

# RAISING GOOSEBERRIES, HELL, AND AN ARMY: THE STORY OF PINE CAMP, 1906-1935

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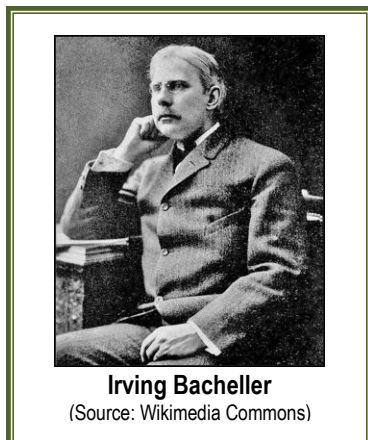
FROM ACCOUNTS IN OVER 330 NEWS ITEMS OF THE:  
*Watertown Daily Times, Herald, & Re-Union; Cape Vincent Eagle;*  
*Syracuse Herald, & Post-Standard; New York Times*

ALSO REFERENCED:

*Black River in the North Country* by Howard Thomas (1963),  
*Images of America: Sackets Harbor* by Robert E. & Jeannie I. Brennan (2000),  
*Drummed Out: A History of Sterlingville and Environs* by Keitha Kellogg Peterson (2002),  
*Images of America: Fort Drum* by Robert E. & Jeannie I. Brennan (2002),  
*The History of Sackets Harbor, New York* by Janis Monroe (2011),  
The Fort Drum website at <http://www.drum.army.mil/>

## Introduction

Irving Bacheller, a journalist born in Pierrepont in 1859 and educated at St. Lawrence University, described the Pine Plains region of Northern New York as good only for raising “hell and huckleberries.” The area, located along the Black River in Jefferson County, was known as a desolate, parched, sandy wasteland – made that way by the glaciers and through the purification of lumbering and fire. Such barren isolation marked the spot at the start of the twentieth century as a good place for raising an Army. Soon Camp Hughes, then Pine Camp, later Camp Drum, and now Fort Drum, was formed. One of the first soldiers who trained there echoed Bacheller upon his departure, “All Pine Camp is good for is to raise hell and gooseberries.”



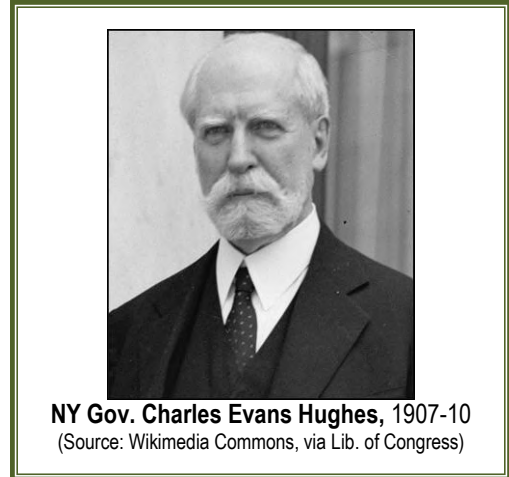
## 1906-1907

In October 1906 a special board of Army officers came to the Watertown region to investigate the proposed camp site at Pine Plains, which had been selected, upon direction from President Theodore Roosevelt, by Col. Philip Reade of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry from Madison Barracks in Sackets Harbor, NY. This caused no little controversy. Lieut.-Col. James S. Boyers spoke against a proposal to reforest the Pine Plains because of what was considered by some locals as a “thin prospect of peopling it with soldiers.” A scathing editorial in the *Watertown Herald* replied:

He evidently believes it greater glory to build an Army to wipe the people from the face of the earth than to build a forest to supply the material for homes for such people. ... To

plant the land with trees means happiness and wealth to your children, and Lieut.-Colonel Boyer hasn't any.<sup>1</sup>

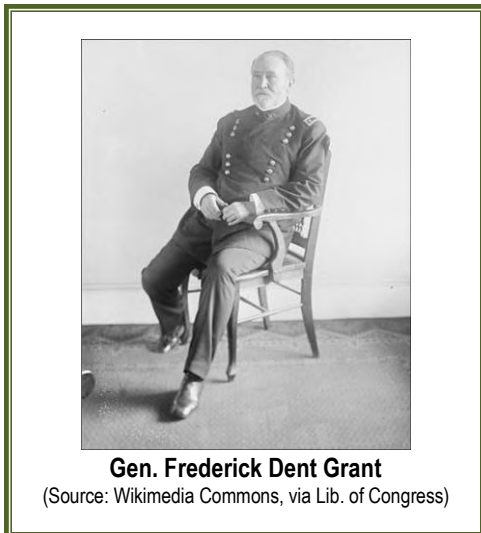
Plans for the camp moved forward, despite dissent. The Army initially leased Pine Plains land for its first maneuvers, before reaching an agreement for 10,000 acres at the cost of \$55,000. On May 25, 1907 the *Watertown Herald* reported, "Governor Hughes has consented to have the Pine Plains camp named after him. It will therefore be Camp Hughes; and Cpt. Rice will see that the soldier boys are provided with good drinking water to drink toasts to the Governor."



The first troops arrived at what was then Camp Hughes, near the village of Felts Mills on former meeting grounds of a Methodist church, at noon on June 13, 1907. They had marched between 100 and 250 miles to get there from the Plattsburgh Barracks, Fort Porter, Madison Barracks, Fort Niagara, and Fort Ontario. No fewer than three night marches were made, though troops were given rest on a Sunday.

## 1908

The War Department decided to have a concentration camp of the United States troops



under command of General Frederick Dent Grant, commander of the Department of the East, at Pine Plains between June 15 and July 15 of 1908. In April, Grant visited the Pine Plains to determine the best spot for detachment of the troops for the summer military maneuvers. He selected an area a short distance from the Camp Hughes site, to the east of an elevated sand dune. Grant was pleased with the location, declaring it comparable to other military sites across the country. The sandy soil of the Pine Plains was seen as the location's one flaw – and would later be one of its assets. Grant speculated that the maximum number of troops that could be simultaneously housed at the camp would be three

small brigades of militia and one brigade of regulars. During his reconnaissance visit, Grant was entertained in Utica and on the plains, and spent a few hours touring Watertown by automobile. An informal dinner was held at the Black River Club. Many Civil War veterans turned out for Grant's arrival.

The United States Army leased 10,000 acres from the Watertown Chamber of Commerce in 1908 for an encampment. That May, 30 engineers surveyed the government Army camp at

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<sup>1</sup> October 26, 1906

Pine Plains. Following shortly after were 250 soldiers from the Second Battalion of Engineers to lay out the camp – including the construction of many wooden buildings. Local contractors believed the government expected too much in too short a time – 110 field kitchens, 10x20’; 110 mess halls, 20x45’; shower baths, incinerators, and more. The finished camp was comprised of temporary buildings and tents, including hospital tents. Grant’s headquarters were located on the “Hog’s Back” hill – an elevation of about 200-feet, roughly two miles from the railroad – providing a view of the entire camp, which at that time would house 7,000 troops.

Officers in charge of the Pine Plains camp declared their interest in buying as much as possible in the vicinity. A rising number of saloon licenses requested near the camp suggested that the soldiers would also be spending money there. This raised local expectations for a “good deal of money” coming into the area. Indeed, almost immediately after troops began arriving to the camp, attempts were made to capitalize on it – such as a bogus set of souvenir post cards purporting to be views of Pine Camp, but were reproductions of photographs taken at a previous Mt. Gretna, PA, encampment. Actual postcards of Pine Camp were issued by the Hungerford-Holbrook company of Watertown, which also provided literary souvenirs of illustrations, maps, and military data to Pine Camp’s civilian and military visitors alike in 1908.

Consumption did greatly increase with the arrival of the troops, evidenced by the 9,000 lbs. of beef, 10,000 lbs. of potatoes, 600 lbs. of coffee, and 8,000 lbs. of flour consumed each day. (The camp larder held fifteen times those amounts of food for maneuvers in 1935.) The North Country was taxed in sustaining the vast quantities of food required. A scarcity of eggs, for example, was reported in the Watertown area – hundreds of dozens being consumed on the camp each day; this was not, however, problematic for the farmers, who were thankful to the government for the financial opportunity in difficult times. Restaurants were even built with an eye toward the possibilities of business from the troops – such as an eating house established at the Pine Camp railroad station by the New York Central Railroad, and a lunch cart moved from Carthage to Pine Camp during maneuvers.

In June the arrival of nearly 10,000 troops – including the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire Infantry, three Massachusetts regiments, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, squadrons A and C and troops B and D, New York Cavalry – by rail and by land marches to the Pine Plains camp was successfully achieved. Governor Charles Evans Hughes arrived about a week later to review the troops, following the first mock battle and all-night bivouac for 7,000 men. The battle began with the problem of the “Attack and Defense of a Convoy” – bringing together both regular Army and militia troops for war games, before their separate bivouacs. Other maneuvers included a test of different kinds of powder and dynamite for wartime destruction. One of the most notable features of the training camp was the use of lectures, in which miniature battles were waged among “blackboard armies” on maps with thumbtacks in a game called “*Kriegspiel*.” Pine Camp received much praise as a great school of military instruction. But it was not all marching and maneuvering. July Fourth celebrations saw relay races and other athletic contests, in addition to special target practice. The 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry squared off for a baseball game at the Carthage festivities, and the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Band participated in a concert at Carthage.



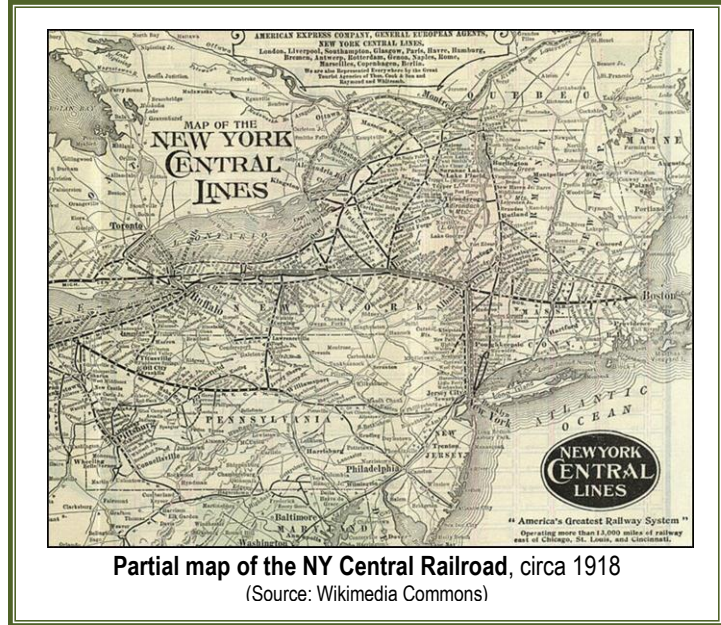
Assistant Secretary of War, Gen. Robert Shaw Oliver, viewed a portion of the 1908 war games, along with Rear Adm. Goodrich, the Commandant of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. While at Pine Camp, Oliver announced the War Department's

plan for the formation and maintenance of a US standing Army of 160,000 men – an Army that would be ready in an instant to answer the call of the President and which would make the United States a great military power. Gen. Luke E. Wright, who would succeed William H. Taft as Secretary of War also visited the Pine Camp drill grounds that summer. The 1908 maneuvers marked a significant moment in US military history and structure – the bringing-together of state militia and regular Army “toward the perfection of the fighting force of the United States,”<sup>2</sup> made possible by the 1903 Dick Law which essentially removed a barrier between the previously unrelated militia and Army.

The troops’ coordinated arrival in mid-June 1908 marked the beginning of much attention to the logistics of the rail service surrounding the Pine Plains camp. In fact, the New York Central Railroad had installed sidings and terminals specifically for the camp a year earlier. The first train to Pine Camp was delivered to the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg division at Utica. An additional 30 troop trains were rushed to Pine Camp via Carthage. Contingency plans were for two or more trains sent to the camp from Utica via Rome, Richland, Watertown, and Carthage in case of congestion. As time progressed, the rail system received much praise from military officials for its efficiency in moving both men and supplies; the railroad became a key consideration in designating Pine Camp as a possible permanent establishment. The railroad would later see improvements in trackage and service to accommodate the permanent encampment.

<sup>2</sup> New York Times: June 28,

The encampment became a site for many excursions, with numerous visitors each day. (In September of 1910, casual visiting and tourism was restricted when Pine Camp was declared unsafe because of target practice, with long-range rifles and artillery that could carry over one mile.) The New York Central made extra provisions to handle the large crowds and operated a shuttle train between Carthage and Pine Camp at convenient intervals, making connections with all regular trains at Carthage. Excursion tickets were



Partial map of the NY Central Railroad, circa 1918  
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

offered at special rates as an “Excellent opportunity to observe actual camp life and war tactics.” Visitors and spectators, however, were cautioned to wear high shoes and old clothes because the ground was a “mass of drifting sand.” They were further warned of possible disappointment, as “The expected gleam of the tents is nowhere to be seen,”<sup>3</sup> there were no “sham battles” to be witnessed, and no accommodations or provisions for even visiting dignitaries. Nonetheless, visitors would hear and see the thunder of cavalry hooves, the blast of bugles, and the crisp, authoritative shouts of officers and staffs. For some older visitors, there was also the pleasure and nostalgia of seeing General Grant, who bore strong resemblance to his famous father, and whose mother did, actually, visit the camp on at least one occasion in 1910; a majority of visitors to the camp carried cameras in order to get photographs of “Genial General Grant,” as he became known, and other visiting officials. (It is also interesting to note that Grant’s father, Ulysses S. Grant, was stationed at Madison Barracks during his tour of duty prior to the Civil War. He would later save the Barracks, which, eventually, were partially integrated with Pine Camp, from closure during his presidency.)

During these maneuvers, which involved lessons learned in the Russo-Japanese wars, Pine Camp was considered as a site for a permanent military encampment. Gen. Robert Shaw Oliver, Assistant Secretary of War, toured Pine Camp and stated:

Pine Camp has all the advantages and but few slight disadvantages [among which was a recent wild rain storm] of a permanent camp, and I hope congress will see fit to establish a permanent camp here for the Department of the East. I am very well pleased with the excellent work of the railroad in transporting troops and in handling the Army freight.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Syracuse Post-Standard*: June 15, 1908

<sup>4</sup> *Watertown Re-Union*: June 24, 1908

Within a week, as of July 1, 1908, Pine Camp was deemed ideal for concentration purposes in case of war, being a suitable rendezvous for 100,000 troops and a strategic location in case of northern invasion.

In these initial considerations, Grant declared that if the camp was made permanent “the Federal Government will probably purchase a reservation of from three to four miles round the present camp for drilling purposes; for maneuvering this would not be practical, as a large amount of territory is covered and not one-fourth would probably be used. It is more practical to lease the land and have all claims for damages paid by the Federal Government, and then if the fields and properties are damaged the farmer can receive redress.”<sup>5</sup> This was not, in fact, how the establishment of a permanent camp occurred, as purchase was deemed a more economically sound decision than lease.

Pine Camp was one of several sites tested for permanent installations in 1908; while none of the sites met with complete favor of Army officers, Pine Camp was considered the most suitable and sanitary in every respect. The US government secured an option to purchase the 10,000 acres of the Pine Plains camp at the cost of \$4 an acre. Grant’s support for the purchase of Pine Plains as a permanent military site, believing that none in the country would be better, was met with much approval from quartered soldiers and local businesses. If the camp became permanent it would “necessitate practically the double tracking of a portion of the Ontario and St. Lawrence divisions and much business for Watertown and Carthage.”<sup>6</sup> Yet, when the troops left Pine Camp in July 1908, there remained speculation as to whether they would come again – though many of the men in khaki, sunburned and weathered, hoped to do future training maneuvers on the Pine Plains.

In December, the annual report of the Secretary of War, Luke E. Wright, was made public – including the request for \$75,000 for a military camp at Pine Plains, and \$50,500 to purchase land at Madison Barracks to be used as stables and a corral for Pine Camp, removed from the maneuvering grounds. Analysts postulated that the war department favored Pine Plains for maneuvers, despite initial reservations. Later that month it was reported that the Department of Agriculture at the government botanical gardens was experimenting with grass seeds, seeking one that would help sod the problematic sandy soil of the Pine Plains.

## 1909

The 1908 maneuvers were so successful that that Army decided to purchase the land for Pine Camp. In February of 1909 attorney Charles E. Norris, as a representative of the Watertown Chamber of Commerce and the Carthage Board of Trade, testified before the House Committee on military affairs that the proposed \$75,000 for the purchase of Pine Plains land was a fair market value; at the hearings it was also urged that purchase would be more economical for the government than rental. Gen. Oliver was the principle witness at the hearings, testifying as to the desirable qualities of the Pine Plains location for concentration and maneuver, which included:

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<sup>5</sup> *Watertown Re-Union*: July 1, 1908

<sup>6</sup> *Watertown Re-Union*: February 6, 1909

- Freedom from insects
- Quality water supply
- Absence of mud
- Good health of the summer soldiers
- Existing installation of incinerator and water systems
- Central location to the Army posts at Buffalo, Oswego, Sackets Harbor, Plattsburg, and Burlington

A permanent Pine Camp became a reality as one of the final acts of President Theodore Roosevelt, who signed the purchasing legislation into law before leaving office on March 4, 1909.

It was anticipated that the maneuvers of 50,000 soldiers would extend three months into the summer, realizing the greatest mobilization of armed troops in New York State history. The expected troops, from the Department of the East, would come from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. State militia, however, would be stationed at Plattsburgh, rather than Pine Plains. Grant was replaced with Major General Leonard Wood in 1909, and Grant returned in 1910. (Meanwhile, Congressman Charles Knapp stated that 1909 would actually see fewer troops than 1908 because of the improvements needed to accommodate Pine Camp's new roles.) A story in the *Watertown Re-Union* proclaimed:

It means much to the North Country. How much is hard to calculate. A sample, just a mere miniature shadow of the big thing, was made apparent to the people of this section last year, when for 30 days from 8,000 to 10,000 soldiers of the regular Army and the national guard, camped on the plains. It is no longer a dream – that idea of a tented city of 50,000 souls – it is to be a reality.

Unstinted praise for the accomplishment of this big piece of legislation is being given to Congressman Charles L. Knapp. It is to him that the people are indebted. They know it and cheerfully acknowledge the debt.<sup>7</sup>

Some of what this meant, in time, to the North Country was the laying of double tracks on the New York Central Railroad, a new passenger train to Watertown, a “metropolitan” train station that could accommodate 10-12 trains, and highway improvements including macadam strips and new roads. Initial talk of a trolley line between Watertown and the camp never came to fruition, though the Gould Automobile Co. established a 20-passenger car line with the Rapid, Model F “rubbernecks” in 1910.

### 1910

Madison Barracks' 868-acre Stony Point Target Range, at Henderson Harbor, was incorporated into the Pine Plains camp in 1910. (It was later transferred to the jurisdiction of Fort Ontario in the 1930s.) At this time, the government was pushing for the closure of smaller

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<sup>7</sup> March 10, 1909

military sites in favor of larger ones and there was an effort to close Madison Barracks. The people of Sackets Harbor, however, protested to preserve the camp for a second time. (They rallied again for the preservation of the installation following World War II, but to no avail; Madison Barracks was put up for sale by the War Assets Administration in 1954.)

The first order of business for the camp that year was the erection of permanent storage buildings and roads. Pine Camp would become the largest of the Army's "camps of association" that year, established for the summer to further the development of the troops of various states. Damage from windstorms, however, delayed field exercises. Once established, the regular daily routine for the camp was as follows:

First call 5:15 a.m.	Recall 10:45 a.m.	Retreat – First call 6:15 p.m.
Reveille 5:25 a.m.	Mess 12:00 p.m.	Assembly 6:20 p.m.
Assembly 5:30 a.m.	Drill–First call 1:15 p.m.	Guardmounting–First call 6:40 p.m.
Sick call 5:40 a.m.	Assembly 2:00 p.m.	Assembly 6:45 p.m.
Mess 5:50 a.m.	Recall 4:45 p.m.	Officers' call (on lecture days) 7:45 p.m.
Drill–First call 6:50 a.m.	Adjutant General's call 4:50 p.m.	Tattoo 9:00 p.m.
Assembly 7:00 a.m.	Mess 5:50 p.m.	Taps 10:00 p.m.

The year's war games were the most extensive attempted since the "blue" and "brown" armies had faced off at Manassas, VA in 1905 – with 16,000 men participating in the Camp of Instruction (over twice the number encamped in the Pine Plains two years earlier). One of the year's sham battles was described vividly by the *Syracuse Post-Standard*:

Shortly after 8 o'clock the sound of trumpets began to come from all directions. The whole plain shook itself with a mighty quiver, and fifteen minutes later thousands of men, two by two, in heavy marching order, filed out of camp, officers at their head.

Down the dusty roads the troops trod along. Many were the interesting spectacles afforded. Two huge searchlights, wrapped in tarpaulin, mounted upon odd-looking wagons, lumbered by, with a huge charging machine close by. Should the armies by chance fall upon each other while darkness prevails, the big searchlights will play a most important part in detecting the enemy.

The Reds are bivouacking to-night at Sterlingville. The Blues are at Felts Mills, many miles away.<sup>8</sup>

Adjutant-General William Verbeck observed the war games for several weeks and proclaimed his enthusiasm for what he witnessed. "The whole tour of duty has been a great stimulating force for the New York troops. It will give us splendid preparation for the winter's work of the Guard."<sup>9</sup> This undoubtedly led to his desire, the following year, to see more soldiers sent to Pine Camp.

<sup>8</sup> August 9, 1910

<sup>9</sup> *Syracuse Post-Standard*: August 23, 1910





Included in these spectacular maneuvers was an airplane (“aeroplane”) demonstration of short, experimental flights, bringing the first airship ever seen in Northern New York – a Farman piloted by Aviator Wilcox. The prevailing opinion among the officers present was that if the aeroplane could be perfected to the extent that it could carry and drop explosives, especially on bridges or railroads, such a use would be more

valuable in wartime than aerial scouting.

There was no shortage of other excitement in 1910, either. There was a 10-year-old stowaway, from Manhattan, who was treated as a camp pet until one of the men thought to have word of him put into the paper to reassure worried family. A Major and his mount sank several feet into quicksand and it took rescuers nearly an hour to save them both. Proprietors and barkers of the Big Bend Coney Island amusements on the fringe of the camp were given a scare when soldiers of the 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment came out of the woods and opened fire. “The man who runs the minstrel show took to his heels... while the frankfurter vendors were so scared they ran the wrong way... A woman who runs a quick-lunch wagon... is reported to have run the two miles to Felt’s Mills where she took a train for Watertown.”<sup>10</sup> High intrigue was to be had when, “A bold, bad Japanese spy came to Pine Camp [and] stole Major Slocum’s copy of *The New York Times*.”<sup>11</sup> Unbeknownst to Slocum, and his staff, the spy, T. Kaku, was playing the leading role in a moving picture called “The Japanese Spy.” Slocum sent his orderlies in pursuit and soon a thousands of troops chased after the hapless actor – whose only concern was that the soldiers were getting between him and the cameras. Many miles covered, the alleged spy was captured by barbed-wire netting and the paper was returned, only to have Slocum admit that it was not even the most recent newspaper.

With the start of the year’s encampment there were concerns about the nature of the food and beverage establishments that had opened in the region to serve the thousands of soldiers and visitors. The *Watertown Herald* wrote:

Some of the places show evidence of the intention of the proprietors to conduct legitimate, respectable business. Rumor says that evidences are not lacking that some of the places are to be of such character that both the officers in charge of the camp and the district attorney of Jefferson County will soon take notice of them, and the sheriff will be called upon to close them up. No one expects that the soldiers will spend all their spare time at Sunday school meetings. Neither does any sensible person see in the camp a reason for turning the Pine Plains into a red light district.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*: August 3, 1910

<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*: August 7, 1910

<sup>12</sup> July 30, 1910

In fact, Gen. Grant had spoken to such concerns two years earlier in a blunt appraisal of the Army canteen. Grant complained that the health of US soldiers was among the world's worst, resulting in large part from restrictions placed on them by organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Additionally, he explained:

Take a lot of men out to camp for maneuvers such as we have been having at Pine Camp... and deprive them of their canteen. What happens? Simply this: So soon as they are free the men get away to the nearest saloon and drink. They are some distance from their quarters and may not go back and forth at will, so they stay as long as they can at the saloon bar. [...] The longer they stay the more they drink and the worse their condition. We had one man drowned out at Pine Camp. [...] We can trace most of our violent deaths in the Army to drink. We had much less trouble when we had the canteen.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, Pine Camp was established, by Grant, in 1908 as a dry post, "so dry that one cannot get a thing harder than sarsaparilla, and that only in limited quantities."<sup>14</sup> The only alcohol permissible on the grounds was that needed for medicinal uses, and any regular soldier who used an intoxicant would be court-martialed.

By August of 1910, Grant was speaking adamantly against "objectionable places" on the outskirts of Pine Camp, resulting from camp followers intent on capitalizing on the encampment. He was chiefly opposed to cafes that would encourage brawls, particularly along racial lines, or promote prostitution. "Scores of shanties" stocked with "bad liquor and dozens of painted women" were built on the rim of camp; allegedly one entrepreneurial Watertown man had 22 such shacks ready to welcome soldiers. Grant instructed these businessmen to move their wares at least one-mile from the edge of Pine Camp, or he would move them.

In addressing concerns about soldier drunkenness as Pine Camp established itself as a permanent concentration, Grant reversed his initial position and argued strongly against the re-establishment of the canteen as a means for managing the existence of off-camp dives and saloons, believing the primary customers of such establishments to be civilians. His primary reason for new opposition to the canteen was that the men had "so adjusted themselves to the new condition of affairs that the worst features attending the change from the old order have been gradually eliminated."<sup>15</sup> Truly, near the end of the encampment, Grant learned that the soldiers had indeed been temperate in their expenditures, saving much of their pay, and that drinking had decreased.

In a September 1910 campaign statement for district attorney, Francis K. Purcell vowed, "I promise finally to clean out the hell holes bordering Pine Camp, that expensive murder trials may be saved to the county."<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, alcohol continued to cause trouble and controversy for the camp. In 1917 Lieut.-Col. Hall of the 4<sup>th</sup> Artillery at Pine Camp denounced bootleggers who distributed whiskey to the artillerymen, indicating that shutting down the bootlegging and

<sup>13</sup> *Watertown Re-Union*: August 22, 1908

<sup>14</sup> *New York Times*: June 14, 1908

<sup>15</sup> *New York Times*: August 14, 1910

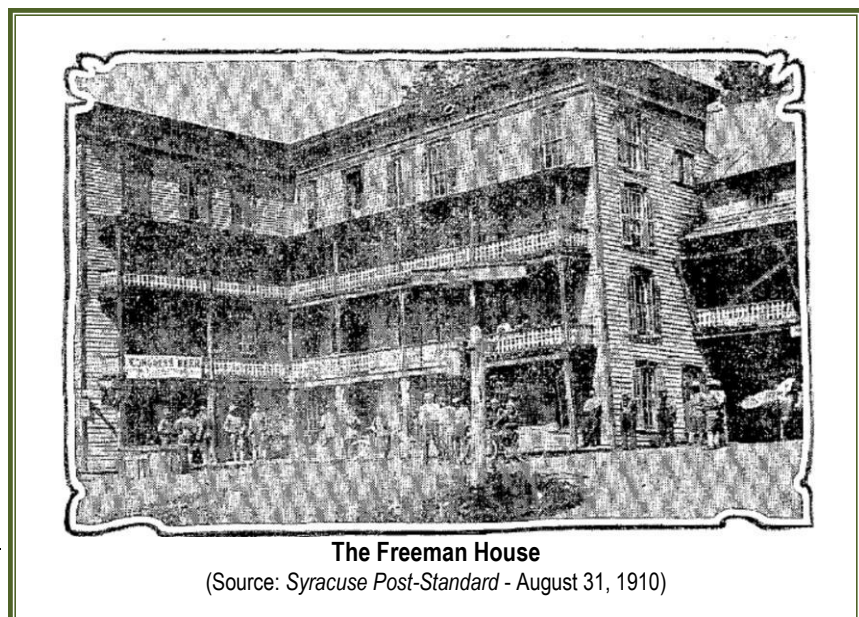
<sup>16</sup> *Watertown Re-Union*: September 17, 1910

the saloons should be more aggressively addressed by the sheriff, particularly if Jefferson County wanted to retain the military establishment; district attorney Cooper and the Wilna town board established a dry district surrounding the camp, closing the saloons. This, however, did not put an end to bootlegging – as soldiers would cover their uniforms with civilian clothes and go to Watertown to purchase booze. Debates raged on into 1918 when the Madison Barracks and Pine Camp featured into deliberations about saloon licensing and prohibition, with the presence of soldiers being noted as a central reason for tightening alcohol restrictions. Ironically, the artillery practice fields of the post were used for hiding bootleg liquor in 1921 – until thousands of dollars’ worth of booze was accidentally destroyed by big gun fire, despite rescue attempts by the taxicab operators of Watertown.

At the close of encampment in 1910 heavy drinking by the departing soldiers resulted in the murder of two soldiers during a craps game. Pvt. Turner of B Company and Cpl. Jones of C Company, 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, were shot by Pvt. McGee of L Troop, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, at a local dance hall called the Freeman House. All the soldiers were black, and news coverage of the violence highlighted racial tensions within the Pine Camp ranks; the *Syracuse Post-Standard* wrote:

The Negro regiments have given a good account of themselves in the Northern barracks. They have proved their soldierly qualities at Pine Camp. It is sad that just before breaking camp one bad Negro with a gun should have wrought such disaster. Two died by his hands and, knowing that death would be his punishment, he preferred to take the fire of those who came to capture him.

There is in this shooting not only the deaths of the men to be deplored, but the damage which one man has been able to do to the reputation of the Negro troopers.<sup>17</sup> During the 1908 encampment the *Syracuse Post-Standard* gave praise to, “The colored regiment, the Twenty-fourth Infantry, which, never before to its history [had] been stationed east of the Mississippi.” (Many of the news accounts referred to the black soldiers as “colored giants.”) The black regiment was said to have been received by the white soldiers in a collegial manner with feelings of the “friendliest kind.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, it was believed that the black soldiers were having more “fun” at Pine Camp than the other troops. However, that same year, the body of a black Private named Waldron Russell was found bruised and battered in Black River, the victim of a mysterious death the Army

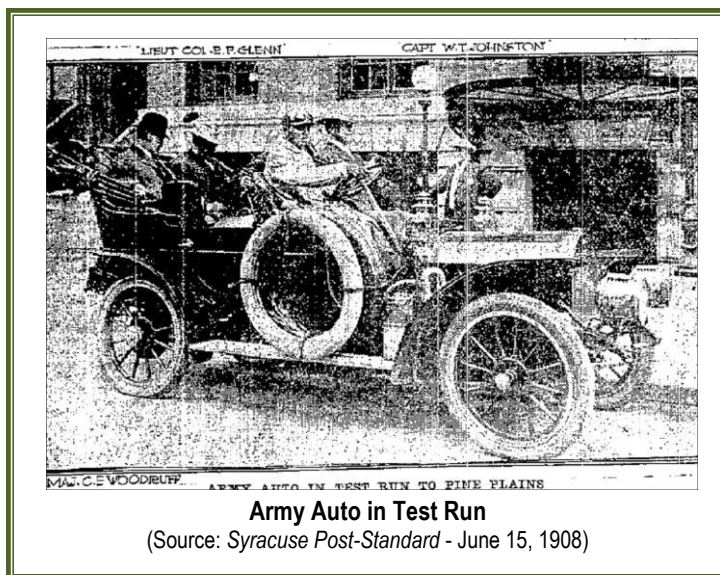


<sup>17</sup> August 31, 1910

<sup>18</sup> June 16, 1908

claimed was murder – potentially resulting from an argument over a white woman – and the local officials claimed was accidental. By 1910 racial hostilities were being fueled by “cheap whisky,” prize fights, and a shared bath house.

Though off-site conditions could be seedy, on camp, all measures possible for the health of soldiers were taken, and the sanitary conditions of the camp were ranked high by Army surgeons. The region was relatively free of flies and mosquitos, reducing the spread of sickness (the average daily sick list in 1908 was only .05% of the total encamped men). Water was piped in from nearby springs. (Water safety continued to be of paramount concern over the years; in 1935, Army engineers and medical corps commanders took special precautions, testing every available water source and ordering all drinking and cooking water to be chlorinated.) Dozens of structures held shower baths for officers and enlisted. Every organization had its own kitchen, and there was one bakery for the division, capable of producing 3,000 loaves of bread daily. Multiple incinerators burned or purified all refuse immediately to prevent fever outbreaks. A



permanent hospital and several field hospitals were equipped to serve the soldiers. Miles of new telephone wire provided the foundation for a strong communication system, supported by messengers on horseback. (Motorcycles were deemed unsatisfactory on the uneven terrain. Moreover, 1908 tests at Pine Camp led the Army to conclude that automobiles in general were worthless to war efforts; they also led to the deaths of one dog and two chickens and to a loss of a huckleberry crops in Jefferson County). The railroads also continued

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to be counted among the camp’s many virtues, allowing for the daily delivery of provisions to the camp. The quartermaster’s and commissary department officers praised both the freight and passenger services. Shuttle trains were established to get soldiers back and forth from the Pine Camp, in time for Taps, throughout the encampment. Nonetheless, these conditions were described as “a close second to those found in war-torn areas in France,”<sup>19</sup> when compared to the modern mess halls, general stores, telephones, electric light systems, and well-defined streets of tents that existed in 1935.

Promoting strong relations with the local community, despite the camp’s red light districts, Grant agreed to bring his staff to Watertown in August to review the parade for the New York Volunteer Firemen’s association; in turn, the firemen were given an outing to Pine Camp

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<sup>19</sup> *Syracuse Herald*: April 12, 1935

with the chance to view a staged battle. The 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry also traveled north to Potsdam to stage an exhibition drill and sham battle for the fair there.

## 1911

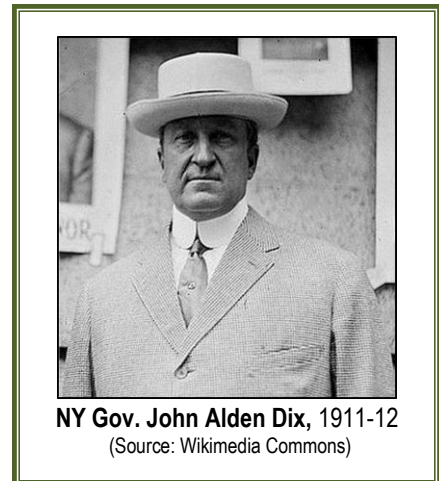
Additional Pine Plains land was surveyed and purchased to enlarge the maneuver grounds of the camp, consistent with war department practice in doing away with small and seasonal posts around the country. Prospects of the permanent garrison and brigade post anticipated infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers, leading the *Watertown Re-Union* to presciently speculate that “Watertown and the vicinity will rank among the great military centers of the country.”<sup>20</sup> Praise began anew for the many qualities – such as water and rail – the location offered the military. At this time the permanent post was to be comparable in size with Fort Leavenworth, KS and Fort Sam Houston, TX. Hope was expressed that the enlargement of Pine Camp would help to compensate for the loss of the consumptive hospital at Felts Mills.

Preparations for maneuvers in 1911 included 50 men from the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry at Madison Barracks laying pipes, setting up incinerators, and doing other quartermaster tasks to get the camp in shape for the 5,000 incoming troops. The first field hospital went into camp in August, just two days before the troops arrived, and a medical officers’ school was established shortly thereafter. Eighteen special trains, with 200 tourist, Pullman, baggage, and horse cars, were needed to bring in the 5,000 militia from around the state.

In mid-August of the same year, New York Governor John A. Dix visited the camp to tour and to view the war games. The estimated cost of the ten-days of maneuvers, in which war was declared along the Black River for possession of the Old Plank Road and Great Bend Bridge, was \$150,000

– divided in rough thirds among payroll, subsistence, and transportation. The largest battle of the encampment was fought during his visit, witnessed by hundreds of other spectators, including representatives from the State Legislature and groups of casual local sightseers. The Red Army, comprised of the Third Brigade under Brigadier Gen. Lester, attacked and won “Hog’s Back,” defended by the Blue Army, commanded by Gen. Welch. The Governor praised the soldiers for their obvious readiness, and later reviewed the troops in a division parade.

The 1911 maneuvers closed without incident and the chief economic beneficiary was declared Carthage. Estimates placed less than \$1,000 spent total by soldiers in Watertown, as the men were given little opportunity to travel that far. Wholesalers who provided Pine Camp with supplies, however, saw a hefty income.



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<sup>20</sup> April 1, 1911

## 1912-1916

Pine Camp was devoid of maneuvers in 1912, though there was an unrealized possibility that it might be used for a week's rifle practice. Meanwhile, concerns arose about the possibility of Madison Barracks being abolished. Gen. Woods and the Secretary of War were pushing for all smaller posts to be abandoned and troops to be mobilized at brigade posts instead. Area business and government leaders called upon the region's representatives to Congress to help retain the Barracks.

On December 21, 1912 a small news item appeared that estimated 8,000 National Guard soldiers for the 1913 maneuvers. County merchants and residents eagerly anticipated tens of thousands of dollars to be circulated by soldiers. Unfortunately, by March 1913 it was learned that no maneuvers would be held in the Pine Plains. Troops were sent to camp at Karnar, NY – a location between Albany and Schenectady that had previously been used as an officers' camp – purportedly because it was more geographically central to the state, and much nearer the homes of the Third Brigade.

In May 1914 the New York Central Railroad authorities at Carthage were instructed to change the switch at Pine Camp, in preparation for 10-15 car loads of tents, incinerators, and other supplies to be shipped to the Mexican front during the occupation of Veracruz.

At the outset of 1916 conjecture began anew about the fate of the Pine Plains and Pine Camp. A May 18, 1916 headline from the *Cape Vincent Eagle*, proclaiming “Another change in Camp plans,” suggested the post's prospects were often uncertain during this time. Brig. Gen. H.P. McCain, the adjutant general, released a statement squashing inquiries regarding the sale of additional Pine Plains acreage to the US, declaring that no additional lands would be purchased for the expansion of Pine Camp. Meanwhile, there were discussions about using the pure spring water supply of the Pine Plains to supply Watertown. “Exhaustive tests by well borings, stream and spring flow measurements, etc., prove[d] that a combination of all would supply a sufficient supply [of water] for present and future need, for a great many years probably.”<sup>21</sup> Engineers, however, estimated that pumping would be necessary to deliver the water to city mains and the water of Black Creek, running through the middle of Pine Camp, would be needed – thereby eliminating Army maneuvers.

Nonetheless, 6,000 men were expected to be quartered for maneuvers at Pine Camp that summer. Initial plans were for two periods of 10-day maneuvers, each with one-half of the state militia. Later, Gen. O’Ryan and Gov. Charles S. Whitman sought to bring the entire militia together for one training period – an initiative that Whitman initially made clear he would veto, preferring a camp for only half of the brigades at a time.

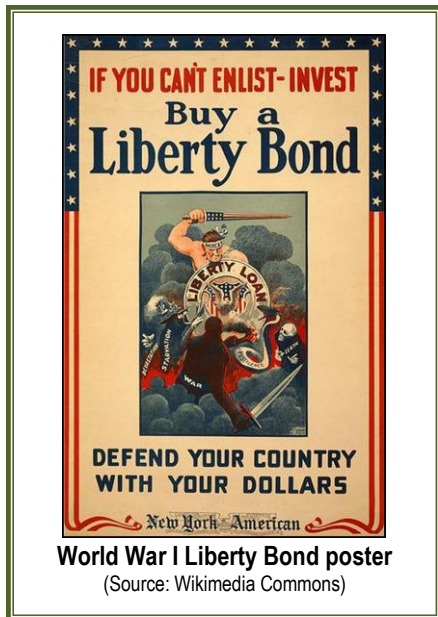


**NY Gov. Charles S. Whitman, 1915-18**  
(Source: Wikimedia Commons, via Lib. of Congress)

<sup>21</sup> *Watertown Herald*: January 1, 1916

## 1917-1920

Pine Plains was designated as an artillery range for Army units, including the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery and 15<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, encamped at Syracuse, and the Second Regiment of Brooklyn. The 1-2 month practice camp scheduled for August/September 1917 was to be the only military use of the Pine Plains that summer, though there rumors of using it for an aviation training field – the previously troublesome sand being considered ideally adaptable for aviation use. (In fact, the only aviator that would be seen that year was when Lieut. A.W. Young of the Royal Flying Corps landed on Madison Barracks' athletic field for a courtesy call on Col. Sample near the end of September.) The reduced usage of Pine Camp for Army purposes was attributed, at least in part, to complaints about the Northern New York weather - despite arguments that its dry fields, pure drinking water, and lack of intrusion on the local population made it ideal as a training camp. Weather had long been a setback for the camp, and continued to be so: The 1908 maneuvers were hampered by heavy rains and winds did irreparable damage, in relation to the



limited budget of the year; wind even carried away \$990 from the Chief Paymaster. Windstorms in 1910 delayed the start of maneuvers, and icy winds from Lake Ontario called off several planned battles. Record temperatures, unofficially recorded near 120 degrees Fahrenheit, in 1931, prostrated numerous soldiers. Troops and vehicles were mired in mud and soaking downpours during the 1935 maneuvers. Accounts from soldiers such as cartoonist Bill Mauldin, in the World War II years, would also note the challenges of frigid temperatures and deep, unexpected, snow.

Contrary to the doubts, by August regular Army officers were again singing the praises of Pine Camp as a training ground, looking to expand the artillery encampment with the inclusion of more regular forces (which did not happen, because infantry officers preferred the climate in

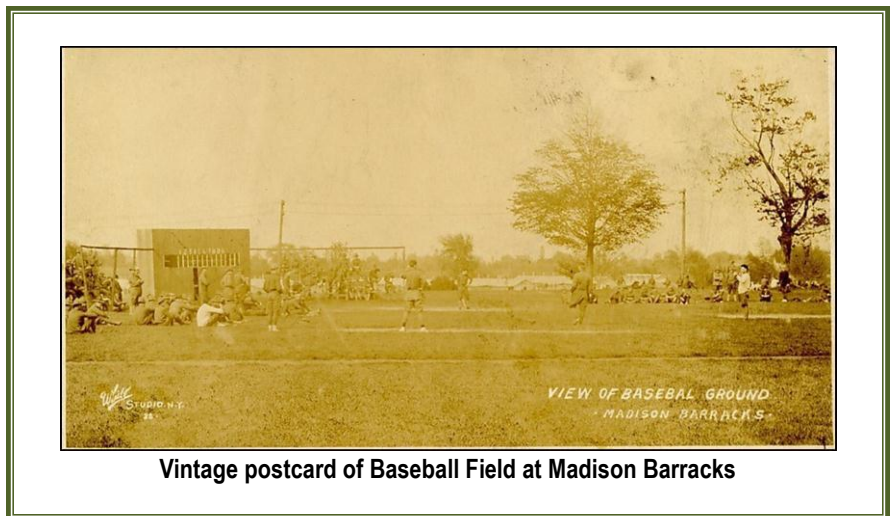
Syracuse to the Pine Plains), finding the proximity to the temptations offered by Syracuse more troublesome than North Country weather. Fifteen hundred soldiers practiced fighting the Kaiser's troops, defending Watertown against the Teutons, that September as they prepared for real battles somewhere on the European front. (The men of the 15<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery who trained at Pine Camp would later be trained in France.) When not so engaged, they could be found playing in organized baseball games and raising money for Liberty Bonds. The artillerymen of Pine Camp raised three times as much per capita in bonds than any other regiment in the country.

Rumors were also circulating during the summer of 1917 about the fate of Madison Barracks. Even though a late spring delayed instruction at the Barracks, contributing to the disuse of Pine Camp, there were reports that a second training camp for reserve officers might follow completion of the first. Additionally, questions arose about the disposition of the temporary buildings erected for the Madison Barracks camp; initially it was believed they would

be reused, until word arrived that all future training camps would be in the south. Regardless of the doubts and vagaries, Col. William R. Sample, commander of the Madison Barracks training school expressed his belief that the Barracks would be an active military center through the duration of World War I. The Colonel suggested that the temporary buildings that housed 2,500 reserve officers would be retained. "They may not use the post as a training camp but there is pretty sure to be something here during the war. It might be used for a hospital or for quartering troops," Sample said. "The Army will use it; there is no question about that. There will be need for all shelters constructed. They may bring some of the troops from Syracuse here."<sup>22</sup> The Barracks were put to immediate use by the War Work Council, organized by the Young Women's Christian Association of Watertown as a subcommittee of the National War Work Council. The council's aim was to place trained workers at each training camp center, and Miss Elizabeth H. Curtiss was dispatched to Madison Barracks, with a home rented in Sackets Harbor as a hostess center, complete with reception, writing, and tea rooms.

Neither training location would, however, be used by local draftees. Conscripts from Watertown and the surrounding areas (which included all men drafted from Oneida, Jefferson, Madison, Oswego, and Onondaga Counties, in addition to other counties in Northern, Central, and Western New York) received their training at Camp Dix in New Jersey. Draftees from Herkimer, Otsego, Hamilton, Lewis, St. Lawrence and Montgomery Counties, in addition to the counties of Eastern New York, were sent to Camp Devens in Massachusetts.

Beyond bootlegging practices and concerns, some of the most direct interaction between the area communities and the military encampment occurred when more than 500 horses and mules belonging to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery stampeded the 15 miles between Pine Camp and Watertown, instinctively following the marching route used between Syracuse and Pine Camp. Local police aided the artillerymen in rounding up the foaming, exhausted animals, placing them into area stables for temporary keeping. Damages were accrued to automobiles when some horses raced through Public Square and one unsuccessfully tried to hurdle a touring car, and another ran into the Adams bus on Washington Street. More positive community relations were seen when Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jackson of Watertown sought local volunteers to host every soldier of the 15<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery at Pine Camp in their homes for Thanksgiving dinner.



**Vintage postcard of Baseball Field at Madison Barracks**

<sup>22</sup> *Watertown Herald*: June 30, 1917



New munitions plants and hundreds of houses were planned at the outset of 1918 in relation to the millions of dollars the government was putting into the barracks, camps, and supplies of the greater Watertown area. The Pine Plains were used more extensively for troops that year, particularly for artillery. Madison Barracks formed its own baseball league, composed of one team from each detachment at the post. Polo was also a favored pastime at Madison Barracks, for both military personal and villagers; officers who had their own horses frequently participated.

News from Washington, DC indicated that Pine Camp could be designated for universal military training service – especially if the Army grew. The camp at Syracuse was being abandoned, making Pine Camp the only significant military post in Northern New York.

### 1921-1927

Though Pine Camp was quiet in 1921, it was not forgotten. Former members of Troop D, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, and Company B, 104<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion held the first of a series of reunions, taking the first steps to form a permanent organization to “keep alive, among former members of the troop, the memories of service on the Mexican border and in France, as well as life at the Pine Plains camp.”<sup>23</sup>

Madison Barracks got its first artillery regiment – the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery – in September of 1922, which meant the construction of new buildings for horses and cannons. The outfit would frequently drill and parade, their appearances benefiting Watertown and other small locales. Unfortunately, that same year, Pine Camp saw its first significant unwelcome encounter with locals, aside from bootlegging and stampedes. On July 12, eight children were killed in an explosion occurring at a Dimmick Street yard in Watertown. The cause was a 155 millimeter shell that was found at Pine Plains and retrieved as a souvenir by Edward G. Workman; it was one of 41 shells remaining after the 106<sup>th</sup> Heavy Field Artillery of Buffalo completed maneuvers at Pine Camp the previous year. The district attorney did not hold the regiment guilty of any criminal behavior, but criticized the regiment in a report that went to state officials. Another death from a “souvenir” shell occurred in November 1930 when a Wilna man accidentally struck a shell in his woodshed with an anvil.

A late August 1924 encampment for Battery A, 104<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery of Syracuse saw damp cold that caused the men’s teeth to chatter despite being dressed “like the Chinese Army... all the way from cottons and denims to woolen OD’s and heavy overcoats and slickers.”<sup>24</sup> Though Pine Camp was now known as a model camp, for many soldiers, their two weeks in 1924 felt like two years and they were eager to go home.

After 20 years, the New York Central rail continued to receive praise for its management of troops and supplies for Pine Camp. Nine-hundred National Guard soldiers from Buffalo were brought in 15-16 coaches, 30 baggage cars, and two Pullman cars (for the officers) in 1925. Madison Barracks hosted the Citizens’ Military Training Camp for field artillery in the Second

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<sup>23</sup> *Syracuse Herald*: August 27, 1921

<sup>24</sup> Philip J. Murphy, *Syracuse Herald*: September 4, 1924

Corps area, duplicating what would be the work of the Reserve Officers in the outbreak of war. As part of this training, the students hiked roughly 20 miles to Pine Camp for firing practice. This road march, in full field equipment, was an annual part of Madison Barracks and Pine Camp summer training, and was, in 2008 for Fort Drum's centennial, re-enacted by troops from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

In 1926 preparations were made to build a rail terminal for Pine Camp, enlarging facilities at Great Bend (where the camp's cantonment was eventually re-located from Hog's Back) to accommodate the increase of freight and passenger business anticipated for the large training camp at the Pine Plains that summer. Madison Barracks also saw improvements that year, with \$400,000 worth of reconstruction to make it a more suitable seat of operations for the country's most intensive site of military training activity. The *Cape Vincent Eagle* wrote:

The eyes of the nation will focus on Pine Camp, a few miles from Watertown, next summer when thousands of men from all over the East will go into training there.

National Guardsmen, artillerymen, cavalrymen and infantry of the reserve corps as well as air units and large detachments of regular Army men will be at the camp and Northern New York will see a new era of military importance with khaki clad men flooding the section.<sup>25</sup>

More than 80,000 soldiers and hundreds of visitors, including the highest ranking officers of the US Army, were expected. Pine Camp was chosen for the sizable enterprise, which involved the entire 10,000-man 27<sup>th</sup> Division, because it was the only post in the East large enough to accommodate satisfactory maneuvers.

Summer training at Pine Camp in 1927 began with the arrival of approximately 420 regular Army troops in May, for 20 days of maneuvers. Upward of 7,200 National Guard troops would follow. On July 6, aviators Capt. Curtis Wheeler and Lieut. Carl Sack plunged 1,500 feet to their death when their plane, a Curtiss JN-4 built in 1918 and rebuilt in 1925, collapsed into a patch of woods, from an unknown cause. There was some speculation that the plane was older than the Air Service claimed and that the aviation sections of the National Guard and Reserve Corps were equipped with "flying coffins." Despite denying any fault or truth to these rumors, the Air Corps announced that all National Guard and Reserve Corps planes dating from World War I would be replaced by September 1, 1927.

Three-thousand, five-hundred soldiers attended the funeral for Wheeler and Sack, held in Hollow Square, while planes circled above the caskets of flag-draped caissons. Wheeler was a World War I hero and a poet. The following verses appeared in the *Syracuse Herald* after his death:

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<sup>25</sup> January 21, 1926

*Shadows, by Curtis Wheeler (July 1918: Coulommiers, Isle de France)*

*Shadows of clouds on the wind-swept grass,  
Under a summer sky,  
Where the blackbird calls from the garden walls  
And the wind goes sweetly by ---  
Shadows of clouds and promise of rain,  
Promise of rain for the earth again ---  
What matter if men should die!*

*Shadows of wings on the pelted earth  
A few bare leagues away,  
Where the crouching horde of the guns have roared  
Since the blood-red break of day.  
Shadows of wings of a menacing doom,  
Warp of the pattern of death's own loom  
Weaving its heedless way.*

*Shadows of clouds and shadows of wings,  
Shadows of death or of rain,  
The rain will fall and death must call  
And life must begin again.  
In the yellow wheat were the scarlet glows  
There is never a poppy nor never a rose,  
But the scarlet flower of pain.*

*Blood to bread and the sun to rain,  
Change and rechange and quicker again,  
And whether life sings or death hums low,  
Swiftly the shadows come and go.*

That same month, the 104<sup>th</sup> Artillery Band of New York City, which was at Pine Camp, furnished music for Cape Vincent's "best ever" Independence Day celebration; the 35-member organization won several prizes during the Great War and was one of the best bands in the service.

### 1928-1930

Only July 6, 1928 the "flying field" at Pine Camp, used during each field training period of the 27<sup>th</sup> air service of the New York National Guard, was dubbed Wheeler-Sack Field, honoring Cpt. Wheeler and Lieut. Sack, who perished in a plane crash at Pine Camp in 1927. Ironically, just days before, Lieut. Herman Von Lockum was killed when his PT-1 plane went into a tailspin at Pine Camp when arriving for summer maneuvers.

Mac McCallum, a Syracusan and member of Battery A, 104<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, began acting as a correspondent for the *Syracuse Herald* in 1928, writing letters and accounts to the paper which were published. One of his first reports included information about the new serge uniforms provided for almost all the outfits at Pine Camp, and the several dress parades that were held. He also wrote about the new men in the battery being formally initiated in the "Order of the Kicking Mules" – which was, seemingly, an informal organization. A letter dated July 23 was filled with gossip: a game of dominoes, ice cream for dessert, an outdated newspaper eagerly passed about camp, a "gold bricking" contest, and a failed attempt at a soldier imitating another's brogue. Much of McCallum's writing was filled with the frolics of camp life in 1928: storytelling, track meets, and nicknames. Indeed, reserve training was often considered by the men to be a sort of summer vacation.

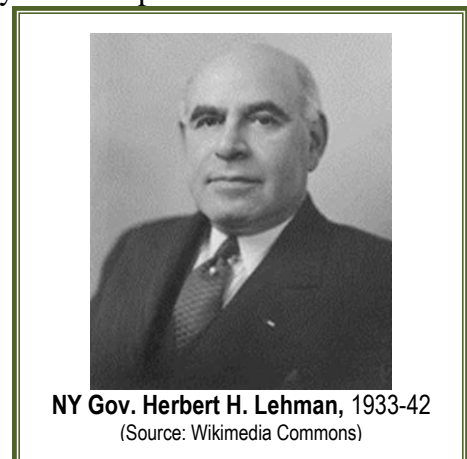


**LeRay Mansion**  
 (Source: Fort Drum MWR website)

About \$80,000 of improvements were anticipated for Pine Camp in 1929. The same year, Madison Barracks hosted spring training at the Stony Point Rifle Range. In 1930 Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt toured the 2,000-acres of LeRay mansion, erected in 1822 (after the original burned in 1808), indicating the government’s interest in its purchase for addition to Pine Camp – which was then 12,000 acres. Purchase of the LeRay estate in LeRayville would enhance artillery practice, hindered by the prohibition of firing at the mansion. Acquisition of the mansion grounds

would not only allow unrestricted artillery work but also ensure preservation of the mansion itself – at which Joseph Bonaparte and other French nobility rendezvoused after the downfall of Napoleon. (A fact that prompted Major J.H. Dunham to declare, in a *Syracuse Post-Standard* editorial in 1908, that the Pine Plains region was historically suited for a military “clinging to these sandy wastes.”) In fact, the LeRay mansion is now the only original building within the Pine Camp expansions that remains, the rest torn down for materials and space. This marked the beginning of government purchases of private properties for the development of the post.

Pine Camp had a rather notable year in 1930. The governors from seven states – New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Maine – were invited by New York’s Lieutenant Governor Herbert H. Lehman. It is not, however, clear how many accepted the offer, particularly after Lehman wrote, “I am advised that the accommodations are of the most simple character. We will, therefore, all have to live in tents and have the usual Army mess facilities. I think, however, that the very simplicity may add to the enjoyment of the occasion.”<sup>26</sup> Night flying was exhibited in Syracuse by a National Guard Aero Squadron from Pine Camp, fulfilling requirements of its training schedule. (Interestingly it was made clear in the *Syracuse Herald* that, “The decision to have such maneuvers here was made last winter and the flying program is not originated by or connected with any newspaper scheme, the State air-force chief said.”) Night-flying practice at the Syracuse airport resulted in one of the city’s worst traffic jams, as thousands of motorists attempted to reach the field for an airshow advertised following the maneuvers; State Police worked until 3 o’clock in the morning clearing the gridlock. It was also the first year that target practice was directed by radio from an airplane. A mock aerial battle was even waged over Syracuse.



**NY Gov. Herbert H. Lehman, 1933-42**  
 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

<sup>26</sup> *Syracuse Herald*: July 7, 1930

## 1931-1934

For the first time in several years there was a concentration of combined infantry and artillery of the regular Army at Pine Camp in 1931, in addition to maneuvers by soldiers of the National Guard. Brig. Gen. William P. Jackson, commandant at Madison Barracks supervised summer war games. Machine gun companies and howitzer and mortar detachments were included with second battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery – with special machine gun demonstrations planned as part of the maneuvers. Special recruit instruction was held for the “rookies” in the mess at night. Temperatures over 100 degrees Fahrenheit suspended activities for two days at the camp after a morning drill saw the collapse of men.

Financial troubles and food shortages plagued military camps in 1932, hinging on an Army appropriations bill in Congress. Nonetheless, militias received training at Pine Camp, and Mac McCallum returned to his role as correspondent for the *Syracuse Herald*. One of the first big news items he had to report was the replacement of silent films with talking motion pictures for entertainment. In November horses were replaced with motors, and Battery A of 104<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery appeared for the last time with their mounts to receive a shooting trophy. The same year brought several changes to Madison Barracks, including the completion of one building (the Post Theater) and the destruction by fire of another (which housed a military schoolroom and library).

In early June of 1933 it was announced that the National Guard training at Pine Camp would go ahead, unless President Roosevelt ordered otherwise because of economy. Training did take place and ushered in the final full motorization of the Field Artillery at the camp when four heavy-duty trucks, a station wagon, and mounted 75mm field pieces were issued to Battery A of the 104<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery. *Herald*

correspondent also wrote of the 37mm guns mounted on the barrel (“tube”) of the 75mm guns, good for short range target practice, throwing a one-pound projectile about 1.5 miles. This was the first time the Battery used motorized equipment in training maneuvers.

Along with motorized Batteries B and C, training in 1933 started the application of the Theory of Motorized Artillery Warfare; daily drills were required for the men to familiarize themselves with the new equipment, though they continued to sing “The Caissons Go Rolling Along” even though trucks had replaced the



caissons. Another change for Pine Camp that year was that the Canteen had unexpectedly taken over the sale of 3.2 beer – a low-alcohol, or “near” beer developed during the years of Prohibition.

December 1933 brought the announcement of a \$170,000 Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.) allocation for an extensive work relief program at Pine Camp and Madison Barracks. The allocation would employ over 332 Jefferson County men and fund the building of a drill hall, non-commissioned officers’ headquarters, a motor shed, and roads, as well as repairs to water lines and grounds – all within a 90-day period. Earlier in the year, another fifty unemployed men from Champion and Rutland were hired under the State work relief project, clearing range space at Pine Camp.

Another \$80,736 was spent on Pine Camp improvements later in 1934, on projects that went to bid. New equipment in the form of two new gun trucks and two station wagons, were provided through the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.) appropriation, assuring each battery two trucks. Troop movement to the Pine Plains in that year brought a motor train rumbling over the Catskills, in the first war-like invasion since the Revolution and in the longest march ever taken by a motor unit of the New York National Guard. Entertainment for the soldiers was, for the first time reported, to be found in Pine Camp environs; a weekend leave was spent hiking country trails, on lake beaches, or in area villages in towns. Many of the troops from Syracuse even returned home for Sunday dinner.

## 1935

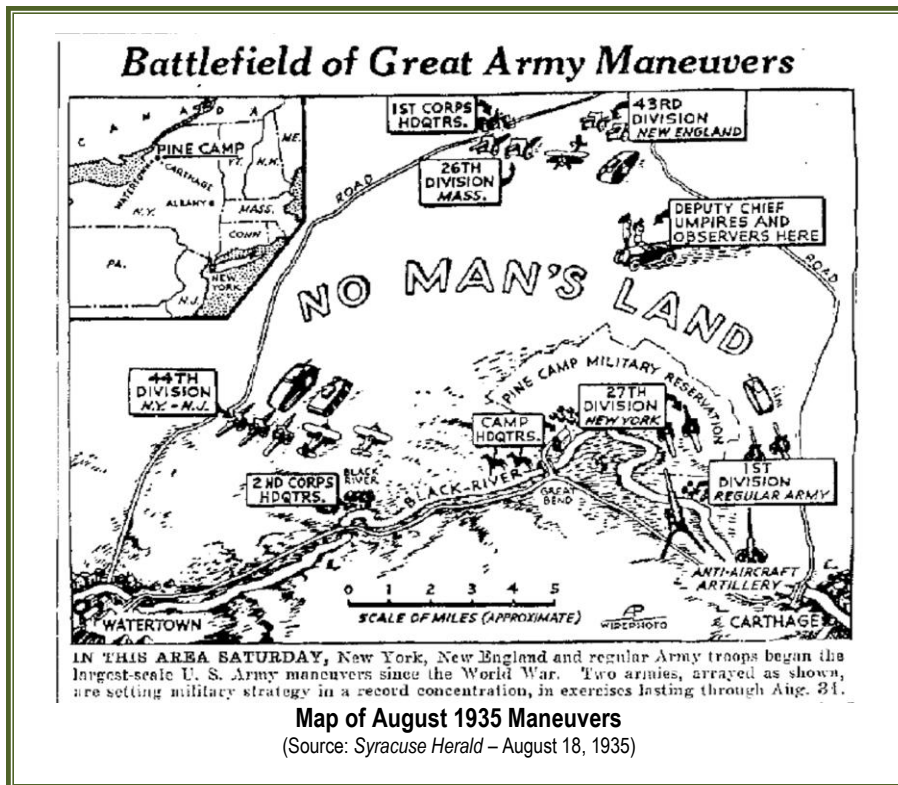
At the start of 1935, approval was given for the purchase of 6,000-10,000 acres of “sub-marginal land” adjacent to Pine Camp. The lands, owned by multiple people, would help to reduce crowding at the summer training camps, “square up” the camp’s borders, and permit a larger big gun firing range.

Maneuvers of 36,500 troops (with newspaper estimates at 60,000-70,000), began on August 17, 1935. They were, at the time, the largest peace-time Army maneuvers in the history of the United States, and they brought about the closing of the NYS National Guard training camp at Peekskill and the leasing of uncultivated farmland in Jefferson County to quarter the troops. These maneuvers were estimated at a cost over \$500,000, and the Secretary of the War allotted \$78,500 for the maintenance and repairs throughout the 14-day camp. It was estimated that the government would spend approximately \$370,000 assembling the troops for the sizable war maneuvers.

The townships of Northern New York garnered around \$1,000,000 from the endeavor through such things as home and hotel rentals, alcohol and tobacco sales, transportation costs (including the use of more than 1,000 privately owned trucks, hundreds of taxicabs from around the state, and the longest passenger train yet operated out of Syracuse), restaurant service, food supplies (for example, Syracuse businesses received ice and bakery contracts), and entertainment (amateurs were sought from the local population); additionally, sales of cigars, chairs, and bedding increased. According to the secretary of the Watertown Chamber of Commerce, Ernest Gould, nearly everyone in the region would eventually benefit from the maneuvers – despite the resort areas of Northern New York being a “NoMan’sLand,” with strict military control on the flow of all traffic.

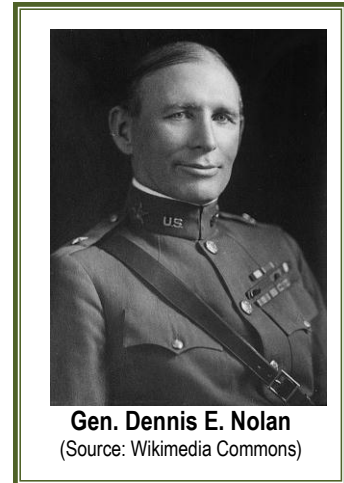
Regular training practice was held at Pine Camp in July, a prelude to “Zero Hour” in

August. The mobilization had been dependent on a \$400,000 appropriation by Congress, which had not even been drawn by the end of January, and efforts to derail the maneuvers were made through unfounded rumors of Communist infiltration and marauding murderous soldiers in what the Army termed a “whispering campaign” against the planned maneuvers. Despite such complications,



32,000 men of the country’s crack troops participated in the concentration. Battle lines extended from Pamela Four Corners through Evans Mills and Sterlingville to the Indian River south of Woods Mill, and from Philadelphia through Pine Camp; the main concentration of battle was on a 100 square mile area around Pine Camp, Carthage, Antwerp, Philadelphia, and Felts Mills. The olive-drab and khaki-clad troops were comprised of about 2,500 officers and 33,000 enlisted men, 7,000 of whom were regular Army; the remainder was from the National Guard. Every arm of the service was represented, including America’s only mechanized cavalry. Near the end of the war games several mythical corps were also involved, as the full five divisions of troops acted to prevent an “invasion” of Northern New York.

Over 1,000 horses took the field with 30 tanks, 56 tractors, and nearly 3,000 trucks and automobiles, in addition to no fewer than 50 airships. Every tactical and mechanical weapon of the previous two decades were brought into play, and it was the first time that the new Army “Crushers” – 22,300-pound speedy tanks – were put into action. Unfortunately, a great many machines proved unserviceable; only five of the 30 tanks could be used in the games, and there was not even enough blank ammunition for efficient fighting. Despite such problems, the games nonetheless provided the tactical opportunity to see how fast combat troops could be moved into action: infantry, cavalry and artillery support speeded into action at 30 miles per hour, covering ten miles in 90 minutes – a distance that once would have taken a full day. It was the first time in history the US Army attempted such a feat. A headline in the *Syracuse Herald* soon exclaimed, “Motor Troops Spell Doom Of Old Army.”<sup>27</sup> In addition to experimenting with the use of commands via short-wave radio, one of the major innovations of the maneuvers involved men rather than equipment. Gen. Dennis E. Nolan experimented with taking buck Privates into his confidence, keeping them informed at all times as what actions would be taken and why, and making his expectations of them clear, with a then-novel idea that battles could be fought more intelligently if the soldiers knew more about what they were doing.



State and local police were needed to help manage traffic, and a motorcycle escort took the troops safely through Syracuse traffic on their way to Pine Camp. The military later returned the favor when they aided police in a hunt for bandits believed to be hiding in the Pine Camp area. Columbia Broadcasting Services (CBS) broadcast eye-witness accounts of the war games, with microphones stationed at strategic points throughout the encampment, including the umpire headquarters and various places on the battlefields, allowing listeners to hear commentary, gunfire, and explosions, and announcers were equipped with pack transmitters in the front line trenches; it was the first time radio went into the field under warlike conditions. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) was also involved in these broadcasts, using 17 tons of radio and electrical equipment, valued at over \$50,000, manned by 23 announcers and technicians. Through this experience, NBC learned several lessons about war broadcasts: An intelligible signal could be sent through an intricate ultra-short wave relay system, despite interference from the military transmissions – and that the system would be relatively safe from enemy compromise, but the cost and logistics of adequate coverage would make it impossible for accurate broadcasts in any widespread battle area, especially because the complexities of warfare baffled many radiomen.

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<sup>27</sup> August 21, 1935





**Scherer's body**

(Source: *Syracuse Herald* – August 23, 1935)

Though the maneuvers were a sham war, there were a number of real casualties. Between 76 and 120 soldiers acquired ptomaine poisoning, through what was thought to be tainted lemonade, causing two batteries to retreat in a mock battle. Three soldiers were hurt when their ton and one-half truck went off the road and rolled three times. A front-rank Private landed in the Field Hospital after being wounded by a bayonet. Lieut. Robert Scherer, a Curtiss pilot with the 97<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron, was dragged to death when his parachute straps tangled with his wrecked plane at the conclusion of a night raid maneuver; it is believed that the gas line of

the plane was plugged, causing the motor to fail. Perhaps these incidents served to reinforce the evidence of “how infinitely more dangerous warfare of today is than the cumbersome specimen of 18 years ago.”<sup>28</sup>

A variety of dignitaries witnessed the war games. President Franklin Roosevelt had planned on attending, until a lengthy Congressional session prohibited him from leaving DC. Military attaches of the embassies of Canada,

China, Cuba, England, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, and Spain were on site to study the maneuvers, particularly the effectiveness of the newest weaponry – though their learning opportunities were limited to only what the US wanted them to see. Other honored visitors included Governors Lehman, Harold G. Hoffman of New Jersey and Theodore Francis Green of Rhode Island. At the close of maneuvers Lehman indicated that he was “tremendously impressed” by what he had seen and believed that the cost of the maneuvers was fully justified and that Pine Camp should serve as an inspiration to the government. He stated, “My honest opinion is that adequate preparedness is the best preventative of war.”<sup>29</sup>

Undeniably, the entire spectacle was seen by some as “the concentrated effort of the United States Government to answer a nationwide babble of pacifism, neutrality and propaganda



**Foreign military attaches and Gov. Lehman**

(Source: *Syracuse Herald* – August 26, 1935)

<sup>28</sup> William L. Pitts, *Syracuse Herald*: August 20, 1935

<sup>29</sup> *Syracuse Herald*: August 30, 1935

that is fatiguing the air of America.”<sup>30</sup>

The war games were called “MacArthur’s pet project.” They were the result of a two-year fight with Congress by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, spurred by the saber rattling of Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, and Hirohito, to ensure that the US would be ready and able

to respond quickly in the case of an emergency. Army General Staff officers saw the maneuvers as a chance to “sell” the need for training and equipment to the American people. Field masses at Pine Camp, attended by 10,000, echoed these ideas; sermons stressed patriotism and courage, yet voiced hopes for peace.

This goal, however, was not fully realized. Local clergymen used the results of the war games as evidence of poor government spending: “When hundreds of millions of dollars are spent for preparedness each year, why do Army officers say that we are unprepared for war after every maneuver?” asked the Rev. Dr. Freeman Jenny of Park Central Presbyterian Church in downtown Syracuse.<sup>31</sup> Jenny supported his argument by quoting from a statement of a high-ranking Army official about the shocking deficiencies in equipment and personnel witnessed at the Pine Camp war games. An Oswego pastor and ex-newspaperman, Rev. Selden Carlyle Adams, called upon President Roosevelt to “divert from the War and Navy Departments funds spent on such ghastly projects as the recent Pine Camp maneuvers and foster public education to the extent that our citizens can continue to be sufficiently enlightened to govern themselves in a democracy.”<sup>32</sup>

In spite of such detractors, the troops received much praise for their morale and efficiency – with full recognition that the training and modernization of the Army still had a long way to go – and, following the successful completion of the war games, Pine Camp was finally declared a permanent maneuvering area for annual programs and residents around Watertown



<sup>30</sup> William L. Pitts, *Syracuse Herald*: August 5, 1935

<sup>31</sup> *Syracuse Herald*: September 20, 1935

<sup>32</sup> *Syracuse Herald*: October 8, 1935

were, according to the *Watertown Herald*, hopeful that the government-optioned land around Pine Camp would be purchased by the re-settlement administration – despite an initial veto to plans to purchase about 12,000 acres.

### Conclusion

In 1936 the military would begin its encroachment on the native environs, when it held maneuvers in Sterlingville, using the fields and yards of residents. (Actually, this was not the first time the locals had been involved in maneuvers. In 1934, spectators accidentally participated in a chemical warfare demonstration when a breeze carried tear gas across the drill ground. Watertown staged a blackout in 1935 to fight mock air raiders, giving residents a show of .50 caliber and aerial machine guns and anti-aircraft artillery over a mostly darkened city. Also in 1935 a Philadelphia farmer, John Hagen, reported a new respect for the Army, when a guard posted at Hagen’s granary to protect it would not even let the farmer himself enter.) Often residents would take refreshments to the soldiers when they took breaks from marching, and troops frequently did overnight encampments at farms when marching to Pine Camp in its earlier days. But as the camp continued to expand over thousands of acres throughout the 1930s and 1940s, civil-military associations became more strained as the government gave local owners the option of selling or being condemned. The War Department purchased 90,000 acres at Pine Camp in 1939 and 1940, and another 75,000 acres in 1941, relocating no fewer than 2,000 people from over 500 families. In a reversal of the boon that Pine Camp’s maneuvers had offered to the North Country from 1906 to 1935, these huge purchases of land did economic damage to the area, despite the over \$6,000,000 paid in salaries to local labor; some families did not receive payment for their properties for over a decade, critical roads were closed, agriculture was decreased, schools were overcrowded, and revenue to many factories and stores was hindered.

Today, however, Fort Drum (which the post became in 1974) has over 3,600 family dwellings. It is the largest employer of the North Country with an annual economic impact of over \$1.5 billion. Multiple community-outreach initiatives are supported, including the annual Memorial Day recognition of the preserved cemeteries from the lost communities of LeRaysville, Sterlingville, North Wilna, Woods Mill, Lewisburg, Slocumville, Alpina, and Reedville, that once occupied the “Huckleberry desolation” of Pine Camp, Camp Drum, and Fort Drum.

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