Colorado takes pride in its many memorials honoring and remembering veterans. Among the memorials that can be found in the state are two that stand out, one for its newness and one for its uniqueness.

In May 2013, the Colorado Freedom Memorial was dedicated in Aurora. The memorial honors war veterans from all eras, with soil from the nations where troops were deployed. The memorial’s unique shape is a reflection of the state's Rocky Mountain range. On its glass panels are the names of nearly 6,000 killed in action since Colorado became a state.

Cummings-Prather Post 119 in Estes Park, named in his honor at the dedication of a hall named in his honor at Cummings-Prather Post 119 in Denver, after performing at the Legion’s national convention. In Fort Collins, dedicated in May 2011 and opened in November 2011, serves as a remembrance to veterans. The memorial, in Spring Canyon Community Park, educates visitors about the roles generations of veterans have played to keep America safe.

Post 109 in Colorado Springs is the largest post in the state.

In Grand Junction, Post 200 members cut timber and give it to community members who need it for firewood during the long winter.

Post 206 is the state’s all-women’s post, dating back to 1957.

Post 7 in Leadville is believed to be the post at the highest elevation in the United States, at over 10,000 feet.

Sacred places of honor and remembrance

The monument’s creator, Rick Crandall, promoted the project while serving as the focal point for patriotic events like Veterans Day, Flag Day and memorial services.

The monument, dedicated in 1995, features a 10-foot-tall monument with stone tablets on all four sides, surrounded by a triangular rock wall that suggests an abandoned outpost from Southeast Asia. Outside the wall are 36 300-pound granite stones in three concentric circles, representing soldiers defending the base. Each of the 36 stones contains quotes in languages of the Americans’ allies: Vietnamese, French, Laotian, Cambodian and others.

In 1998, the building was dedicated to those who lost their lives in service to America and a tribute to veterans of the past, present and future. There are five brass disks about six inches in diameter featuring the emblem of each of the service branches above the engraving. The top of the obelisk is lit at night.

The Veterans Plaza in Fort Collins, dedicated in May 2011 and opened in November 2011, serves as a remembrance to veterans. The memorial, in Spring Canyon Community Park, educates visitors about the roles generations of veterans have played to keep America safe.
CO Legionnaires

Earl Franklin, a World War II veteran, lived a postwar life of community service. In addition to being a Legionnaire, he served as mayor of Sterling, city councilman for a dozen years and a church deacon.

World War I veteran James “Jimmy” Lingenfelter was the last Colorado department commander from his war era, serving in 1963. For more than 50 years, he was a veterans service officer and post commander in Salida.

George Sakato received the Medal of Honor for his actions in France during World War II. In 1944, he charged an enemy stronghold, then took command of his platoon while leading the defense of the position. Sakato later served as a district commander for the Legion.

Sgt. Allen Dale June, a member of Post 32 in Longmont, received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2000 for his role as one of the original 29 Navajo Code Talkers.

Peter Ole performed as the organist during annual conventions for 37 years, including his final one in 2015. Ole, who began playing at Paul C. Beck Post 23 in Aurora, was honored with a resolution naming him "The American Legion Maestro Emeritus."

Each July, 30 high schoolers from across the country converge on the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs for the two-day American Legion Junior Shooting Sports championship. Colorado Springs has hosted the championship every year except one since 1991.

The contests qualify by scoring the most points during competitions among 1,300 participants in the American Legion tournament. There are two categories, sporter and precision, in which each of 15 finalists compete in Colorado Springs. Past participants have included Olympic gold medalist Jamie (Beyerle) Corkish. The winners in each category receive scholarship money.

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports program encompasses the basic elements of gun safety, education, marksmanship, enjoyment and competition. Boys and girls can participate; and disabled youth are encouraged to join, as competitive shooting is a sport that creates an equal playing field for all competitors. The participants, staying together in Colorado Springs, socialize between competitions.

When American Legion Past National Commander Mike Robinson retired from overseeing the program in 2016 after having been involved from its beginning, he commented, "I've had the privilege of doing many, many things in The American Legion. This ranks up there with anything else that might have been an accomplishment."

Did you know?

Shawn Chacón played Legion Baseball for the Greeley team before beginning a career in Major League Baseball that saw the pitcher play for the Colorado Rockies and several other professional teams.

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