LANDMARK/DISTRICT/VIEW SCAPE FACT SHEET

Landmarks Advisory Committee
Town of Sweden

1. LOCATION:
   Street Address/Legal Description/Boundry Outline
   Owens Road North of Railroad

   Tax Map Number(s): 069.030-01-001

2. OWNER:
   Name(s): Brockport Rural Cemetery Association
   Address: _____ Phone: _____

3. PRESENT USE OF PROPERTY: Soldiers Memorial

4. ZONING DISTRICT: Cemetery surrounded by industrial

5. DESCRIPTION:
   General description of exterior of property(s): Round Medina Sandstone Faced Tower, 11 Feet in Diameter and 50 Feet in Height

   General description of site and surroundings: Tower at peak of hill on 17 acre site adjacent to railroad. Three veterans graves remain.

   General description of exterior conditions (state of repair): Imposing ruin. Belvedere partially fallen, roof missing and spiral stair removed.

6. PHYSICAL HISTORY:
   Original and subsequent owners: Brockport Rural Cemetery Association

   Date of Erection: 1894 Architect: Clarence Birdsell
   Builder: E.A. Maynard (General) William Stevens (Masonry)
   Notes on original plan and construction of building: NA

   Notes on known alterations and additions, with dates and architects and builders:
   NA

7. REASON:
Why the property(s) should be designated.

A. Special character, historic, or esthetic interest or features: Distinctive Stone Oblesk on Prominent Hill

B. Historic events or persons associated with the property: Commemoritive Civil War Memorial initiated by Horatio Beach - Prominent Business Man.

C. Distinguishing architectural style(s) or period: Neo-Gothic Stone Masonry Architecture

D. Exemplifies a particular heritage: Erected in remembrance of local civil war veterans representative of a national memorial building movement.

E. The work of a significant architect or builder: Clarence Birdsell, Architect of several Gettysburg Memorials

F. Conspicuous relationship within neighborhood: Hierachic Dominance of surroundings.

8. OWNER CONCURRANCE:

Owner's signature(s):_____

Date:_____

THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MEMORIAL TOWER
TOWN OF SWEDEN, MONROE COUNTY, NEW YORK

We believe that the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Tower (better known as the "Soldiers Memorial Tower") meets Criterion C in the area of architecture, as a representative example of a commemorative monument in western Monroe County, New York.

In the early 1890's, Civil War veterans in the Brockport/ Sweden area were angry and frustrated. Most neighboring towns had erected memorials of some kind to the late fallen soldiers; this area had not. The ex-soldiers here were not wealthy, and times were hard. They had no money to do this themselves; any funds had to be raised by subscription from the general public.

The saviour and catalyst for this memorial movement came in the person of Horatio N. Beach, local owner-editor of the Brockport Republic, a weekly newspaper. Beach, active in local politics, had served as trustee for Brockport's Collegiate Institute, was village trustee, chairman of the town Republican committee, chairman of the Assembly District Committee, a member of the Republican County Committee, and a manager of the state Industrial School at Industry, New York (near Rochester.) He had also served as collector (state) of canal tolls; U.S. Consulate at Puerto Cabello, Venezuela; U.S. Commissioner to Mexico, U.S. Consul to Ecuador, and Consul-general to Ecuador. He got things done!!!

Mr. Beach noted that all area veterans were members of Cady Post, G.A.R. This group had grumbled louder than many that, after 25 years, no monument had been erected locally to honor their fallen companions.

Through Mr. Beach's efforts, the Brockport Rural Cemetery Association (of which he was President) proffered the gift of land, free of charge, for the erection of a suitable memorial. An association was formed from both Cady Post and local residents, and a working committee of 6 appointed to make plans.

Clarence Birdsell, a Brooklyn architect, had designed several attractive monuments on the Gettysburg battlefield; he also had relatives in this area. Mr. Birdsell was appointed official architect. A tower was suggested, to be

50 feet high, and offer a superb view from its summit of the surrounding countryside - perhaps even down the Erie Canal to Rochester, or to Canada! (Note: War memorials were often erected to provide a service for the community, rather than just offer symbolic value. They became the focus point for local commemorative services and ceremonies, often serving as a meetingplace for patriotic observances too. The area surrounding such monuments becomes "hallowed ground"- and this description certainly fit!)

The local working committee consisted of 4 veterans, a local stone mason (well-known in the community), and Mr. Beach himself.

1. Capt. Stephen Frost, owner of a clothing store in Brockport, had joined the 25th New York Militia in April, 1861, serving in the rank of sergeant. That September he moved to Company B, 91st New York Volunteers, and achieved the rank of First Lieutenant.

2. Andrew Boyd, Brockport grocer. Born in Ireland, he came to this country as a young man. He served with the 108th New York Volunteers from August, 1862, was wounded in 1864, and was Captain and Aide-de-Camp to General Smythe. Boyd saw action at Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Appomattox.

3. Edgar Maynard, carpenter and contractor, served at Gettysburg with Company B, 32nd Regt. Volunteers from Massachusetts.

4. Thomas S. Hinton, 3rd New York Cavalry, served from August, 1862. He was first bugler, then orderly to Col. N.P. Pond, finally reaching the rank of lieutenant. Participated in battles at Kingston, Goldboro, and Gum Swamp.

5. Thomas C. Berry, a graduate of Brockport College, was employed by D.S.Morgan and Company as a foreman. He had a reputation of being a fine stone mason, and also had a whip and glove business.

6. Horatio N. Beach, himself.

The monument design pleased most persons. It was to be a round rock-faced stone tower, ornamented by having the stone laid in regular courses instead

of the irregular patterns used in Rochester and Buffalo stone works. It was to be eleven feet in diameter at its base, ten feet from the top of the door to the lookout, and eleven feet in diameter to the top of the structure. Inside, a winding stairway would take visitors to the observation deck, which was roofed over.

Before its completion, marble tablets would be placed in side with the names of all soldiers and sailors who had given their lives during the recent war. Outside over the arched doorway would be a marble slab inscribed: "Soldiers Memorial Tower
A.D. 1894"

If enough money were available, soldier statues would be added.

This monument, as many, was dedicated to a great humanitarian purpose: as people came to honor those who died, they could reflect on the inhumanity of war; perhaps they could regard this as a promise that this should never happen again! It offered more than a monument to the dead; it offered a plea for peace in future years.

Since the money had to be raised through subscriptions, many community groups organized fund-raising events. Programs and concerts were "tendered in aid of the fund", and tower proponents constantly pressed for additional donations. Names of subscribers were published periodically, for all to see.

Planning took much of 1893. A committee selected the Medina sandstone to be used, and it was floated down on the Erie Canal on a barge. Actual construction began in early spring of 1894.

The actual Dedication took place September 1, 1894. A special excursion train ran from Rochester, and veterans by the hundreds participated. G.A.R. Posts came from Spencerport, Rochester, Bergen, Albion, Churchville, and other towns. There were carriages by the hundreds, and throngs of people on foot. At the ceremony, a formal announcement was made by the Brockport Rural Cemetery Association that not only the 60 foot circle on which the tower stood, but also a plot approximately 50 feet down the hillside was to be available for the free interrment of any area veterans

and their families - quite a generous offer.

From the tower parapets, it was indeed possible to see Lake Ontario, to peer down the Erie Canal for some distance, and even see into the neighboring counties. Its rectangular and point-arched openings, buttresses, and crenelated parapet became a tourist attraction; the New York Central Railroad regularly scheduled Sunday afternoon excursions from both Rochester and Buffalo, and featured it in a promotional book.

War memorials derive their primary identity from public usage; indeed, this Soldiers and Sailors Monument was well-used. It was the focus for several years of special events, held on Memorial Day, July 4, and other such special occasions. On weekends the grounds were filled with local families out for a stroll. It was a social meeting place.

At the end of the century Horatio Beach died. The tower and cemetery grounds immediately became the focus for a political battle. Several years later, this was followed by a severe depression locally - and thus precipitated the cemetery's demise. Local citizens (including veterans) used their burial lots as collateral for loans. One local farmer had advanced money to many, but not been repaid; accordingly, one day he decided to plow HIS land for planting. Much to his surprise (!!!), he turned up many graves and created a local scandal. This gentleman ended up having to pay to move these, and other, burials to other local cemeteries for reinterrment- an expensive proposition.

Following this, the cemetery became neglected and overgrown, a mass of weeds and trees with pathways running through it. The cemetery chapel and the tower roof burned, ignited by sparks from a passing train. Left open, the tower's staircase rusted, morter fell from between its stones, and it became an attraction for vandals.

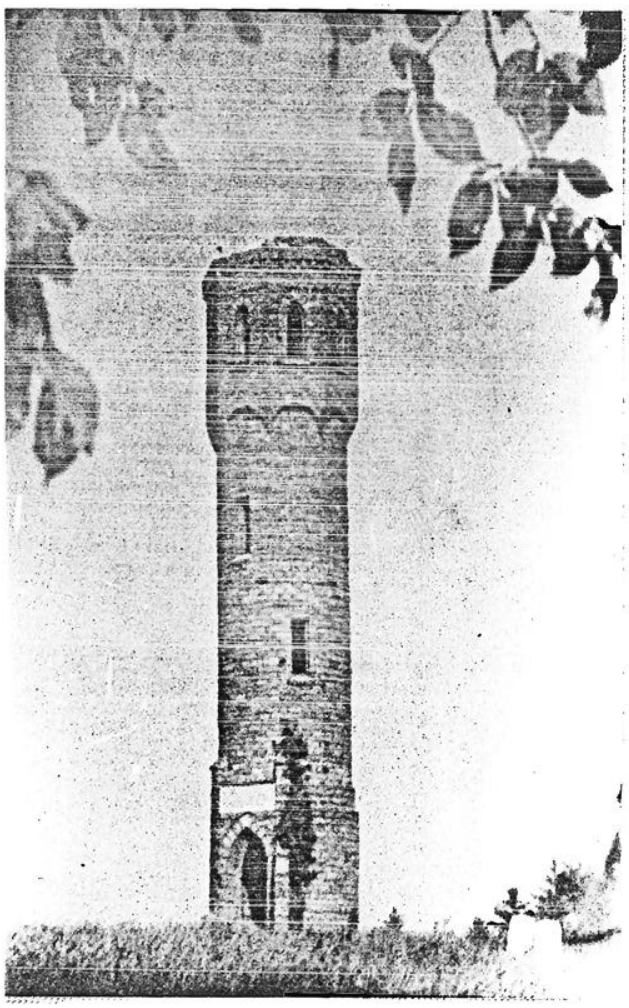
Today the tower still stands, an imposing ruin. Its belvedere has partially fallen and its interior stairway was removed (for safety purposes) by town officials. Three veterans graves are definitely known to remain on the property.

From time to time groups of local townspeople have banded together to attempt a restoration, and prevent further deterioration; most attempts failed. Much interest remains, however. Several times the land has been cleared and used for patriotic of commemorative services and programs.

The present restoration group have obtained legal ownership of the tower property, and have again restored its use as a community focus for patriotic commemorations. Programs have been held for Independence Day, Memorial Day, Armed Services Recognition Day, etc.

Despite its present condition, the tower remains substantially intact in its location, design, materials, feeling, and patriotic association. It has now been termed "unique" in its style and design by several wellknown architects. Most definitely, it meets the integrity requirements for National Register listing. We hope you will agree.

Margaret Johnson, Secretary
July, 1993



1937 PHOTO OF

SOLDIERS MEMORIAL TOWER

Letter to the Editor
May 6, 1992

Dear Editor;

The basis of any community must be a reasonable blend of its past, present and future. It is too often the past that is allowed to disappear. Only through the education of present and future generations as to what was important to the past generations can fair decisions be made that will give a solid basis for community growth.

Pride is another factor in providing community stability, pride in ownership and upkeep of homes and businesses, pride in achievements, past and present, pride in the community's place in the historic development of its wider geographical area.

One symbol of past pride in our area's participation in larger historic events was the building and dedication in 1894 of the Soldiers' Memorial Tower on Owens Rd. in the Town of Sweden. The building of this tower as a memorial to all area veterans, but especially for those of the civil war, was made possible by donations from peopel of all walks of life to whoma veterans' memorial was an important reminder of this country's history.

The Soldiers' Memorial Tower is a unique gift from the generation of 100 years ago, given into our care. So far we haven't done a very good job. The Soldiers' Memorial Tower Committee has started the process toward restoration and rededication of the tower and grounds. Won't you join us? Please call (716) 637-5664 or write P.O. Box 715, Brockport, New York 14420, to join our committee or to volunteer time, labor or equipment.

Thank you,

Dorris Clune

Dorris Clune, Corresponding Secretary
Soldiers' Memorial Tower



John Clifford/Westside News Inc.

Improvements to the area around the Soldiers Memorial Tower in Brockport, including land clearing, have already begun. Restoration of the tower itself is one of the next steps for which funds are being raised.

Funds sought for Soldiers Memorial

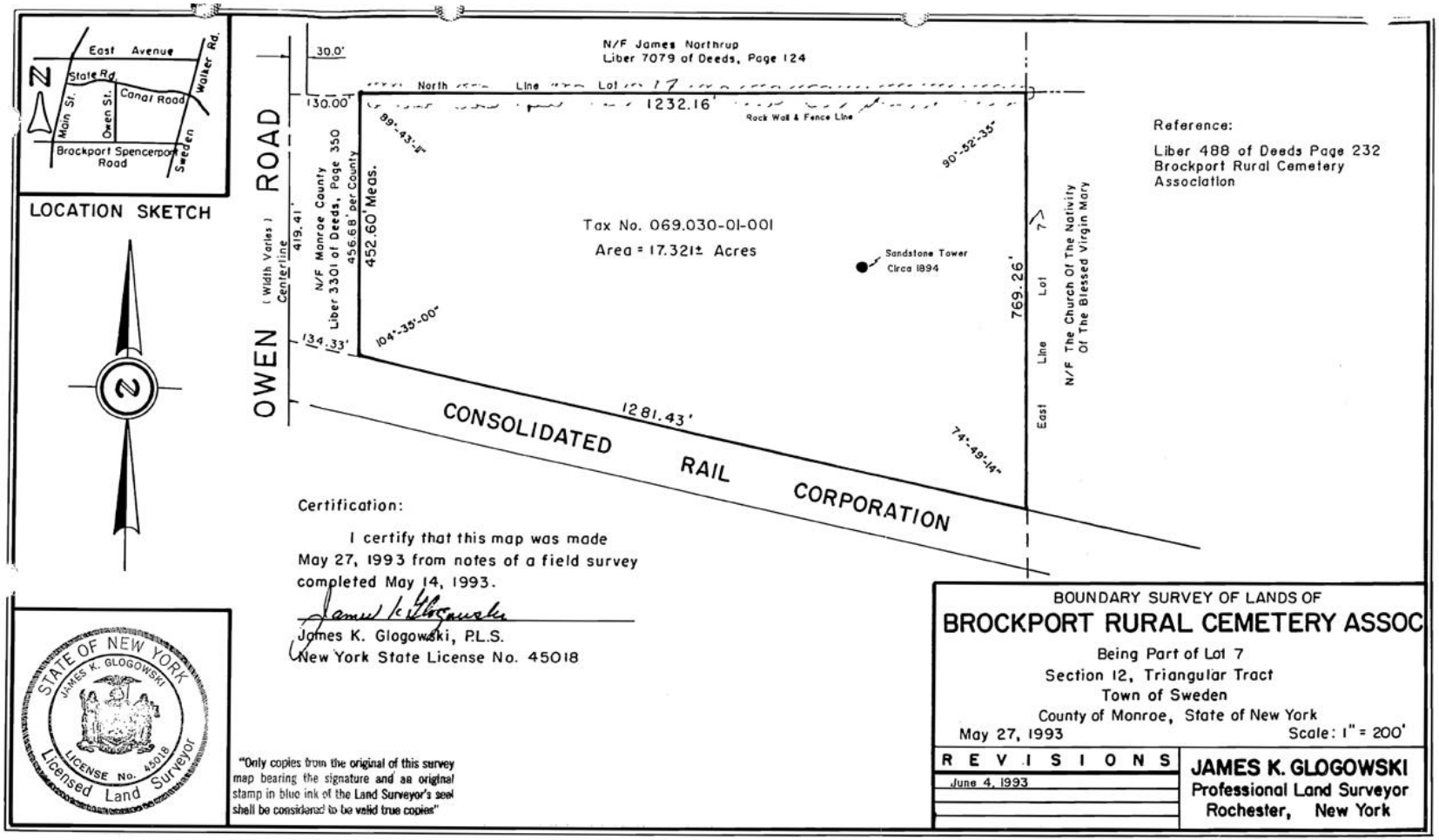
by Leisa Strabel

Ownership has been obtained, a willing liability insurer found, and the site clearing has begun at the Soldiers Memorial Tower on Owens Road in the town of Sweden. Now all the enthusiastic tower committee needs to begin restoration of the nearly century-old tower is $140,000. They are planning to kick off a fundraising program this summer and hope to have the entire amount raised by next year's building season, according to committee member Bill Gminski.

It has been nearly two years since Gminski approached the Sweden Town Board asking for their assistance in cutting through the red tape entangling ownership and liability issues. The town was unable to help him, but from the ensuing publicity, interested members of the community came forward and formed with him the Soldiers Memorial Tower Committee. The committee has been successful obtaining ownership of the seventeen acre site. But the six owners and other committee members cannot pull off the entire project on their own. They are looking for donations and most of all for volunteers to help in their fundraising efforts (including someone to head up the fund drive).

Scott Arends Excavating has donated their services for the necessary excavating and landscaping during the next two years. Other donations include promises of a roof, windows and wrought iron door. Smith Fence Company from Castile has donated construction fencing that will surround the tower to discourage trespassers until construction begins and to provide a measure of safety during construction.

Plans for the tower and acreage's future use haven't been finalized, but Gminski says many ideas have been discussed by the committee including use as a park, a site for a new community library, or as an active cemetery once again. He feels that with the proposed revitalizations of the railroad and the canal, with the tower laying directly between them, that it will be a prime spot for some kind of community recreational development. Persons interested in making a donation or volunteering may contact the Soldiers Memorial Tower Committee, P.O. Box 715, Brockport 14420, or call 637-5664.



Certification:

I certify that this map was made May 27, 1993 from notes of a field survey completed May 14, 1993.

James K. Glogowski, P.L.S.
New York State License No. 45018

STATE OF NEW YORK
JAMES K. GLOGOWSKI
LICENSE No. 45018
Licensed Land Surveyor

"Only copies from the original of this survey map bearing the signature and an original stamp in blue ink of the Land Surveyor's seal shall be considered to be valid true copies"

BOUNDARY SURVEY OF LANDS OF

BROCKPORT RURAL CEMETERY ASSOC

Being Part of Lot 7
Section 12, Triangular Tract
Town of Sweden
County of Monroe, State of New York

May 27, 1993 Scale: 1" = 200'

REVISIONS
June 4, 1993

JAMES K. GLOGOWSKI
Professional Land Surveyor
Rochester, New York

The use of this map in conjunction with an affidavit of no change releases the Surveyor of all responsibility.