somerset Coroner Wallace Miller, who worked tirelessly to help identify and divide the 8 percent of human remains found at the crash site, living in one of his funeral homes for months after the crash so he could be closer to the crash site and morgue. Miller worked to ensure he could send the families any parts of their loved ones he could identify, so they could lay them to rest, and through this tireless work, he formed a bond with the families. In an interview before the 10th anniversary of the tragedy, Miller noted he still received Christmas cards from the families and felt a strong tie to the sacred space and history of the event.

Somerset County changed in the wake of 9/11.

Somerset County’s population played a large role in ensuring that the legacy of Flight 93 received the proper memorialization and recognition it deserved during the ten-year period from the crash to the opening of the permanent memorial. This work manifested itself in volunteer activity at the Temporary Memorial, the hosting of annual ceremonies, and the creation of a small web of local memorials to Flight 93. The work of running the Temporary Memorial fell to National Park Service Volunteers. These “ambassadors” came from the local area and worked without pay to ensure the site was properly protected, and to assist visitors in understanding the history of the moment. Along with this effort, locals helped run annual ceremonies to honor the dead and to provide the families a public forum of acknowledgement and recognition in a variety of ways. In 2003 the Somerset community established a Memorial Grove to honor and pay tribute to the heroism of the 40 passengers and crew, and held a dedication ceremony on

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64 Thompson, From Memory to Memorial, 18.
September 11 to read the names lost, and to toll a bell for each member. A tradition also formed of having a wreath-laying ceremony at the Temporary Memorial to allow families and members of the community to come together near the sacred space, and this event drew politicians such as the Governor of Pennsylvania (Ed Rendell-Democrat), House and Senate representatives (Bill Shuster-Republican, Pennsylvania’s 9th District), and the Secretary of Home Security (Tom Ridge-Republican) to speak and show shared strength. The planned event included public shuttles to transport people to the site, allowing many more people to attend without causing too much traffic or chaos, and always included the respectful reading of the names and tolling of the bell. This event connected the interests of the local community and NPS at the memorial site to commemorate the event by allowing the public to participate in a ceremonial acknowledgment of the passengers’ death and sacrifice. The repeated action of acknowledging those lost and paying tribute with flowers, oratory, and new traditions allowed the community to come together to remember the moment of loss, but also to express their communal strength and unity in the face of such daunting tragedy.

Somerset also saw a large number of smaller memorials come into creation during this period. The Flight 93 Memorial Chapel, created through the generosity of donors and the willpower of the late Reverend Alphonse T. Mascherino in 2003, is an old building converted into a place of patriotic remembrance endowed with Christian ideology. The site captures the very Christian sentiment of the community, with its fusion of commemoration with Christian practice, as the community is a largely Protestant community (though the Chapel performed Catholic Mass as well as non-denominational services). During the absence of the permanent

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67 Thompson, *From Memory to Memorial*, 76.
memorial, the Chapel performed its own remembrance ceremonies, drawing hundreds of attendants from the local community, family members of Flight 93 passengers, and people visiting the area for the annual ceremony at temporary memorial, who gathered in the Chapel’s small space to observe the loss of life and heroic sacrifice through the lens of Christianity. The Chapel is a very simple white, wooden church with a small bell tower that bears no grandeur on its exterior, but some beauty in its interior. This memorial conveys the conservative values of the community, and stands as an example of American reliance on Christian symbols to show strength and reverence (a large wooden cross stood erect at the Temporary Memorial, although now the permanent memorial is devoid of such overt Christian symbolism). The Chapel site also is home to a black marble memorial to the Flight 93 crew donated in 2006 by the CAUSE Foundation, an organization created to assist United Airlines crewmembers and their families. The memorial bears the visages, names, and rank of the crew members on a central statue topped with a plane, and has four benches surrounding it with the names of the passengers and the message: “A grateful nation will forever honor the courage and patriotism of the Flight 93 passengers.” The memorial creates a pleasing contrast to the white chapel, and offers a place of solace and contemplation of their sacrifice. Along with the CAUSE Memorial, the yard of the Chapel also harbors a piece of steel taken from the Twin Tower wreckage, cut out to read “UA 93” that was donated by the New Jersey Transit Authority in 2006. The metal cut out also features smaller cut outs that read “9/11, WTC, VA, PA” thus paying tribute to all the sites affected by the attacks. Thus this site became a secondary site of commemoration to the

68 Appendix, Image 7.
69 Kashurba, Courage After the Crash, 91.
70 Appendix, Images 8-12.
71 One can also note the 9 of UA 93 has a pentagon shaped cutout to pay tribute to the Pentagon.
72 Appendix, Image 13.
tragedy of 9/11, and allowed various agencies and the community to gather a random collection of donated memorial tributes in a place where people could venture to find meaning and solace while the permanent memorial came into creation.

The Temporary Memorial closed in 2011, but the Chapel and its other two accompanying memorials still exist on the corner of two farm roads near Shanksville, though the sites have faded from relevance in the wake of the opening of the Flight 93 National Memorial. There are still signs that point to the Chapel from Route 30 along the way to the permanent memorial, but the site seems forgotten and not as important as it once was. During the waiting period these sites provided a location for pilgrims who sought to find places where they could pay tribute. The small town of Shanksville had also added new street signs with American flag backdrops and changed their town sign to pay tribute to Flight 93, and the entry road to the Temporary Memorial used to bring visitors closer to the town. This connection had brought people to the space, and made the community feel a profound connection to Flight 93’s legacy. Now, visitors never have to drive past the Chapel site, or through the barren town to view the National Memorial. The street signs have faded with time, matching the continued deterioration of the community in the face of ever-rising economic despair.

A former editor of the Daily American, Jim Oliver, stated in 2002 in an interview with Kashurba: “I don’t think Somerset has changed all that much. Shanksville has changed forever. That will never be the same. That community was off the beaten path and now the beaten path is right through it.” Oliver’s words failed to recognize the coming future, as the community of Somerset and Shanksville became forever linked to Flight 93 and altered by this relationship. Initially the residents harbored the patriotism of the heroes through continued

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73 Appendix, Image 14 and 15
74 Kashurba, Courage After the Crash, 176.
thought and sustained efforts to commemorate the history, but as time has passed and the National Memorial came into existence, the local community began to fade more and more from the narrative. Somerset still serves as a place of rest for weary travelers, visitors to the region, and also sometimes to pilgrims of the Flight 93 memorial, but its earlier standing as centers of commemoration has faded with the completion and success of the permanent memorial.
Section III- Patriotic Remembrance and War

On November 8, 2001, President George W. Bush gave a speech addressing the entire nation from Atlanta, Georgia. The speech updated the public on the unfolding war on terror, and America’s need to defend itself in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Bush acknowledged the need for the United States to go to war against terrorism: “we wage a war to save civilization itself. We did not seek it, but we will fight it, and we will prevail.”75 Bush concluded the speech by discussing the patriotism and heroism of the passengers and crew of Flight 93, focusing on their decision to retaliate against the terrorists and thwart their malicious intentions of taking more American lives in an attack on Washington, D.C. He stated that it was courage and optimism that led the heroic passengers and crew to make the correct decision, and that Americans needed to follow their path in the coming struggle. Bush called this moment the first battle in the war on terror, and called on Americans to follow the valor and strength of those fallen heroes by closing with the phrase: “Let’s Roll.”76

Todd Beamer Jr. said these words as the passengers charged the cockpit, and the phrase comes from one of the last recorded communications of Flight 93, which were collected from passenger’s phone communications and placed into the public record. Bush used these words to further entwine the legacy of Flight 93 with the coming war on terror. With a heightened intelligence initiative and a military campaign raging in Afghanistan, Bush eventually spurred America into a formal war with Iraq in 2003. In 2001, Bush dubbed the United States an agent of good fighting a war against terrorism, which sought to harm lives and destroy the pillars of national identity. Yet, the eventual legacy of this war is not one of America’s triumph, but one of lasting pain, loss, and futility as the war on terror still rages and both Iraq and Afghanistan

76 Ibid.
remain devastated war zones. Though America’s degree of direct involvement has changed over the past 15 years, it is important to note that the legacy of Flight 93 and September 11 have become connected to the legacies of the Iraq War and the war on terror—connected in their rhetoric of fighting back against terror to protect America and its values. Moreover, this connection of narratives has fed into a more militarized perspective on Flight 93 that begets a more militaristic and perhaps even “wartime propaganda” view of Flight 93’s history.

The National Flight 93 Memorial strives to capture and commemorate this history through its various physical elements and presentation of facts in its displays and staff presentations. But even as the memorial transitioned from conceptualization to actuality, the legacy of Flight 93 was used to help ignite the fire that fueled America’s wars in Iraq and against terrorism, politicizing its history of patriotic sacrifice. Communities utilize history to achieve political goals in contemporary society, and historian Peter Novick addresses this subject in his book *The Holocaust in American Life*. The politicization of history serves as a main point of Novick’s study, which examines the rise of the Holocaust’s relevance in contemporary American culture in the second half of the 20th century. Novick’s work addresses the complexities of how the Holocaust came to be used in the political discourse of American life by Jewish communities from relative silence following World War II to an increased relevance in the late 1960s during Israel’s military campaigns and in forming identity politics for Jewish Americans in the 1980s and 1990s. In the immediate wake of WWII, the Holocaust did not share a prominent place in American history, but it became politicized by groups to help progress political agendas. Though Novick’s work deals with a history far different than that of September 11, his clear understanding of cultural memory and cultural identity can help preface a discussion of how

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Flight 93’s legacy became politicized to serve the Bush Administration’s agenda in initiating campaigns against foreign agents and countries to avenge the attacks of 9/11 and to demonstrate American might.

The nation state, as Anderson explains, is an imagined community bonded through a shared common language, sources of identity, and history. Novick states that: “Collective memory simplifies; it sees events from a single committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes.” The United States has created a collective memory of September 11 and Flight 93, and this collective memory hinges on the main themes of being attacked, patriotic heroism, profound loss of American life, and a violation of national security. Novick further states that collective memory and collective identity have a circular relationship wherein certain memories claim a central role to expressing that identity. Thus, by adopting Flight 93 as a collective memory, America has produced a central memory that speaks to patriotic heroism and unified action against the threat of terrorism. This threat of terrorism resulted in the loss of American life on September 11, but after 9/11 terrorism came to embody a threat to the essential values of American life. President Bush and his Administration politicized the collective memory of September 11 to justify wars against particular agents of terror and oppression through speeches like the one noted above. Through this type of political leveraging, the legacy of Flight 93 will forever be marked by the shadows of the Iraq War and various endeavors to combat the foreign terror threat.

President Bush achieved this result through his elevated public popularity in the wake of September 11 and the fact that these attacks resulted in loss of life and property, but also constituted an attack on national identity. According to Frank P. Harvey in *Explaining the Iraq*

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War, President Bush benefited from the “rally-around-the-flag effect” in which the president usually receives widespread public and congressional support in moments of national crisis.\footnote{Frank P. Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 187.} This elevation of popularity saw President Bush receive a 90% approval rating following September 11, and a 75% approval rating following the start of the Iraq War, across multiple rating systems (Gallup, AP, CNN, Newsweek, Fox, etc.).\footnote{Ibid.,182.} With this rise in public image and prowess, President Bush’s decisions and words carried more weight in forming public policy and opinion.

In the wake of September 11, President Bush preached religious tolerance and mutual respect of non-violent Muslims and Arab-Americans as he attempted to divide the radical, misguided usage of Islam by terrorist groups from the larger community of non-harmful Islam in the United States and around the world. This divide fed into Bush’s framing of September 11 as an attack on values and traditions that define American national identity.\footnote{Joseph Margulies, *What Changed When Everything Changed: 9/11 and the Making of National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) 125.} On September 20, 2001, President Bush gave a speech wherein he reflected on this framework, stating that America is “in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith.”\footnote{Ibid.,133.} It would be wrong to persecute people for their religious beliefs in a nation founded on the principles of religious freedom, so President Bush preached for understanding to best protect American values while he continued to vilify the foreign agents of violence and hate that led to the destructive climax of the terrorist attacks of September 11. With this framework, President Bush achieved his political goals and launched the United States into conflicts that are still
dictating American foreign policy to this day. More importantly, the politicization of Flight 93 in helping to achieve these goals linked it to the conservative agenda and to the eventual repercussions of galvanizing a war on an ambiguous enemy: terror.

One such fallout of this politicization of cultural memory comes in the various forms of Islamophobia that have risen in the United States in the 21st century. Despite President Bush’s attempts to differentiate radical terrorists who justify their violence through Islam from American Arabs and non-violent Muslims, some Americans have developed and fostered a hate of Muslims and Arab-Americans due to a perceived “us versus them” rhetoric derived from “Othering” the terror threat as foreign bodies. This type of radical conservative rhetoric leads to bigoted attacks on people and ideals deemed to be Muslim. Alec Rawls’ accusations, as noted in Section I, demonstrate how this type of ignorance fed on the sentiments of Americans in order to create division, even in a forum committed to the remembrance of American heroes. The Rawls example also directly affected the development of the Flight 93 National Memorial, but there have been far worse hate-based crimes against Arab-Americans and Muslims in the United States following September 11.

Nicoletta Karam compiled ten years worth of data and instances of these hate crimes in her book *The 9/11 Backlash*. This book examines the various hate crimes that came after 9/11, which included threats, damage of property, and murder. Karam asserts that this harmful backlash came in a perfect storm of government inaction and xenophobia from deep-seated sentiments of Islamophobia. These feelings amongst a number of Americans were triggered by the terrorist attack and concomitant war on terror. There are too many instances to highlight in this essay, but there is one murder following 9/11 worth acknowledging. Karam explores the

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murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi, who died on September 15, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona.\textsuperscript{85} Sodhi was a middle-aged Sikh gas attendant who was shot down at his work by a man who highly vocalized his bias-based motives in the ensuing aftermath and trial. Sikhs are not members of Islam, but also wear turbans and in the case of Sodhi, often times have similar skin tone to people haling from the Middle East. This further emphasizes the xenophobic nature of Sodhi’s murder, and the ignorance behind these violent actions against innocent people. Sodhi’s death gained national attention due to the hateful nature of the killing and its timing after the terrorist attacks, which highlights the still malicious environment of hateful sentiments in America after 9/11. This type of hate does not reflect the majority of the nation, nor does it speak directly to the memory of Flight 93, but this violent history has become connected with the legacy of September 11 and is important to acknowledge when speaking of this tragedy.

At the root of this hate and violent military campaigns waged by the United States was the death of many Americans on September 11 in Manhattan, the Pentagon, and Shanksville. Along with the 40 passengers and crew of Flight 93, 2,937 Americans lost their lives on that fateful morning along with the 19 hijackers.\textsuperscript{86} This loss of American life allowed the actions of the Bush administration to institute security actions across the nation to go unopposed. It also created public fervor amongst the majority of the nation for a war abroad in the name of bringing justice and freedom to people outside of America, people who do not have the same legacy of American liberties and values. These campaigns were fought to unseat the perceived agents of oppression in each country such as Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. It is a tragedy that so many innocent and brave Americans perished during the attacks and ensuing rescue efforts in the World Trade Center, but the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have only led to the loss of more

\textsuperscript{85} Karam, \textit{The 9/11 Backlash}, 218.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{The 9/11 Commission Report}.
American lives. To date, 4,411 American soldiers have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom and 2,216 have died in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.\(^{87}\) Along with these causalities, there have been over 50,000 reported cases of soldiers wounded in action in both campaigns, and while these are professional soldiers dying in the line of duty for a cause they believe, there have also been astronomical numbers of civilian casualties in both nations due to the attrition and length of the wars. The Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University places the estimate at 165,000 Iraqi civilian deaths during the period of 2003-2015 due to direct US military impact while an estimated 31,000 Afghani have died violent deaths from the war.\(^{88}\) These numbers are only estimates due to the lack of proper data collection in both countries during the campaigns, and another comprehensive study points to the number of Iraqi deaths ranging from 405,000-500,000.\(^{89}\) These numbers do not show the number of civilians wounded physically and scarred mentally for life, which the Watson Institute estimates is extremely high. These wars have brought further suffering to the world, and author David Simpson addresses this problem in his cultural analysis of September 11.

Simpson’s approach to the commemoration of September 11 grounds itself in a far more expansive, liberal perspective that provides a far different angle of politicizing Flight 93. Simpson views the escalation of the war in Iraq with shock and criticism: “In less than two years we went from the fall of the Twin Towers and the attack on the Pentagon to the invasion of Iraq, a process marked by propagandist compression and manufactured consent so audacious as to

\(^{87}\) Department of Defense, Causality Report, 19 March 2018.  
\(^{88}\) Watson Institute, Costs of War: Civilians (Afghanistan and Iraq), March 2015.  
seem unbelievable, except that it happened." Simpson acknowledges the surreal speed of America’s transition from ailing nation dealing directly with the threat and presence of terrorists to invading and capturing a nation in the region on weak evidence of weapons of mass destruction. With the addition of war in Iraq, the United States waged war against multiple enemies, and brought further death to the world. This type of intervention became justified in the wake of the loss and damage of September 11 due to the narrative of bringing freedom to oppressed people and justice to their oppressors—delineating Bush’s original call for war against terrorism to a broader spectrum of injustice. Simpson calls the Iraq War an “unjustified and internationally condemned military and political adventurism that not only arguably dishonors the dead in profound ways but also endangers the living across much of the world.” His description sheds a dark light on the campaigns conducted in the name of protecting America and its values of freedom, democracy, and justice.

In contrast to using Flight 93 to invoke valor and honor in the name of war, Derril Bodley, a father of Flight 93 passenger Deora Bodley, decided to view September 11 as a moment of true violence and harm, but did not wish for his daughter’s memory to be tainted with further violence. Bodley decided to honor his daughter through efforts to promote peace and assist those in need. He donated all the money he received from United Airlines to humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, and gave his time to helping organizations like Peaceful Tomorrows that aim to promote peace out of the grief from loss of September 11. These perspectives offer a different way of using the same memory to achieve far different political and social goals.

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91 Simpson, 9/11: The Culture of Commemoration, 88.
Yet, even 10 years after the events of 9/11, with the campaigns abroad resulting in further death and taxing a new presidential administration, the legacy of Flight 93 continued to be politicized to justify the wars and violence at the opening of the permanent memorial. The opening event on September 10, 2011 included speeches from a variety of important political figures including former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, and then Vice President Joe Biden. While the atmosphere of the event was one of honor and solemn remembrance, the politicians’ speeches contained references to the more militarized commemoration of Flight 93. Bush reminded the people in attendance that the passengers and crew “launched the first counter offensive….For as long as this memorial stands, we will remember what they did.” Bush echoed his previous terminology in this line by continuing to equate the heroic actions of those onboard to the first battle in the war of terror. This theme did not stop with President Bush, but was echoed in Biden’s words as well. Instead of returning to the battle metaphor, Biden spoke of the 2.8 million Americans who joined the armed forces in the 9/11 generation to become the “new generations of warriors.” Biden paid respect to the memory of those on board, but also highlighted the waves of young Americans who have joined the ranks of the military to fight wars abroad. There is no a problem in referencing patriotism and heroism, but there is an apparent utilization of memory to promote the political agenda of justifying military intervention and continued military strength derived from the narrative of Flight 93.

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94 Ibid.
Section IV - Sacred Space and Constrained Impact

This thesis has navigated the history of the permanent memorial’s creation, the relationship of Somerset County to 9/11, and the connection of Flight 93’s legacy to a conservative political rhetoric. The final section will analyze and discuss the permanent Flight 93 memorial at its current phase of construction, and address the last major question of this thesis: How does the conservative utilization of Flight 93’s legacy discussed in Section III come to life in the Flight 93 National Memorial?

For context, I begin with an overview of the memorial’s composition from a visitor’s perspective. The Flight 93 National Memorial consists of multiple physical features across its expansive campus including walkways allowing guests to explore and access roads that facilitate the usage of automobiles to view the site. It is clear from the map that the NPS and Advisory Commission decided to make full use of the land acquired to comprise a total visitor experience, while also facilitating a theme of natural renewal and conservation.

Like all National Parks, the site includes large tracts of untouched forest and green space to preserve the natural beauty of the local environment, and to create a buffer between the park’s borders and the land of the memorial. This green space creates a beautiful backdrop for visitors who explore the campus, and helps highlight the sub-theme of restoration. There are signs throughout the memorial’s landscape that discuss the destructive past of strip mining of the area and the NPS’s efforts to transform the land into a sustainable ecological space. At the entrance to the park, visitors see a large sign welcoming people onto the campus, and directing them to drive down Approach Road. Upon its completion in the summer of 2018, visitors will encounter

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95 As stated in Section I, the Flight 93 National Memorial’s construction process has been completed in a set of phases with the final phase being completed in 2018.
96 Appendix, Image 16.
97 Appendix, Image 17.
the 93-foot high Tower of Voices, which will dominate the skyline. This feature will greet guests with its haunting chorus of 40 wind chimes, one for each person aboard the plane.\footnote{“Tower of Voices,” \textit{National Park Service}, 18 Sept. 2017.} It is important to again highlight the usage of the number 40 throughout the memorial’s design, as the United States decided at the very beginnings of this memorial to exclude the terrorists from the total number of lives lost. This decision reflects the pain of the nation, and an unwillingness to celebrate the hijackers’ deaths in a space deemed sacred from the sacrifice of the 40 other passengers and crew.

Visitors then continue on Approach Road towards the Visitor Center, and are presented with various scenic car stops and informational signs that discuss the history of Shanksville, the history of the impact site before 9/11, and highlight the natural beauty of the park and surrounding countryside. Visitors can then choose to park at the Visitors Center, or continue along Approach Road to park at Memorial Plaza. The Visitor’s Center provides exhibits that discuss the history of 9/11 and Flight 93, and features an education center for group tours and events, a novelty store, and an exterior walkway that provides views of the impact site, surrounding farmland and rolling hills. From the Center, visitors can either follow the flight path of impact down the hill to the Memorial Plaza or walk around the Field of Honor bordered by the 40 Memorial Groves to arrive at Memorial Plaza.

The Memorial Plaza provides a parking lot, restrooms, and a shelter for visitors, serving also as border between the guests and the impact site, which is marked by a large boulder in front of the tree line. Walking along the black stonewall of the Plaza, visitors can view the impact site and eventually arrive at the Wall of Names. The Wall lists the 40 names of the passengers and crew, each on individual panels of white marble, and features a wooden gate that leads to the
impact site. Only family members, special guests, and park staff can go through the gate to the impact site. Thus, visitors are obliged to stand at a distance from the impact site, reinforcing the solemn nature of the memorial’s environment. In this tranquil place, visitors can contemplate the sudden violence and loss of life that occurred 17 years ago. Park Rangers patrol the Plaza, offering information and answering questions. Information sessions and tour options are available to visitors, as is an audio tour guests can download on their phones to provide a set narrative to their journey. Thus, the Flight 93 National Memorial is not merely a simple statue placed in a barren field, but a comprehensive site that aims to educate all of its visitors.

This overview will not dwell on its many impressive features, but will focus on Memorial Plaza’s utilization of barriers and simple, modern stone structures designed to elevate the already sacred space of the impact site. As discussed in Section I, the violent nature of the crash left miniscule amounts of human remains to be identified and returned to family members. Thus this hallowed ground became a literal resting place for the heroes. According to Kirk Savage, some memorials become sites of pilgrimage due to the auras they fabricate, gaining vocabulary from civil religion to deepen the importance of the site. He applies this principle to his study of the National Mall in Washington, D.C., stating: “the rhetoric of civil religion—pilgrimage, holy ground, sacred space—is often used to describe [memorials].”99 For example, although the Lincoln Memorial does not contain the remains of the former president, it still draws many visitors to experience history in its large temple structure devoted to his legacy. But this and other sites mentioned in Savage’s work, do not bear the same literal sacredness of the Flight 93 National Memorial—the actual cemetery of fallen heroes. Of note however is that the National Mall sites, including the Lincoln Memorial, have gained greater historical meaning due to the

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continued usage of the sites by protesters, an expansion of significance that has not occurred at the Flight 93 site to this date. Nonetheless, an application of Savage’s civil religion rhetoric to the Flight 93 Memorial would go in tandem with the elevation of Flight 93’s legacy in the narrative of supporting wars abroad by glorifying the deaths of the passengers and crew.

Though designer Paul Murdoch denied being influenced by other memorials, the Flight 93 Memorial bears resemblance to two prominent American war memorials: Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier rests in Arlington National Cemetery where it houses the unidentified remains of American soldiers lost in WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. The VVM heralded a bold new approach to memorial design with its powerful, modern simplicity that enabled it to become a source of healing for a divided nation and veterans of an unpopular war. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier revealed the difficult and painful truth of modern warfare’s destruction, and J. William Thompson observed the similarity between the Murdoch and the Lin memorial designs in his book that explores the impact of Flight 93 on Shanksville. He notes the similar use of dark stone, and how the Wall of Names draws semblance with Lin’s famed design. However, Thompson also observes that the Wall of Names is done in white stone in Murdoch’s rendition. Murdoch’s utilization of simple stone designs creates a pleasant contrast with the natural environment, encouraging the visitor to focus on the tranquil aura of reverence created through the sheer weight of the traumatic event.

100 Thompson, From Memory to Memorial, 137.
101 Arlington National Cemetery, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier-Homepage, U.S. Army.
102 Ibid.
Like the VVM, the Wall of Names lays the names out in a simple manner with no added onus or special design. The names are placed in alphabetical order, each name on its own slab standing eight feet high, placing the names at a level where visitors can view and touch them, while also lending them a heroic status. The names are set in a darkened font to contrast with the white marble, but unlike the VVM, some of the names received additional designations in a smaller font, in the color of the stone. The flight crew each have their positions next to their names, such as Lorraine G. Bay who has Flight Attendant under her name; Lauren Grandcolas, who was pregnant, has “and unborn child” next to her name; and finally, Toshiya Kuge, who was Japanese, has his name in Kanji as well. These secondary descriptions subtly add to the complexity of certain passengers, but do not take attention away from the others. They were added to appease the mourning families, and were executed in a tasteful manner.

The Flight 93 Memorial is also comparable to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in its significance as a final resting place of American heroes. Since 1937, guards have monitored the site and maintained a buffer between the tombstones and any guests who visit the site. The guards have kept this 24-hour, 7-day a week protection without fail despite severe weather, terror attacks, and other impediments. This reverence and protection underlines the importance of this site by giving it state sponsored protection, and keeping the public away from the remains of the soldiers. Though the Flight 93 impact site does not have an armed guard, the location features a large black wall that keeps guests from entering the area, thus maintaining a similar

\[103\] Appendix, Image 18.
\[105\] Appendix, Image 19.
\[106\] Appendix, Image 20.
\[107\] Murdoch, "Flight 93 National Memorial."
\[108\] Ibid.
buffer to preserve the sacredness of the space—protecting the remains of those lost from any defacement or sacrilege.

But how does this simplicity in the presentation of the names feed into the conservative rhetoric surrounding the legacy of Flight 93? This memorial is beautiful and moving and pays respect to those lost, but its elements contrast sharply with the other 9/11 impact site memorials, particularly in its designation and maintenance of a sacred space. In Manhattan, thousands upon thousands of people traverse through the memorial on a daily basis, and there is no place formally designated as the final resting place of the thousands lost in the attack. Although the names of those lost are etched in dark metal around pools of water that pour into a dark void, and create a peaceful moment for reflection amid the craziness of lower Manhattan, it does not make the land sacred. In the Pentagon, the memorial features a multitude of benches, each bearing the name, age, and location of the victim at the time of the attack, and thus does not formally make the land sacred. Both memorials are beautiful and respectful, but their message and homage to the loss of life derives from visitors interacting within the space and reflecting on the loss and pain of that day. These two memorials also do not use any white or other colors of prominence, relying instead on more neutral, subtle colors. This stands in contrast to the Flight 93 Memorial, where guests are greeted with signs at Memorial Plaza that proclaim “America Attacked” and the narrative of the passenger’s heroism.109 Visitors are thrust into the narrative of Flight 93 as being the first moment of retaliation in a war against agents of terror, while the other two impact sites leave the interpretation to the guests. As seen in its utilization of white marble, the Flight 93 National Memorial also elevates the commemoration of the passengers and crew to highlight their heroism. The memorial also emphasizes a narrative of averted disaster by discussing the

109 Appendix, Image 21.
plane’s perceived target. The memorial plays on this theme by placing pictures of the Capital building on its pamphlets around the site to emphasize the prevention of further tragedy and violence against pillars of American power. The reality is that no one knows the exact target of Flight 93, but the NPS and Commission opted to choose this narrative to further elevate the theme of patriotic heroism. The memorial achieves its purpose in this regard, and fulfills its duty as prescribed in the Mission Statement, but this approach can be seen as constrained.

The Memorial’s weakness comes from its inability to evolve with the rapidly changing political and historical climate surrounding the narrative of 9/11. Its Visitor Center displays the quintessential elements of the entire 9/11 terrorist attack, and focuses on paying proper tribute and depth to Flight 93 through pictures of the passengers, details of the ensuing FBI investigation and efforts of the local community. Yet it does not attempt to delve into the painful repercussions of Islamophobia or other harmful effects in any way. And though these facts do not play a role in the direct history of Flight 93 in relation to the events of September 11, they are important to understanding the total legacy of Flight 93 after September 11. There can be no denial that the Flight 93 National Memorial is a powerful space that conveys its intended message, but its strategic simplicity fails to provoke its guests to think about the tragedy in a more comprehensive manner. As discussed in Section III, Novick expands upon the political usage of memory by communities and how collective memory can change overtime. Thus, we do not know how the legacy of Flight 93 and September 11 will be understood by America in the future, but given the memorial’s current construction and direction, there seems to be a limitation to how much the memorial’s message and narrative can expand over time. Yet, hypothetically, there is no way to tell how America, Somerset County, or Americans will change in the coming years to further differentiate the current standing and projection of this site’s impact and value.
The reality is that the memorial’s message and composition not only adheres to its prescribed narration of September 11 and Flight 93, but also to the nature of its politically conservative, rural home at the time of its construction. This memorial captured the feeling and reaction of the community to the Flight 93 crash at the time of its planning, construction, and completion. It will continue to speak to this exact moment of history, and will continue to embody this perspective. Savage speaks to this aspect of memorialization. He observes that:

Public monuments are the most conservative of commemorative forms precisely because they are meant to last, unchanged, forever. While other things come and go, are lost and forgotten, the monument is supposed to remain a fixed point, stabilizing both the physical and the cognitive landscape.\[110\]

In this context, conservative means reserved, as the public monument is meant to last forever and have a limited scope due to the limitations of its physical size. The Flight 93 National Memorial merges the preconceived sentiments of its visitors with the cultural memory of the history it captures, and aims to speak to and navigate the public who walk its campus through these ideas. Americans who make the pilgrimage to the Sacred Space go there to be present in the aura of heroes and to pay respect to their legacy. And their legacy became interlaced with the land and the community where the plane crashed, thus enabling its perspective to become engrained in the discourse of 9/11 commemoration. The Flight 93 National Memorial exists to be a constant reminder of American strength and heroism in the face of terror, and to pay homage to those brave American lives. It will always exist to remind the nation of those moments of panic, and of the bravery born in the moment of despair. And it will always speak to the values, history, and nature of its politically conservative home, Somerset County from this 15-year period of 2002-2017. The future of the memorial and its home are unknown, and only time will tell how this memorial’s role will transform.

Conclusion.

The story of the Flight 93 National Memorial is complex, and remains unfinished. The memorial will finally be complete within the coming year, and with its entire campus constructed, the memorial will face its unknown future. During its development, the site enjoyed a large number of guests per year with the NPS reporting that 500,000 people made the trip to visit the memorial in 2016, the same year the Visitor Center opened. This large number of guests comprises of Americans making the pilgrimage in cars or as part of group tours in buses, and this core of guests will continue to visit over the coming years due to the memorial’s appeal and the addition of its Tower of Voices. Americans come to the campus to seek meaning from the heroism of that day, to learn of this history, and to manufacture their own lessons and sentiments in this sacred space.

Yet, the memorial does face a number of questions due to the freshness of its history and the still unraveling political narratives of the United States and Somerset County. Will Somerset’s economy rebound or continue to fade, thus crippling the county’s growth and future? How will the nation’s feelings toward 9/11 change as terrorism persists? Moreover, will the elevation of the patriotic sacrifice of the passengers and crew take on a new meaning as time passes?

These questions cannot be adequately answered at this time, but there are some things to contemplate in relation to these questions, namely: America’s politics, the persistence of terrorism, and the development of commemoration. First, the current political landscape of the United States has shifted into a new level of divisiveness and uncertainty with the election of

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President Trump last year. In his current tenure, the President has brought his biases and hateful rhetoric to the forefront of the American discourse. Through his proposed immigration restrictions on “undesirable” people and his indirect empowerment of hate groups, President Trump instigates fierce debate over the current plight of minority groups in the United States, while also revealing the racist underbelly of the American people. This type of political rhetoric feeds into political divisions throughout the country by “Othering” groups of people and exposing painful histories of hate. Those targeted are minority groups primarily composed of immigrants from the Middle East, Africa, and Mexico, and the long-standing mistreatment of black Americans is not being countered. The worst part of this exposure is the continuation of oppressive systems and orders in America that only leave people behind. This political turmoil leads to groups appropriating symbols such as the Flight 93 National Memorial. For example, some Americans can interpret this space as the first battlefield on the war on terror—as the first battle against malicious, foreign others. This type of perspective feeds into a narrative of war, of hate, and of needed action. Thus this site (and so many others) will face this type of usage that undercuts the fullness of its message and applicability in terms of healing national trauma.

Second, terrorism has persisted throughout the United States since 9/11, and the perpetrators have been both international and domestic. Terrorism in the context of Flight 93 and September 11 has come to mean radicalized individuals acting to destroy and harm the United States and its people, and this definition has persisted though the perceived perpetrators have expanded from stereotyped Islamic men to include a wide array of violent criminals from a multitude of backgrounds. There have been a large number of attacks throughout the United States since 9/11 that have been conducted by Jihadists, Far Right Wing Radicals, and individuals acting on their own accord—like school shooters—without direct affiliation. The
Jihadists have killed 103 people in their attacks, but a majority of attackers are not foreign agents, as 85% of these terrorists are citizens or permanent residents. Moreover, the Jihadists’ violence and destruction is not astronomically higher than the other groups, as Far Right Wing Radical terrorists have accounted for 73 deaths during this same 17-year period. This persistence and homegrown origin of terrorism undermines any perceived success on the war on terror, and also puts President Trump’s ideals into question. His travel ban and immigration sanctions hinge on the notion of protecting America from foreign terrorists and refugees, while the real threat comes from individuals who call the United States home, and from the ease of access to guns in United States—though that is an entirely different issue.

Finally, the development of commemoration in the United States has changed how public memorials are seen in the public eye. The recent debates and demonstrations around Confederate memorials in the South serve as an example of how memorials change in their meaning over time. The Confederate memorials in question are far more controversial due to the hateful and oppressive nature of their histories. But the debate surrounding them speaks to how memorials and their messages can be dissected in the public eye, and only time will tell if the Flight 93 Memorial will face any type of debate. It is also worth noting that memorials in more urban environments experience changes due to the transformation of the city around them. The National 9/11 Memorial and Museum is surrounded by an ever expanding and developing city and bolstered by a museum that attempts to speak to the broader narrative of 9/11, addressing a wider audience of visitors. These developments ensure the space can adapt and change in meaning over time, but the Flight 93 memorial does not share these traits. Instead, it exists in a

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more isolated environment where the development of the neighboring space is slow and the message of the memorial is not tested by a large, diverse flow of visitors.

Thus, the Flight 93 National Memorial’s place in history and American culture is still not fully known. For now, it is a beautiful site of commemoration for a horrible tragedy that took 40 lives, but this action prevented the loss of many more by thwarting the terrorists’ plans to hit a target in Washington, D.C. The closing section of the memorial’s Visitor Center is a wall displaying the names of all those lost in three crash sites, and includes a video montage of the memorials in Manhattan and the Pentagon. This memorial, and its peer memorials, speak to this tragic day and attempt to offer some level of solace in their designs, and this thesis does not refute that or the gravity of this loss or somber history. Instead, it offers a perspective and hope that future visitors will be aware of its inherent politically conservative narrative and the community it speaks for as well.
Appendix.

I, the author, took all the pictures in this appendix and the title page during a trip to the memorial site and surrounding community in November of 2017. The map in this appendix was taken from the National Park Service Website.

(Image 1, Pro-Life Billboard)

(Image 2, Civil War Memorial with Somerset County Courthouse in background)
(Image 5, Korea War and Vietnam War Memorial)

(Image 6, *Daily American* receptacles attached to a mailbox in Somerset County)
(Image 7, the Flight 93 Memorial Chapel)
(Image 8, One of the four benches that are a part of the CAUSE Foundation Memorial)

(Image 9, Second bench)
A GRATEFUL NATION

CHRISTIAN ADAMS
TODD BEAMER
ALAN ANTHONY BEAVEN
MARK BINGHAM
DEORA FRANCES BODLEY
MARION R. BRITTON
THOMAS E. BURNETT JR.
WILLIAM JOSEPH CASHMAN

OF THE FLIGHT 93 PASSENGERS

WALESKA MARTINEZ
NICOLE CAROL MILLER
LOUIS J. NACKE II
DONALD PETERSON
JEAN HOADLEY PETERSON
MARK ROTHEMBERG
CHRISTINE SNYDER
JOHN TALIGNANT
HONOR ELIZABETH WAINIO
(Image 12, The centerpiece of the CAUSE Foundation Memorial)
(Image 13, The carved slab of steel from the World Trade Center donated by the New Jersey Port Authority)

(Image 14, Town of Shanksville sign)
Photo taken from the National Park Service website for the Flight 93 National Memorial, and can be found through the links to the NPS website in the Works Cited.
Flight 93 National Memorial is a place of renewal. It embraces the natural environment, both stark and serene. Land scarred by decades of coal mining is being restored. Native trees are once again part of the landscape, and flowering meadows soften remnants of the area’s harsh industrial past. Wetlands filter the water and create a habitat teeming with life.

With time, this landscape will be transformed by nature, just as this place was changed by the events of September 11, 2001.

(Image 17, One of the many signs throughout the campus speaking to the environmental restoration in the park)
(Image 18, Wall of Names with guests for scale)
(Image 19, A close up of the names to further display simplicity, but also to show how subtle the additional titles appear on the marble)
(Image 20, A closer look at secondary descriptions next to darkened names)
Signs around the Memorial Plaza speak to the militaristic narrative of Flight 93.
Works Cited.

Secondary Sources


**Primary Sources**


*Note: These meetings met close to 4 times a fiscal year, and each set of Meeting Minutes includes the Briefing Reports.*

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