Bulfinch’s early designs were heavily influenced by European neo-classical style, best seen in the work of Robert Adam and Christopher Wren. A classical revival, the style looked to great architects of the past for inspiration, most importantly Andrea Palladio. Bulfinch, Thomas Jefferson, Asher Benjamin and Minard Lafever, all used the classical motifs of columns and arches with the traditional colonial Georgian Style, which prized balance and symmetry.

The result was a new federal style. The first design Bulfinch completed was the rebuilding of the Hollis Street church in 1788 which had been destroyed by fire a year earlier. The church demonstrates his ruminations on classical Italian church architecture. In 1839 the church was taken down and rebuilt in East Braintree using the Bulfinch-designed framing and columns. The Hollis Street church was soon to be followed by other architectural projects, each one growing more ornate and costly as he learned how to implement architectural features.

“To commemorate the train of events which led to the American Revolution and finally secured Liberty and Independence to the United States, this column is erected by the voluntary contributions of the citizens of Boston” – Beacon Hill Memorial Column

From 1634 to 1787, the beacon giving name to Beacon Hill warned Boston residents of danger. When the beacon was blown down, Bulfinch suggested a column to replace it as a celebration of independence. The column stood sixty feet tall and was built of stucco plastered brick with inscriptions at the base. The column was poorly constructed and when Beacon Hill was cut down in 1811, the column was removed until 1898 when it was recreated in stone by the Bunker Hill Association.

Bulfinch was influential in the formative years of classical revival architecture in the United States. His work was heavily influenced by the work of the Adam brothers, particularly Robert Adam. Bulfinch was one of the first American architects to fully embrace the classical revival style, and his work was widely imitated in the United States.

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