

Shaw 54th Regiment Memorial to reopen Friday in Boston Common

By **Charlie McKenna** Globe Correspondent, Updated May 26, 2021, 4:52 p.m.



The Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Memorial will be uncovered after months of reconstruction work. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The renovation of the Shaw 54th Regiment Memorial will be unveiled to the public on Friday, officials said.

The fencing and protective covering around the monument will be removed for the first time since [it returned to Boston Common in March](#), allowing people to view the iconic sculpture in time for Memorial Day. the Friends of the Public Garden wrote on their

sculpture in time for Memorial Day, the Friends of the Public Garden wrote on their website. The memorial was erected in 1897.

The unveiling also coincides with the 158th anniversary of the events depicted in the memorial, when Colonel Robert Gould Shaw led the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, one of the first Union regiments of Black soldiers to see major combat in the Civil War, down Beacon Street as they departed the city.

[Restoration work on the \\$3 million project began last May](#), and the memorial was removed from its Boston Common home and [taken to a studio in Woburn for restoration](#). The bronze relief returned to its post across from the State House, at the corner of Beacon Street and Park Street, on March 3.

While the memorial was being restored, the Friends of the Public Garden erected fencing around it, which depicted the story of the 54th Regiment.

The genesis of the restoration dates back to 2015, when stone conservators working on the memorial discovered its brick core had been deteriorated by water penetration and as a result, it was vulnerable to “seismic events,” the Friends of the Public Garden said.

The 54th Regiment went on to lead an assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina in July 1863, where 281 members of the unit, including Shaw, were killed, according to the Friends of the Public Garden. Nearly 50 percent of the 600-man regiment were killed, wounded, or missing in that unsuccessful frontal attack on the fort, a vital defense for Charleston Harbor.

The sculpture was crafted by Augustus Saint-Gaudens and took 14 years to complete.

The memorial was renovated by a partnership that included the National Park Service, the city of Boston, the Friends of the Public Garden, and the Museum of African American History.



The Shaw 54th Regiment Memorial is hoisted in the air and returned to its place in the Boston Common across from the State House in Boston, MA on March 3. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Material from prior Globe stories was used in this report.

Charlie McKenna can be reached at charlie.mckenna@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@charliemckenna9](https://twitter.com/charliemckenna9).

[Show comments](#)