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Five Geneseo Monuments: Exhibition Catalog

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Five Geneseo Monuments

Exhibition Catalog

BRIDGE GALLERY

December 4, 2019

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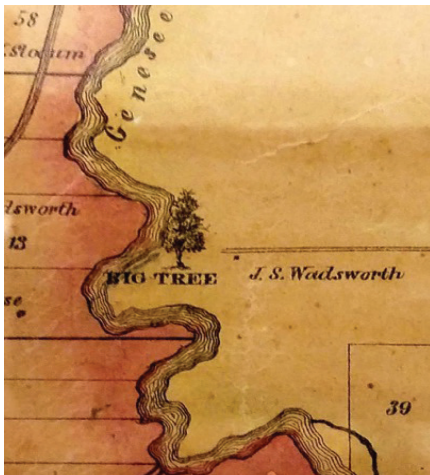
Contents

The Big Tree	6
Jessica Pisano, Ryan Brock, Mercedes Simpson	
The Bear Fountain Monument: A Symbol of Community	11
Jake Ovenshire, Juliana Kuryla, and Ireland Scanlon	
James Samuel Wadsworth Statue	18
Rachel Balfoort	
Progression Toward Modernity: Geneseo's Suffragists, The Shaw Sisters	25
Elana Evenden, Tom Mossey, Kayla Whalen	
The Geneseo Fire Department Memorial	31
Rachel Mihlstin, Olivia Schoenfeld, Olivia Delahunt	



The Big Tree

Jessica Pisano, Ryan Brock, Mercedes Simpson



Historical Map found in Livingston County Historical Society Museum

The Big Tree is a unique addition to this collection of landmarks. It was not man made in remembrance, like most of the other things found in this collection. In fact, from it other things were made, and while it lived an ecosystem flourished. Located at the Livingston County Historical Museum, the Big Tree is the five ton remnants of a once very living 300 year old massive oak tree.¹ Aptly named for its size, the historic Big Tree has stood witness to many generations of people and has served as a symbol and relic to very different cultures at very different times. The Big Tree is a prominent symbol of Genesee and depending on which lens you view it through, can have multiple meanings to different individuals. The Big Tree stood on the east bank of

the Genesee River until 1857, when it fell due to rising flood waters, despite efforts to save it. For the Seneca tribe and the larger Haudenosaunee confederacy, it served as a landmark to guide their way and help them identify where they were. The massive appearance of the tree made it easy to identify, therefore making it a natural navigational symbol for the newly arrived colonists. It even appears on official maps, which can also be seen in the Livingston County Historical Society Museum's collection.

The Big Tree is most commonly associated with the Big Tree Treaty, but the name of the Treaty refers to the region, not the actual tree. The council site of the treaty was located near Wadsworth Log Cabin owned by William and James Wadsworth. Robert Morris, a powerful political figure and financier, paid for feasts, beads, and furs in attempts to persuade the Seneca to sell four million acres of their land.² The deliberations for the treaty took days and in the end the decision was left to the females of the Seneca group. Seneca females, as part of a democratic government, had more rights than

¹ *Up & down the River: Art & Geography of the Genesee River*. Genesee, NY: Genesee Valley Council on the Arts, 1977.

² *Up & down the River: Art & Geography of the Genesee River*. Genesee, NY: Genesee Valley Council on the Arts, 1977.

white female settlers and were included in the deliberations, in the end the deciding vote was left to them. The democratic process observed by the Seneca nation served as inspiration to the Founding Fathers for the structure of The United States Government. Originally these women did not have any interest in selling the land, yet after two weeks of negotiation they decided to sign. A lot of this can be considered directly related to manipulation and power dynamics. For instance, gifts and liquor were used to incentivize the sale. Overall, they had little respect for the majority of the tribe leaders, referring to Red Jacket as “prey to liquor” and Cornplanter as a “half-breed Seneca chief.”³ At the conclusion of negotiations, three million acres of land changed hands at the low price of one hundred thousand dollars.

At the conclusion of the treaty, the Senecas were left with four small reservations of land to host their community, a small portion of what they used to call home. The Seneca could be seen as better off than many other Native American tribes who were forced onto reservations without compensation in completely different states than their original homes. However, it was clear, “For the Senecas it was sunset, but for the young pioneers who soon moved into the land it was a new dawn.”⁴ This may be why the Big Tree is often called the Wadsworth Oak.



Chief Cornplanter, Frederick Bartoli, 1796

The Big Tree is a polarized symbol shared between the Seneca Nation and white settlers. A hundred years after signing the Big Tree Treaty, members of the Seneca Nation voiced their ill will regarding the deal. Andrew John was recorded exclaiming, “From the standpoint of my race many incidents of the most disgraceful tricks and robberies were perpetrated upon the poor untutored sons of the forest. It would have been strange indeed if the natives had borne tamely such wholesale robbery of their property.”⁵ In 1997, 200 years post-treaty, the Seneca Nation joined the Livingston County community and erected a commemoration plaque. From the Seneca perspective, the plaque stands today to remember the unfair, dishonorable theft of their land.

3 *Up & down the River: Art & Geography of the Genesee River*. Geneseo, NY: Genesee Valley Council on the Arts, 1977.

4 Dutch VanRy, “Dedicating the Plaque Marking the Council House of the Treaty of Big Tree” (dedication speech, September 14, 1997)

5 Dutch VanRy, “Dedicating the Plaque Marking the Council House of the Treaty of Big Tree” (dedication speech, September 14, 1997)

White settlers held a decidedly opposite view of the Big Tree treaty. The Seneca people were viewed as “savages” that were easily swayed. In fact, settlers provided Native Americans liquor and trinkets to incentivize a successful land transaction. Select historical representations refer to the Big Tree as the Wadsworth Oak. The Wadsworth Estate has a desk made from the Big Tree itself. White settlers took great, perhaps excessive amounts, of pride in the Big Tree treaty and their successful western expansion without considering the detriment caused to the Seneca Nation.

The Big Tree is important as a symbol of past and present of this community. The Big Tree first serves as a symbol of the Seneca Community that once thrived in the areas of Geneseo. Yet in the same way, it is a symbol of the Native community’s oppression that they continue to overcome today. Although the Wadsworths may rightfully be seen as historic heroes, it is important to remember that the Big Tree existed long before they gained their foothold in their new land of the Genesee River Valley and it should not be seen as The Wadsworth Oak. Today’s Geneseo community looks to the Big Tree as a symbol of strength and endurance. It is a symbol of the pride in which the people of Geneseo take in their historic past. It serves as a link to that historic past and serves as a reminder of the people who came before them. By preserving The Big Tree and opening their new exhibit that highlights the pre-colonial past of the area the Livingston County Historical Society Museum has helped preserve the past to help teach future generations that there is strength in community.

I ran into Sally and Liz, President and Vice President of the Board of Directors at the Livingston County Historical Society Museum when I went in to photograph the Big Tree exhibit. Sally seemed excited to show me around the exhibit, her enthusiasm was contagious. After allowing me to roam the museum with my camera, Sally showed me a map of the area made in the 1800s that used the Big Tree as a landmark.

As we spoke I remembered reading in a source book that there was a desk commissioned by James Wadsworth out of some of the remnants of the Big Tree after it fell. I asked Sally if she knew anything about the desk. Her eyes lit up and she energetically motioned for me to follow her to the next room. There against the wall was the secretary style desk that was commissioned by James Wadsworth.

Sally and Liz indulged me with one last question before I left. I asked both of them what they



Wadsworth desk, made from The Big Tree



The Big Tree, found in the Livingston County Historical Society Museum

of Exhibitions at the Iroquois Indian Museum in Howes Cave, New York. An important stipulation that Lemmon has made for the purposes of this interview is that she is not Haudenosaunee. She is a Museum Professional who has worked and learned over the span of many years from the Haudenosaunee. The following opinions and thoughts should by no means be considered to hold the weight of authority of the Haudenosaunee community. As it comes to The Big Tree as a symbol, we must remember what this tree meant to the Haudenosaunee themselves. Lemmon describes the traditional values of Haudenosaunee as including respect and care for all the elements that are considered gifts of the natural world. In addition, the importance of considering the impact of one's actions on generations to come. I think this is important to consider as we look at Geneseo through the lens of The Big Tree, it embodies the importance and consideration of the natural world that perfectly align with Haudenosaunee values. As Lemmon states, "Respect for and showing gratitude towards the natural world and its gifts are foundational to traditional Haudenosaunee culture." The Thanksgiving Address, referred to as Ganö:nyök in Seneca, opens and closes all gatherings even today and acknowledges each individually. As Lemmon stresses, on a daily basis members of the Haudenosaunee acknowledge the irreplaceable value of the land, water, medicinal plants, and traditional artistic methods. Individually and through collaborative efforts they protect and preserve their traditional values. As Lemmon states, "If I understand accurately, the current loss of health & deterioration of the natural world is part of Seneca/Haudenosaunee prophecies and considered a warning."

As Lemmon explains, another traditional value of the Haudenosaunee is maintaining sovereignty as a distinct nation/group of nations. The Big Tree as a symbol has association with The Big Tree Treaty that effectively took their lands. The overarching theme of this treaty is colonization. As Lemmon makes clear, colonization affected the Haudenosaunee in countless ways. As she makes clear, "With colonization land use

thought the Big Tree meant to the community of Geneseo. Liz Porter said she believed the big tree was a symbol of strength and survival. She also mentioned that she was overwhelmed by the support the community offered when they began fundraising.

She said it took no time at all to raise the needed funds. Sally mentioned the historic value of the Big Tree. She remembered coming to the museum as a child in the fourth grade and seeing the Big Tree. At that time it was housed outside, and apparently looked much larger back then.

Colette Lemmon is the Curator

changed; gender roles & responsibilities changed; languages were lost; much indigenous knowledge was lost; Christianity undermines traditional ways of life & thinking; western values and assimilation become a big part of the mix; government structures change from traditional system to elected (in most Haudenosaunee communities); diet sees dramatic change; Native identity becomes a marketable commodity, shared resources vs individual ownership/personal benefit, etc.” Colonization had a great effect on the colonized Haudenosaunee. It must be remembered that “The original authority & rights to these lands which they hold as a consequence of having occupied them for several thousands of years before European contact.” Not only this land but everything contained within it including The Big Tree was lost. The Haudenosaunee continue to grieve this loss and Lemmon describes their experience as, “The loss of home, loss of places of memory, loss of important natural resources, sorrow and powerlessness of leaders to prevent its happening...” Yet it is important to acknowledge that the Haudenosaunee continue to function as the oldest democracy on Earth. As Lemmon puts it, their first and true allegiance is to their own nations.



The Big Tree, Livingston County Historical Society Museum



The Bear Fountain Monument: A Symbol of Community

Jake Ovenshire, Juliana Kuryla, and Ireland Scanlon



Central view of the bear monument from Center Street.

Communities around the world often have a symbol they look to when imagining a specific place. For the village of Geneseo, New York, that symbol is the infamous Bear Fountain positioned in the center of Main Street. Anyone who has passed through the town can notice the stature of the fountain as a whole and as a landmark within the community social atmosphere. One opinion you typically may hear about the monument concerns its awkward placement in the middle of the road. However, this center



Close up of Emmeline Wadsworth bear monument.

point within the community simultaneously brings people together and gives use to the historical monument within the changing social structures of an ever-changing society. The Bear Fountain monument has been an irreplaceable symbol of the village of Geneseo, New York since its installment in 1888. The town's efforts to maintain constant restoration efforts of the fountain has survived the changing times of the town.

Herbert Wadsworth and his brother William Austin Wadsworth commissioned the bronze bear to the town in memorial of their mother Emmeline. This monument was



View of Main Street, "Horses At The Fountain". 1900. Courtesy of John and Liz Porter APOG.

put to physical use as a trough for the town's water source at the end of the 17th century in addition to leaving a historical landmark to the town for generations to come. The architect chosen by the Wadsworth brothers held personal ties with their late mother Emmeline. Emmeline had a passion for animals which inspired the brothers when searching to create this monument. Thinking back on a family trip to Switzerland is where the connection lies within the sculpting for the statue and the architects involved. Although there has been some questioning as to who deserves the full credit of the creation of the bear, there are only a few documents stating names involved with the statue, the title is given to Christophe Fratin and Richard Morris Hunt to the rest of the fountain. On Christophe Fratin, he is an architect from France during the early 19th century, he's credited to creating many bronze works produced in France during this era along with Antoine Bayre who was also thought to have some credit to the bear statue ending in no connection at all. As Fratin travels through Europe, he frequents in Switzerland gaining most of his fountain experience from the Swiss seeing as fountains are the main form of art throughout the country. The Wadsworth family had also enjoyed vacationing there, especially the mother Emmeline, which is why the brothers chose Fratin to cast the bronze bear memorial. For the remainder of the fountain, the architect responsible for constructing the monument is Richard Morris Hunt who was a prominent architect of his time. He was involved in creating multiple famous American monuments, in addition to the fountain Hunt also worked with creating the Statue of Liberty as well as the U.S Capitol building. The fact that the Wadsworth were able to get into contact with Hunt to create this piece for the town is in and of itself a monument, it truly shows the stature the Wadsworth family held over the county and surrounding areas. This gives way for a greater historical background context for the town of Geneseo. Combined with the Swiss aspects of the bear at the top of the fountain, and the American architecture of the fountain used with American based marble to create the original bowl for the statue based out of Bradford, Connecticut. The creation of this dedication in full became a whole community event especially once installation took place in the late 19th century, and remained a staple centerpiece within the community since the production, maintaining its place within the community as a gathering place for all who visit or abide within Geneseo.



Hind view of the Bear Fountain circa 1890.

Countless instances have transpired that illustrate the importance and significance of the Bear Fountain as a symbol for the village of Geneseo. The most recognized force that has highlighted the importance of the fountain is the Association for the Preserva-

tion of Geneseo. Also known as APOG, this organization has been at the forefront of the Bear Fountains preservation and renovation of the fountain as early as the 1970's when the fountain was riddled with multiple street signs and a traffic light, making the fountain an eyesore to the community. Paul Malo, a Syracuse architect retained by the Association for the Preservation of Geneseo, suggested that the signs and fixtures be moved from the base of the fountain and moved to the street corners, where they still reside today. At one point the complete bottom half of the fountain was hidden by the signs and fixtures. This set into motion a fountain project would be consistent with board policy to "strengthen Main Street, the social and commercial center of the community" budgets costing around 2800 alongside the fountain. This communal involvement can also be attributed to one of SUNY Geneseo's professors, Kurt Cylke, who got involved with APOG in 1997 to replace to terrible looking lanterns that was once held by the famous bear with a more authentic gothic-inspired lantern and 3D images made for the fountain to keep any renovations to the fountain as authentic to the original as possible. His experience can be better understood in the interview that we conducted. As per Malos and Cylke's example, we can see that the fountain as a symbol of Geneseo is powerful enough to evoke strong opinions from the community based on how it's displayed. A more recent instance that illustrated the fountain's importance to the village was when the fountain was struck by a milk truck in 2016, leaving the fountain damaged beyond repair. In a Livingston County newspaper called the Genesee Sun, we can see the steps that were taken to rebuild the monument stat-



Central view of Center Street from the Bear Fountain.



Side view of the Bear Statue from Main Street.

ing that “The Association for the Preservation of Geneseo” (APOG) is partnering with Moorland Studios, a nationally renowned outdoor monument restoration group, to restore the fountain. APOG keeps 3D images of the fountain’s every detail since its Gothic lamp was restored years ago.” While funding the restoration was done “by a ‘trust fund’ set aside by the community for the bear fountain in case of such accidents and partially by insurance paid by Upstate Niagara Cooperative Inc., who owns the truck.” The steps taken to reinstall this monument like 3D image use and even using a trust fund that the community raised illustrates just how important the Bear Fountain is to the community.

In summation, the community of Geneseo has gone to great lengths so that the Bear Fountain remains an everlasting symbol of Geneseo. With the likes of APOG, Kurt Cylke, and generous Geneseo alumni, it appears that the fountain has sufficient financial and communal support to continue lighting up Main Street. As a monument that all residents and students have come in contact with, the Bear Fountain stands as a symbol of the passion the community of Geneseo embodies.

Interview with Kurt Cylke

Oct 22, 2019

During our research, we had the pleasure of conducting an interview of the very knowledgeable Kurt Cylke, a professor of Sociology here at Geneseo. After moving to the town with his family in 1990, he began to take an interest in the bear fountain, which was conveniently a block away from his new residence. Due to its central location between the school and his home, Cylke would walk by the fountain daily on his way to work. The structure is hardly visually avoidable and with time, Cylke became

critical of the fountain's appearance. His initial complaint concerned the "fucking ugly lantern" that had presumably replaced the original following its destruction. This was not the first time people have been dissatisfied with arbitrary additions to the fountain. In the 1930s, a stop light system was installed to the fountain which was followed by street signs being affixed to the base of the structure in the 1960s. Unsurprisingly, these items did nothing to contribute to the fountain's artistic intention and were removed in the 70s due to public backlash. Cylke reacted in a similar way when he joined APOG (Association for the Preservation of Geneseo) to advocate for the replacement of the unsightly lantern. The collaboration between Professor Cylke and APOG began with their consultation with Moorland Studios in New Jersey, the company that was tasked with reproducing the lantern. To fund the restoration, Cylke called upon Geneseo alumni to contribute what they wished to finance the project. The accumulated money totaled \$30,000, which was more than enough for the \$4,000 lantern restoration. With \$26,000 at APOG's disposal, they were able to purchase a 360 degree detail oriented digital scan of the fountain which would be used as a template for future restorations. This left \$6,000 for whatever eventual financial burden was created by the fountain.

Mr. Cylke also informed us about a piece of misinformation regarding the materials used for the original fountain. The granite in the base of the fountain was thought to have come from St. George, Nova Scotia. It was confirmed by Cylke that the stone was extracted from a quarry in Bradford, Connecticut. The company that would reconstruct the base from that same granite used in the original was the Rock of Ages, a globally recognized laser cutting company based in Vermont, where they were able to



Side view of the Bear Fountain via Main Street.

utilize the 360 digital scan. The remaining granite from the destroyed fountain was later repurposed into four benches that now line Main Street in Geneseo. Smaller portions

of the stone were broken down and sold as pieces of history at the Livingston County Museum.

Cylke addressed a question we had about the particular usage of a bear for the fountain. Architect Richard Morris Hunt apparently spent a great deal of time in Berne, Switzerland. Berne is actually Swiss for 'bear' and the city hosts about 100 municipal fountains topped with bear figurines. The bear was a dedication to their mother, Emmeline Wadsworth, who died in March 21st 1885. When Emmeline visited Berne with her family, she had taken a particular fondness for these fountains making the fountain dedicated to her a thoughtful tribute. In a way, the memorial serves as a memento of the Wadsworth's mother's trip to Switzerland. As for Hunt, Cylke does not even believe that the architect visited Geneseo to survey the land prior to construction. It seems as though his efforts were done from afar. Cylke clears up an important point for us, the fountain and the actual bear statue were pieced together at the same time.

According to Cylke, there have been few acts of vandalism performed on the fountain. Most of the issues the fountain endured were caused by vehicular accidents. The fountain has come down at least five separate times, says Cylke. He explains how it is not really a big deal because of this. Cylke reinforces our thesis of community involvement by detailing multiple activities that take place with the fountain as a centerpiece. Due to its proximity to SUNY Geneseo, the fountain is used as a post for hanging the homecoming banners. The banner, attached to the bear, actually brought the statue down on a y. Activithe statue on a very windy day. In regard to celebrations concerning younger folk, there is an annual Teddy Bear Parade that takes place on Main Street every year. During Halloween, children dress up and parade around the illuminated fountain. During Christmas time, holiday decorations are hung on the fountain as well, drawing even more attention to the towns centerpiece.

The fountain has now taken on a modern use, a directional divider for a traffic circle. The structure sits at a crossroads at the center of a lengthy Main Street and perpendicular Center Street which often funnels cars into the main drag. Cars can use the fountain to turn onto Center Street or Main Street without completely blocking traffic by stalling in front of it then making a turn. This structure alleviates a potential traffic problem while being more attractive than a set of orange traffic cones.



James Samuel Wadsworth Statue

Rachel Balfort

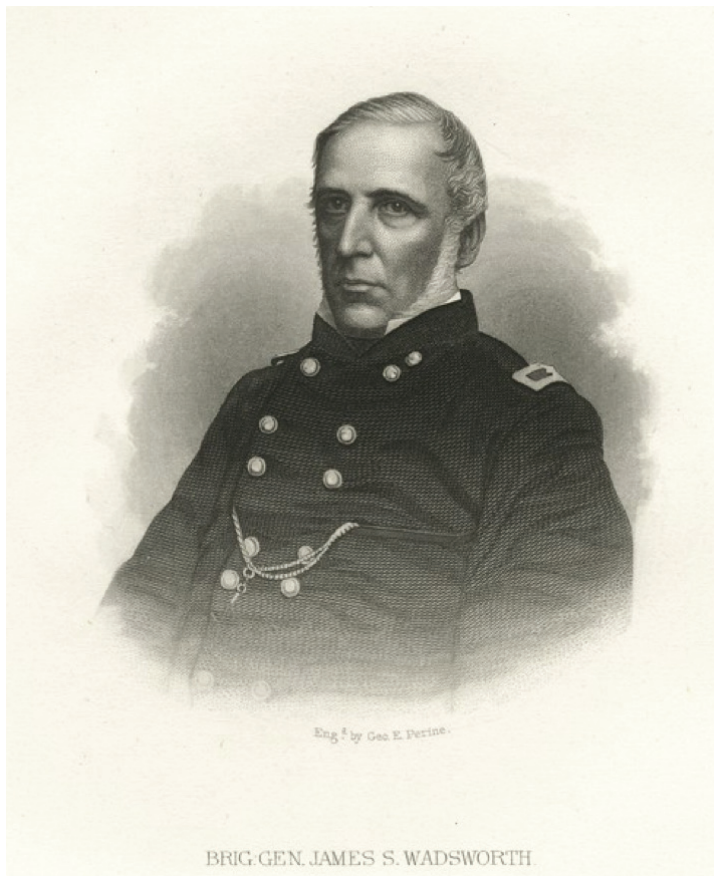
James Wadsworth's Background

James Samuel Wadsworth was born on October 30th, 1807 and died on May 8th, 1864. He was a Union general known for his wealth, military expertise and politics. Wadsworth was an influential abolitionist and military hero in the nineteenth century that made a difference in the world and brought honor to Geneseo. This influential man lived in a small town in New York called Geneseo. His life is commemorated by the statue in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania made out of bronze in honor of his military service. However, not a lot of people realize that there is a replica of the same statue hidden behind trees in front of the Livingston County Courthouse in Geneseo.

James was an influential figure, even before his military involvement in the Civil War that garnered him a statue in Gettysburg. Wadsworth was the richest man of the North during the nineteenth century. His family owned property that stretched



James S. Wadsworth Statue. November 11, 2019.



General James S. Wadsworth Portrait

twenty four miles from Genesee to Henrietta. Although James had amassed this great amount of land and was extremely wealthy, he used his fortune in order to donate a full shipload of grain to Ireland during the Irish potato famine in 1845 to 1849. This proved that Wadsworth had the ability to give back to others and to assist his community as best he could. Among his fine qualities of being a well known figure in society, he had a fine education that led him to pursue law at prestigious schools, such as Harvard and Yale. When he did not take the bar exam for being a lawyer, he married Mary Craig Wharton in 1834.

Wadsworth's Political Stance

In addition to being an extremely wealthy philanthropist, the General was also extensively involved in New York politics. Originally a member of the free soil Democrats, Wadsworth believed that slavery should not be allowed to expand to new states and territories during the presidency of Martin Van Buren in 1837 to 1841. James was passionate about preserving the Union and his opposition to slavery. He focused more on anti-Southern politics than against anti-slavery. For instance, he only donated fifty dollars to a slave who was captured in Wisconsin compared to the full boat of grains that Wadsworth donated to the potato famine. It appears that James wanted to fight against proslavery Southerners and believed they endangered the freedoms and existence of the republic in order to promote slavery.

New York Republicans wanted Wadsworth to run for governor in 1862, yet he did little campaigning. In his writings and speeches he justified the party label of being an abolitionist as a means to preserve the Union and to punish the South. James only held one speech in New York City for his campaign in which he described in full detail how he was not in favor of the anti-slavery cause. He had garnered eleven thousand votes in total during the election but did not win by only a handful of votes. Due to the lack of votes, Wadsworth's party label changed from a Republican to an Abolitionist. James finally recognized Abolitionism as his main cause and saw it as an effective war measure. He stated in his New York City speech that "We have the right, we are bound, more-

over, by the solemn obligations of duty, to use this agency [emancipation], so far as we can, to put an end to this struggle, and to save the lives of white men who are perishing by thousands in this country” (Hunter 37). James decided to serve in the army during the Civil War and enlisted in 1863.

Wadsworth as a General

When the war in Gettysburg began, Wadsworth volunteered as a major even though he was already extremely wealthy and would not be paid throughout the course of the war. President Abraham Lincoln admired the General’s attention to his troops and



how he took care of them. As Lincoln stationed James at the front lines during the first winter of the Civil War. With Wadsworth’s strong background in military skills, his politics also gained a new perspective during the course of the war. For example he reflected : “At the beginning of the war, I was hardly a Republican. I thought slavery should be restricted to the ground where it stood, but was opposed to interfacing with it there. I dreaded insurrections, massacres, and violence” (Hunter 33).

When James’ political beliefs began to change, he started to employ slaves in his camp and treated them with the respect they deserved. By Wadsworth having the ability to gain the slave’s trust, he was able to figure out the size of the Confederate army in order to attack them. Lincoln was so impressed

with his achievements that he appointed James as the military governor of the District of Columbia. This made him in charge of slave runaways and returning them back to their owners under the Fugitive Slave Act. The general wanted to keep the slaves who committed no crimes under his protection, however, and ordered soldiers to free slaves who were considered “contrabands” in the middle of the night.

Wadsworth was serving various other positions in the army. During the nineteenth century, Mississippi was in the Union’s hands. In the spring of 1864, he was back in the combat field at the Battle of the Wilderness. The war could only be described as a very confusing and chaotic situation. In Virginia, the battle’s surrounding had underbrush, scrub, and trees. This made it especially hard for the armies to keep in contact with each other to let them know when an enemy force was attacking. James did something that generals typically did not do. He led the charge to attack enemies on a horse, and while he was on the horse, Wadsworth was shot in the head. The General fell behind

Confederate lines where they took him to the hospital to be taken care of. James was then stated to be in a comatose and proceeded to die behind Confederate lines. Once he passed, Wadsworth was sent back across enemy lines where citizens held ceremonies for James in Rochester and New York City in order to commemorate his legacy.

Wadsworth's Recognition in Gettysburg

James has an abundance of plaques, statues, and monuments dedicated to him throughout the nation. In Gettysburg, Pennsylvania specifically, a statue of Major General James S. Wadsworth was commissioned on March 2nd, 1910 and sketched by R. Hinton Perry. The statue was of a bronze James statue leading his troops onward to battle and forming the line to position them for battle. The New York Monuments Commission "authorized and directed to procure and erect on an appropriate site on the battlefield of Gettysburg, in the State of Pennsylvania, a bronze statue of Brevet Major-General James Samuel Wadsworth, deceased, at an expense not to exceed the sum of Ten thousand dollars" (Authority of the State of New York 12). This statue is located on Seminary Ridge, otherwise known as where General Wadsworth's best known exploit as a commander.



Official party at Wadsworth monument dedication, October 6th, 1914.

Recognition in Geneseo

The statue stands proudly in Gettysburg for people to admire and appreciate James' services to our country. However, not many people realize that General Wadsworth who stands proudly in Gettysburg directing his soldiers into battle, grew up in a small town in Western New York called Geneseo. The town of Geneseo decided to commission a replica of the Gettysburg statue in 2006 by Pepsy M. Kettavong in dedication to his life that he led in Geneseo. The statue was created by The committee did not want



James S. Wadsworth Statue in front of the Livingston Courthouse by Daniel Sanderson

children who grew up in Geneseo believing that this was a stagnant town. The committee firmly believed that the courthouse looked bare and thought it was appropriate to put the statue right in the front. The committee believed that putting the statue in front of the courthouse would allow students in school buses to see the statue and know it was Wadsworth. However, the State Office of New York informed the committee that the statue could not be put in front of courthouse only because people would believe that the statue was originally part of the courthouse. Therefore, the statue is tucked away behind trees and made to look not prominent. The town of Geneseo is not even allowed to put lights around statue because it is not “authentic” to the courthouse.

Geneseo community members were able to raise the funds for the statue since the committee pitched how General Wadsworth was the most prominent Civil War historian that lived right in Geneseo. The committee continued to raise funds for the statue by hosting a lecture about James at the Hartford House in early 2001. The committee also raised the funds through various projects such as a house tour, a two hundred year old birthday party for the General, and appealing to people one on one. The committee also sold T-shirts with a photo of the original artist’s model on the shirt. The statue was an exceptionally important community project and was a huge commitment.

Interview with Judith Hunter

Judith Hunter was a former History professor for SUNY Geneseo. She also specialized as a trainee Civil War historian in the 1990s. I met with her on October 10th,

2019 to talk about her process with commissioning the James Samuel Wadsworth Statue by the Livingston County Museum. She stated that James was the richest man of the North during his period. Wadsworth's family-owned property that went from Geneseo to Henrietta. James was involved in New York politics, as at the time he was more anti-Southern politics than anti-slavery. Wadsworth was the first General stationed at the front lines in the first winter of the Gettysburg war. The General conducted interviews of runaway slaves that crossed Union lines and knew where the enemies were located. He ran for governor in the fall of 1862. He had 11,000 votes, but did not win the election. When he loses the election, he serves in the army when Gettysburg wins. In the spring of 1864, Wadsworth was back at the Battle of Wilderness where it was a very confusing and chaotic situation. The war had an abundance of underbrush, scrub, trees, and it was hard for the armies to keep in contact with each other. Judith made it clear that it was atypical of a general to lead a charge on a horse and he was shot in the head because of his bravery. Where the General fell behind Confederate lines, they took him to a hospital where he passed.

Judith visited Gettysburg, Pennsylvania where she saw the James S. Wadsworth statue several times. Yet, it was not until after she taught in Geneseo that she realized the importance of statues and monuments in the fact that they are located everywhere and are apart of history. Hunter thought of James' heroic contribution to the Gettysburg Battle and how there is no monument to him in Geneseo where he grew up. Judith pointed out that while there is the Wadsworth Library located on Second Street in Geneseo, there is nothing to commemorate James S. Wadsworth in particular. Hunter believed that this was out of modesty since many statues and plaques have been dedicated to him throughout the nation. Judith decided that a monument needed to be built here in Geneseo to commemorate his life.

The fundraising process for commissioning the monument was taken upon the community members of Geneseo. They were the ones who helped raise money for the campaign because Wadsworth was the most prominent civil war historian in Geneseo. To raise the funding, the committee hosted a lecture on him and hosted a reception at the Hartford House in early 2001. The committee also raised the money through various projects such as a house tour of the Hartford House, a two-hundred-year-old birthday party for Wadsworth, and appealing to people one on one. Unexpectedly, the statue cost was much less than it was expected so it was easier to commission it sooner. Judith firmly believes that the monument was a very important community project and commitment.

Some particulars of commissioning the statue included the significance of the pose of General Wadsworth. The reason why James is pointing onwards to show that he is directing his troops and forming the line to position them for battle. Another factor was why the statue was commissioned in front of the courthouse. The reason being was that the committee didn't want kids to grow up here thinking that nothing happens around Geneseo. This is also where school buses go by, and children would see the statue when they were going to school. However, the committee ended up being disappointed in the end. The State Office told the committee that the monument could not be put in front

of the courthouse since it was not original. Therefore, the statue is tucked away much more and is not prominently in front of the courthouse.

Overall, the biggest takeaway that Hunter would like to see from my exhibit is that the Yankees need to remember the Civil War and what James S. Wadsworth stood for.

Conclusion

General James S. Wadsworth was a man who had sacrificed himself for the right cause of protecting his troops and becoming an abolitionist. This is what we as 21st century citizens should remember James as. He not only affected the world, but brought a significant honor to Geneseo. Although it is located in the most unfortunate spot, it resembles the man that he is and how he brought great honor to a small town in Western New York.

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Progression Toward Modernity: Geneseo's Suffragists, The Shaw Sisters

Elana Evenden, Tom Mossey, Kayla Whalen

“And Eventually...They Voted”

In the sweeping world of the Progressive Era, two women grew up to change Geneseo's history and influence future generations. Nicolas and Eleanor Shaw would become the front runners of the Livingston County Suffrage and Temperance movements by inspiring public opinion during town meetings. They took the torch from women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), who passed away around the turn of the century. The Shaw sisters lived in an era where their progressive ideals could be disseminated with the help of the railroad. With the railroad and their progressive ideals, these women were able to see modernity when in 1919 Women's Suffrage was passed in New York. They were products of the moment



Women Fighting for Suffrage During the Progressive Era



Nicholas Shaw, 1913



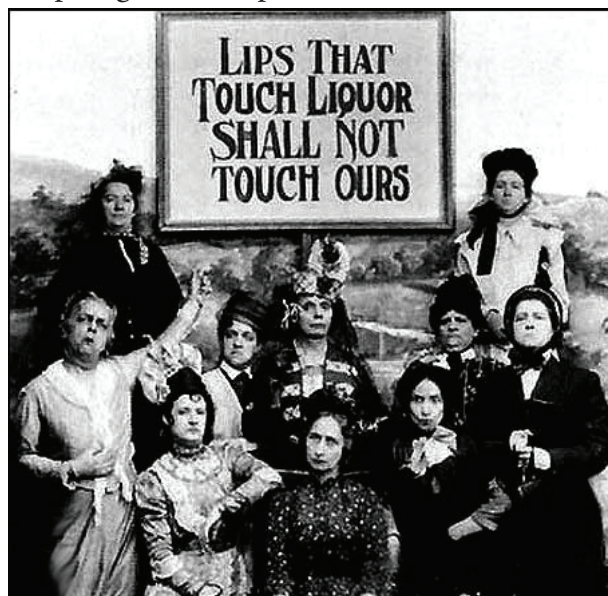
Eleanor Shaw Smith, 1914

and movements they were living through. They fought for education, lectured, inspired, empowered women throughout Western New York, and eventually...they voted.

Social and political reforms were the hallmark of the Zeitgeist for the turn of the century in America. From the 1890s up until after the First World War, people began to question the corruption and the problems associated with the modernization of the United States. The women's suffrage movement officially started in 1848 when the First Woman's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY, only fifty-five miles from Geneseo. For the first time in history, women were standing up to fight, lobby, and educate the public on matters that truly concerned their sex and their rights. Due to complications both politically and socially, the movement would not gain full traction until the turn of the twentieth century. Urbanization and industrialization had taken its toll on American society, and out of this sprang the final push that the women's suffrage movement needed for the vote.

With all of the reforms, women were able to get their voices heard on issues that plagued the women's sphere such as suffrage and temperance, both topics that interested the Shaw Sisters and would become apart of their legacy.

In addition to suffrage, the other biggest cause for women at this time was temperance. The Temperance Movement was a reaction against the sales and consumption of alcohol. The movement instituted in 1874 when the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed. Their



Women Fighting for Temperance, 1800s

main action was to outlaw alcohol for safety concerns, but ultimately for the safety of the family unit.

Although these two movements stayed separate because neither group wanted to delude the other, many women stood for both causes. For example, Nicolas Shaw was very involved in the Women's Suffrage Movement while her sister Eleanor was more involved with the Temperance Movement. In fact, Eleanor was the president of the Livingston County chapter of the WCTU, while Nicolas was not an officer but still sat as a member of the chapter. These causes were both about protecting the feminine sphere. From suffrage giving them political independence and a say in the family dynamic to protection from the harsh realities of alcoholism, women were finally able to fight for the rights they deserved.

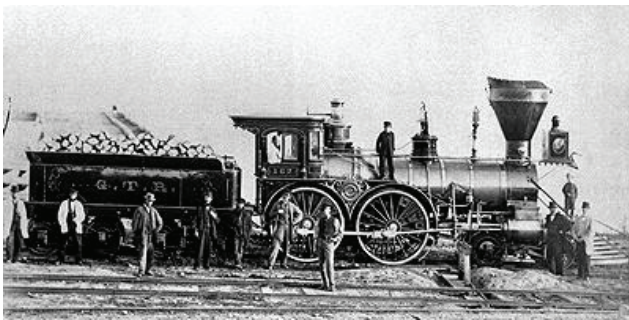
Eleanor and Nicolas were influenced by their aunt, also a feminist, Anna Howard Shaw, was the guiding influence for her nieces' progressive ideas. She has been a prominent figure when the sisters were growing up, and this is why when asked to live with her, Nicolas agreed. She had also been contemporaries with the Suffrage movement's founding mothers such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who presented at the First Woman's Rights Convention in 1848 and Susan B. Anthony, who was arrested for voting in 1872. Howard Shaw was a leading figure within this movement and was well connected within the community which helped fuel the philosophies of the Shaw Sisters later in their life.

The Shaw Sisters were born in the Midwest into the upper-middle-class family. When their parents passed away Nicolas went to live with her aunt, Anna Howard Shaw in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, Eleanor stayed in the Midwest with her husband. While living with her niece, Howard Shaw paid for Nicolas to go to an agricultural school where she met her husband Samuel Fraser. Fraser would go on to be a founder of the Agricultural school at Cornell University which would turn into the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). His other large accomplishment was creating a new agricultural technology that would be used to breed new varieties of apples.



Anna Howard Shaw, Aunt to Nicholas and Eleanor

While at Cornell University, Fraser became recognized for this new technology and William Wadsworth of Geneseo, New York became very interested in his advancements in agriculture and persuaded both Samuel and Nicolas to come to Geneseo, which is where Nicolas starts to change Livingston County's perception of women. Eleanor's husband died in the early nineteen-tens, and as a result, goes to live temporarily with her sister Nicolas' family in Geneseo. Howard Shaw then takes Eleanor to Budapest to go to an International Women's Convention, in which Nicolas stayed in Geneseo with Eleanor's children. This conference was fundamental in the sister's formation of their feminist ideologies. In 1910, when Eleanor returned to the states, the Shaw Sisters decides to fully settle in Geneseo and start fighting for social reform within suffrage and temperance. Their residence was at 22 main street which is on the North end of the street.



Locomotive, circa 1850's

The Progressive Era sparked an increase in mobility and led many to be able to travel outside their hometowns. Railroads were a key part of that mobility, many carrying passengers to New York City. Coming from the West, many railroads would stop in the center of Geneseo where there was a booming station.

This caused Geneseo to be a hub of progressive thinking. Most of Western New York was very conservative, minus the big cities, so Geneseo was full of liberal thinking and action. Along with Eleanor and Nicolas' aunt, Anna influencing their spark in the suffrage movement, the town of Geneseo also played a role in their progressive thinking.

From the early nineteen-teens until the passing of Women's Suffrage in 1919, The Shaw Sisters fought and were active within the community taking on the tradition that had been passed down to them from their aunt and other figures of the movement. Luckily, Geneseo had taken the moniker for the progressive hub from Mount Morris around the same time the sisters settled there. Geneseo was a place that discourse ran freely, and so breaking down barriers within the county was not as complicated as it would have been in a more rural area. They were able to gain traction in the rural communities by holding Saturday night lectures that opened up the conversation of feminism and suffrage in areas they would otherwise not be able to enter.

Despite this, the Shaw Sisters did have adversaries within the community. The grandson of General James S. Wadsworth became a New York Senator and his wife, Alice Hay Wadsworth, both became anti-suffrage. So much so that at the age of thirty-seven Hay Wadsworth became the second president of the anti-suffrage movement, which was founded in 1895, but not a fully formed association until 1911. Splitting their time between Washington DC and the Wadsworth Homestead in Geneseo the Wadsworths never had direct contact with the Shaw Sisters, but there was tension within the community because of the progressives state of the members juxtaposed with the ardent support for the family who started Geneseo.

Their fight with the true anti-suffragist would be subjugated by the people who fear change. Men and women alike were scared of what suffrage and temperance would do for society. When the Women's Movement was initiated, women were not allowed to speak out on any matter. The Culture of Domesticity was the existing set of values that women followed during the mid to late nineteenth century. Women were meant to stay home and take care of the home and family, so them claiming their voice for the first time was able to cause mass hysteria. However, due to Geneseo's progressiveness, the Shaw Sisters became well-respected members of the community that changed public opinion. It was in the rural area that the suffragist needed to persuade the popular opinion

At the dawn of the 1920s, the Women's Movement was accelerating exponentially. In 1915, New York State came close to passing suffrage, but the First World War overshadowed the movement. The following year, Democrats back and fully support the movement. In 1917, New York became the first state in the east to pass suffrage. President Woodrow Wilson would endorse Women's Suffrage in the following year of 1918. This would cause the senate to pass the 19th Amendment in 1919, but it was not truly ratified until August 26th, 1920. Women were to vote following this ratification all due to women like Nicolas and Eleanor Shaw who spent years fighting for what they believed in.



22 Main Street, Geneseo, NY. Home of Nicholas and Eleanor Shaw with Plaque.

The Shaw Sisters would remain active in the community of Geneseo and Livingston County until they died in the late 1940s. When they passed they were still living in their residence of 22 Main Street. In 2018, ninety-nine years after the 19th amendment had passed, the William C Pomeroy Foundation gave a grant to Livingston County Historian, Amie Alden who commemorated their life and contributions with a blue plaque outside of their former residence. Today, people on Main Street can express gratitude for the Shaw Sisters' achievements and the grit they needed to change the local community.

An Afternoon with Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian

On Monday, October 17, we interviewed Livingston County Historian, Amie Alden about her research on the suffragists of Geneseo, specifically the Shaw Sisters. There, we discussed the upbringing of the Shaw Sisters and how they made their way from the Midwest to Western New York under the inspiration of their aunt, Anna Howard Shaw. The Shaw Sisters ended up at Geneseo in 1908 during the suffragist and temperance movements and helped fight for what they believed in. There was a divide between the Wadsworths of Geneseo and the Shaw Sisters due to their beliefs about progression, but there were no direct conflicts. The main goals for the Shaw Sisters differed as Nicholas wanted women to win the right to vote and Eleanor wanted alcohol to be abolished. The Shaw Sisters were considered progressive for their time as they held meetings in town and were part of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

The Progressive Era had a huge impact on the beliefs of the Shaw Sisters as Geneseo was a hub for different people because it was a stop along several different railroads that ran to New York City. The Shaw Sisters along with Eleanor's children lived in Geneseo until they died. Suffrage meant different things to different individuals in Livingston County. Many of the Men were worried about suffrage and equality due to the inevitable shift in the power dynamic.

The suffrage movement in Western New York happened a lot slower than in the City.



Livingston County Historian, Amie Alden and Geneseo Mayor Margaret Duff



The Geneseo Fire Department Memorial

**Rachel Mhlstin, Olivia Schoenfeld,
Olivia Delahunt**

The Geneseo Fire Department is the reason why Geneseo became a town. In order to establish a fire company to protect the village from fires, Geneseo needed to first be recognized as a village. Since its establishment in 1834, the Geneseo Fire Department has been a volunteer company and has grown to acquire better fire truck vehicles; the earliest models were pushcarts and pulled by horses. The fire department was very necessary to the survival of Geneseo as a town because without it, Main Street would not



The Geneseo Fire Department Memorial installation at Temple Hill Cemetery, 1985

have been successfully salvaged from fires so many times. The department's recognition can be seen through the Geneseo landmark.

The Geneseo Fire Department headstone is a landmark that was installed to commemorate the service of its late members. It is in two locations; both cemeteries. The landmark is located in Temple Hill Cemetery. There is also an identical headstone in the St. Mary's Church Cemetery. Its significance for Geneseo can be seen through the recognition of the time that the members spent volunteering. The headstone also honors the families of those who have served. Matt Hutchinson was a volunteer firefighter who passed away in 2016. He is the only member who has died "on duty." While he did not die while putting out a fire, he was an active volunteer firefighter who was very loved by the community. The headstone was erected in 1985 as the fire department was gaining significance. At that time, the community of Geneseo and members of the fire department felt that the town needed to honor this group of people that had kept the commu-



The Geneseo Fire Department Memorial Emblem

The Geneseo Fire Department was and continues to be a vital part of the community. Honoring those who have served throughout the years is a great way to acknowledge its significance.

Interview Summary

On September 23rd, 2019 Olivia Delahunt and Rachel Mihalstin met with the Fire Chief Andrew Chanler at Cricket's cafe.

Chanler opened up with sharing his excitement about our interest in this topic. He told us about his role as Fire Chief for the past 15 years and that he has been a part of the Geneseo Fire Department for 32 years. While Fire Chief was his assigned role, Resident Historian was a role he gave himself. It's a passion he has always had. He came prepared and had a powerpoint ready to show us that included all of the work he had found himself while studying the history of the Geneseo Fire Company. He opened with the fact that Geneseo would not be an established town if it was not for the department. They needed to make Geneseo a town because they were plagued with fires and could not get the equipment for a fire company without having a town. So, the village was actually formed in 1832. A petition was sent to the state to incorporate the village.

By late 1832, the town started a basic tax roll and by December, the fire companies began to organize.

After being able to form a fire company, they were able to start protecting the inhabitants. People at this time were very scared of fires because the materials that were used to make buildings and furnish the insides were more flammable than they are today. However, with their new equipment and firefighters, they were able to fight the fires



Photo reel from the Main Street Fire of November 11, 1972

and save Main Street. The first engine house was on Ward Place; back then it was called North Center Street. At the first engine house, they kept a hand pumper. Originally, the hand pumper had to be pulled by a team of horses. From the first team that showed up to the call, the owner would receive a monetary reward.

He goes on to point out a picture of the company at a competition with other departments around the region. There was competition in events like racing up ladders and hitting targets with a hose. Even today, fire departments all over compete in these same competitions.

There used to be a club room above Sweet Arts Bakery for the hose company. Chief Chanler mentioned how there was a bowling alley in the club room. He described how his mother was a pinsetter. Being apart of a club or company was how people socialized back then. Chanler quotes his mother by saying that that is what people did at night before televisions reached the household.

The first motorized piece of equipment was bought in 1992. It was a 1928 Seagrave that was considered a real fire truck. It had a decent size pump on it. The emergency car, which went to rural fires, carried a portable gasoline pump in the back. If there was a fire outside of the village, there would be no water source. So, they might pray for a source from next door but the company would probably not be able to save much. They could stick the portable pump carried by hand in a well and maybe get a stream of water out. But the previous truck was not really set up to do anything outside of the village. Then, they were able to get a custom made engine truck from Rochester.

Even in 1939, the equipment they had was lacking. By the 1940s, there was a first aid squad. The first ambulance, a hearse, was donated by a nearby mortician from Mount Morris. The funeral directors took people to the hospital and if they were tied up, they would have the fire department come and get the person. But then that evolved into a regular ambulance service. There was a rural truck because it had a bigger water tank. In the 1940s, they really did not have helmets or coats. They wore whatever they had that they thought would effectively protect them. The first airpads came into play in 1950 in order to help the firefighters breathe in smoke-ridden situations.



The Geneseo Fire Department Memorial at Temple Hill



Fire on Main Street, November 11, 1972

Chief Chanler went into detail about the changes in equipment, along with various Geneseo fires. Some key fires that were discussed were the 2001 jail fire, the 2000 bus accident, and the 2015 Kelly Saloon fire. Chanler went on to discuss the death of Matt Hutchinson, and how it was very connected to the fire department. Matt volunteered at the fire department. The firehouse was expanded in 2004; basically doubled according to Chanler. Chanler discussed his family background. He described how his family ran a dairy farm and had a route to deliver milk. One consistent part of the Geneseo fire department is that it is all volunteer-based.

Chanler was extremely prepared for this interview. He came bearing a slideshow with various pictures of fires and new fire department equipment in order to give as much information as he could. Chanler said that the history of the fire department is very important to him because “history repeats itself.” He believes there is a reason for all of the changes that have been made. An interesting fact regarding the location of the fire station is that its location was chosen because it was cheap to purchase that land.

When asked why the fire department is so important to the town, Chanler spoke about how the department protects the community from fire because fire creeps on us every once in a while. Chanler said that the department has not lost a firefighter in the line of duty. However, members have passed away from illnesses. Chanler believes that this can truly devastate a community. This happened in Avon in 1983, where a firefighter was killed in a fire.

Chanler described some more pictures from his slideshow. Then, Chanler went on to say that the fire history of Geneseo is his passion. When someone asked him about something specific, like the bylaws, he is more than willing to explain the bits and

pieces of what happened. The interview with Chanler was extremely helpful in learning more about the history of the fires in Geneseo.

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