

# NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED MONTHLY EXCEPT SUMMER BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 77

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

September, 1971

## *The First Fall Meeting*

*of the Association will be held on Monday evening, September 13, in the auditorium of the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Sol Levites, president of the Hydro-Molding Company and amateur archeologist. He will give an illustrated talk on "Personal Reminiscences of Three Archeological Expeditions to the Holy Land."*

*The Annual Dinner of the Historical Association will be held at the Royal Savage Inn on the evening of Friday, October 8. The address will be given by Dr. Myron Luke, professor of history at C. W. Post College and long associated with the archeological work at Crown Point. His topic will be "The Day I Met Lincoln." Reservations may be made with the program chairman, Daniel Shea, at 40 Morrison Avenue. The price is \$4.75 a person for dinner and gratuities, and payment should accompany reservations.*

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## NEW ACQUISITIONS BY THE ASSOCIATION'S MUSEUM

The most important addition to the museum since our last issue is a tapestry-rug made by the daughters of Pliny Moore of Champlain about 1814. It is the gift of Mrs. Donald Bartlett of Trombley's Bay, Chazy. Its larger companion piece has been owned and displayed by the Metropolitan Museum in New York since 1916. Mr. Dwight Hitchcock of Mooers has given the museum a complete maple-sugar-making outfit, while Professor Thomas LeDuc of Oberlin College has donated a pin tray with a picture of the Keeseville stone bridge and a medal of 1914 commemorating the battle of Plattsburgh.

The Curator, Mrs. Ruth Hecht, has also purchased an early county map on linen, a water color of Cumberland Head, a commemorative plate and an enlarged photograph of a local trolley, about 1905. She was instrumental in collecting \$63.20 through basket donations to the museum at a summer auction.

On loan from the Patterson Historical Memorial Collection of the Research Center at the Feinberg Library are a gold-filled bracelet, an Indian beaded necklace, a framed Victorian print and a set of druggist scales.

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## AS FOR A MUSEUM

The Association's Museum Committee continues its investigation into ways and means of acquiring and converting the Stone Barracks, and its preparation of a proposal for the County Legislature. On August 3rd State Historian Louis Tucker was in town for a tour of the Barracks, but he was not encouraging about state aid for the project.

## *The General Leonard A. Wood Memorial*

At the 20th anniversary reunion of graduates from the 1915 Citizens Military Training Camp, a proposal for a memorial in honor of Major-General Leonard A. Wood was advanced by the 1915 "alumni." The Citizens Military Training Camp, established on the reservation south of the Plattsburgh Barrack's buildings, grew out of General Wood's efforts to arouse the nation to the need for military preparedness. Among the first to realize the possibility of America becoming a belligerent in World War I, General Wood became known as the "Father of the Plattsburgh Idea" of voluntary, civilian, military preparedness as other citizen training camps sprang up throughout the country.

Early in the spring of 1935 Captain Bernard L. Sandler, a New York attorney and a member of the first Reserve Officers' Training Camp of the CMTC at Plattsburgh, conceived the idea of holding a reunion of the graduates of the 1915-16 camp at Plattsburgh during the month of July when the CMTC would be in progress. Though only eleven graduates were present for the reunion, the members were enthusiastic and discussed a memorial in the form of a monument to General Wood, commander of the first CMTC. Nothing definite was decided upon but the group endorsed a tentative plan suggested by Colonel William B. Wallace, commandant at Plattsburgh Barracks.

At this July 29th meeting Colonel Wallace suggested acquiring the 24-acre site south of the Pine Grove as the place for the memorial. It was on this site just south of the military reservation that the first 1915 camp was held, and it was at this place, Carter's Field, where the First Infantry Regiment drilled. According to the **Plattsburgh Daily Republican**, it was also suggested by Colonel Wallace that the memorial consist of a park containing a "Hostess House seating 3000 and ample facilities for commemorative plaques honoring the war dead trained at Plattsburgh." These tentative plans were approved by Judge Charles M. Harrington and former City Judge Robert C. Booth of Plattsburgh; Bernard M. Sandler, New York attorney; Harold W. Clark of New York; Dr. George H. Wright of Brookline, Massachusetts; and Major James J. Geegan of the New York Police Department. Dr. Wright was selected as chairman of the General Leonard A. Wood Memorial Committee. It was expected to hold another meeting in the early fall to coordinate the efforts of the graduates of not only the 1915 camp but all those who attended subsequent camps in an effort to raise sufficient funds for the memorial.

Thus, instead of erecting a monument in honor of General Wood, the committee endorsed Colonel Wallace's idea of the Hostess House. As the **Plattsburgh Daily Press** stated:

Knowing General Wood as intimately as he did, Colonel Wallace told the group that if a memorial was to be erected, it should be something useful—something which General Wood would heartily endorse if he were alive today. Colonel Wallace then told the group that one of the greatest needs of the training camp was a hostess house.

Realizing that Colonel Wallace and his staff were far abler to plan such a memorial, the General Leonard A. Wood Memorial Committee requested the army officers to prepare tentative plans for the building.

In the meantime, Robert C. Booth, a prominent Plattsburgh lawyer and a member of the 1915 training camp, began negotiations for the purchase of the Carter lot from Mrs. Lucy Pike, the owner. The committee sponsoring the memorial, namely, Judge Charles Harrington, Dr. George Wright, Bernard Sandler, Major James Geegan, Colonel William Wallace, Harold Clark, and Robert Booth, acquired the property. According to the deed dated September 21, 1935, between Lucy R. Pike and George H. Wright, chairman of the committee, the group purchased for \$650 the lot bounded and described in the following manner:

In the north by the United States Military Reservation of Plattsburgh Barracks, New York; on the west by United States avenue (also known as the Lake Shore Road Route 9); on the south by the lot known as the Warm Farm now or formerly owned by the Estate of William N. Levy deceased; on the east by Lake Champlain; (exclusive of the right-of-way of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Company, traversing said tract); containing twenty-four (24) acres of land more or less.

In August, 1935, the memorial committee, in conjunction with Colonel Wallace, instructed George A. Wright to construct a map and survey of the Carter lot. This map was made in the Office of Constructing Quartermaster, Plattsburgh Barracks, and deposited in the Clinton County Clerk's Office.

The plans of the structure were constructed by Colonel Wallace and his staff working together with Alvin Innman, local architect. In late September, 1935, the plans were shown to the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club, two organizations interested in the memorial. The building was to be of tapestry brick with stone columns "resembling somewhat the Junior High School type of construction." Under tentative plans the building was to be 280 feet long and 240 feet wide, at an estimated cost of between a half and one million dollars.

#### According to the Press:

On the first floor will be a memorial hall facing United States avenue, an auditorium and stage will be located in the north wing. The south wing will consist of a lounging room, reading room, visitors room, and Post exchange room. On the east side facing the lake will be a dance hall.

If a second story was to be built over the main part of the building, Memorial Hall, it was to include six bedrooms and a reception room. It was also planned that the basement would consist of a gymnasium, lockers, showers, and storage rooms. Chairman Wright was expected to begin a drive to obtain funds for the memorial, but contributions had been reaching the committee as early as July, 1935, when W. Nelson Smith of Reading, Pennsylvania, another 1915 Training Corps graduate, offered the first contribution to such a fund.

Thus, during the summer and early fall of 1935 much progress had been achieved in the realization of a General Leonard A. Wood Memorial. A site had been selected and purchased, building plans had been drawn up, and a drive had been undertaken to secure contributions for the memorial. Such an auspicious beginning, however, was to end in dismal failure. It seemed that, at least in the city of Plattsburgh, the drive to obtain funds for the memorial never materialized. The campaign appeared to have been centered around securing contributions from past CMTC graduates. Moreover, in March, 1936, Colonel Wallace left Plattsburgh for assignment as chief of staff of the Hawaiian Military Department. Colonel Wallace was instrumental in acquiring the property for the memorial, constructing the plans for the building, and soliciting support for the endeavor. Indeed, as the **Republican** stated, ("The 'Hostess House,' proposed memorial to the late General Wood, father of the 'Plattsburgh Idea' of citizen military training, is certain to be constructed and to Colonel Wallace goes the credit for suggesting the 'Hostess House' as the type of building most fitting and needed." The **Republican** went on to say that the proposed memorial was as much a tribute to Colonel Wallace as it was to General Wood.

The memorial was also plagued by the nature of the committee, itself. All of its members except Robert C. Booth and Judge Charles M. Harrington were out-of-towners. Dr. Wright lived in Brookline, Massachusetts, and the others all lived in the New York City area. Thus, the committee was mainly an out-of-town group while the memorial was to be built in Plattsburgh. Such an arrangement would greatly increase the inefficiency of any organization, and this appeared to be the case with the Wood Committee. When the 1915 training group began to plan for a 25th anniversary reunion in July, 1940, Mr. Sandler, chairman arranging the reunion, made no mention of the Wood Memorial when interviewed by the **Press** in January, 1940. The proposed reunion, in fact, was never held.

Thus, by 1940 the Wood Memorial seemed to have been forgotten by the members of the committee and the press. Perhaps the depression decade prevented the committee from securing adequate contributions for the memorial. On the other hand, it appeared that no city-wide drive occurred in Plattsburgh, though contributions were probably received from prominent local members of the Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and the Chamber of Commerce. These three groups, at least until the time of Colonel Wallace's departure in 1936, seemed greatly interested in the memorial, and there was considerable rapport between these groups and the military barracks.

Finally, with the death of Dr. George Wright and America's involvement in World War II, the General Wood Memorial was forever discarded. In March of 1942 the War Department acquired the site selected for the memorial as ". . . necessary to adequately provide for expansion of facilities at a military reservation for the use

in connection with the expansion of Plattsburgh Barracks." According to the confirmatory deed dated May 8, 1942, between Mrs. Mary L. Wright and the United States of America, the property was transferred to the United States' government "in consideration of One Dollars." The government had been willing to pay \$5,000 for the Carter lot, but it seemed Mrs. Wright and the other purchasers of the land deemed it their patriotic duty to accept no reimbursement. After all, the country was at war, and the War Department needed the property. Thus, with the transfer of the Carter lot to Plattsburgh Barracks came an end to all talk and action regarding the General Leonard A. Wood Memorial.

Nick Sayward, SUC

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### RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

Old riddle: The first newspaper in Clinton County was the **Monitor**, which was published for a few years beginning in 1807. The second was the **Republican** of 1811, which continues to this day after a merger with the **Press**.

New riddle: Which was the last town in Clinton County to be organized?

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Issued by the

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