Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit

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First Peoples House – Ceremonial Hall

Installed on Cole’s Hill overlooking Plymouth harbor in 1921 to mark the 300th anniversary of the landing of the English, the Cyrus Dallin-crafted statue Massasoit became mobile in complex and unexpected ways after its unveiling. Due largely to an astounding case of fraud in the fine arts market, replicas of this statue now stand in Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah, Kansas City, Missouri, and Dayton, Ohio. This talk takes up the effect of this “monumental mobility” by asking what happens when monuments become unmoored from their proper historical locations. What meanings do people attach to monuments that pop up in locations far distant from their original places? How do people engage with monuments to make historical meaning in connection with place? How does this example of monumental mobility help us think about the place of Massasoit in local and national narratives of encounter?