

10-23
(May 1929)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FORT GREENE ~~NATIONAL PARK~~ PROPOSED AERA

FILE NO. 0-36

PART 1

PROPOSED AERA

FORT GREENE

LAST DATE ON TOP

IMPORTANT

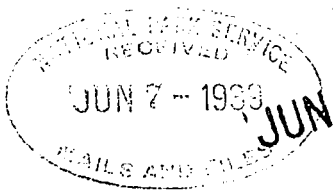
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ARNO B. CAMMERER,

Director.



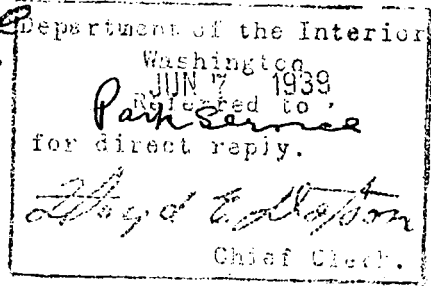
JUN 8 1939

RESPECTFULLY REFERRED
FOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT
AND CONSIDERATION

Interior
May 26, 1939.

W. M. C. C. C.

Hon Franklin D. Roosevelt ~~President~~ President
United States of America
The White House
Washington, D. C.



My dear Mr. President:-

As you know the Ft. Greene Monument in Ft. Greene Park, Brooklyn, was erected at a cost of \$174,144.00 to memorialize the Prison Ship martyrs of 1776.

The monument was the second, the first was erected by The Tammany Society or Columbian Order. And as it is so quaintly put in the inscription, "The erection for which was bestowed by John Jacob Astor, Nassau Island (Long Island) Season of Blossoms." The added flourish of "Season of Blossoms" no doubt arose from Tammany's predilection for poesy. That marker was erected in 1808, on Hudson Avenue. The Second Monument was dedicated on November 14, 1908 by President Taft. That fact and others such as, fifteen of the boxes containing bones of unknown martyrs exhibited labels that could be deciphered as follows:-
8. Delaware, 10. Massachusetts, 11. Pennsylvania, 12. Rhode Island 13. Drummer Bay, 14. Virginia, 15. Maryland, 16. North Carolina, 17. Connecticut, 18. New Jersey, 19. Georgia, 20. New York, 21. South Carolina, 22. New Hampshire, didn't cause the "Best Minds" of the Republican Party to deduce that the Ft. Greene Monument was really a national monument. The result was that it is now- just another piece of architecture in a city owned park. Nothing particularly was done about it until October 1938 when the New York State Society of the D.A.R. at there 43rd annual conference at Jamestown passed a resolution asking Congress to acquire adjoining land for a memorial road from the Brooklyn Navy Yard to the Ft. Greene Monument "building a plaza commemorating the Navy in the War of 1812", and making the whole thing into a National Monument.

I never heard what became of "The Daughters" resolution. Probably nothing because about November, 1938 when the Fleet Reserve Ass'n of Brooklyn, United Ex-Navy Men's Comm. of Port of New York the V.F.W. and the American Legion were reported to have joined hands to have Ft. Greene Park and the Monument made into a National Monument.

Again I haven't heard what has happened to that plan. However from my past experience it has probably been shunted off into a blind alley. I know that though I have filled columns of newspaper space in the past there seems to be an apathy about the whole thing, for which I blame the past Republican Administrations. As example when the Sesqui-centennials

Mr. President

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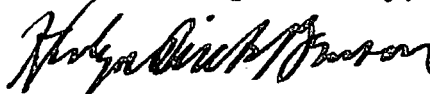
May 26, 1939.

of the Battles of the Revolution was being memorialized in 1926 I wrote the Post Office Department demanding to know why no stamp was issued for the Battle of Long Island tho one was issued for the Battle of White Plains. I was told that Brooklyn showed no interest in the matter. White Plains I presume being a Republican stronghold was more patriotic.

Of course it isn't really my particular business to present the matter to you, other than that I have come to the rescue before. Yet I feel that the neglect of the proper disposition of the Ft. Greene Monument by the Republican Party can be rectified by the Roosevelt Administration. May I ask, Mr. President, that you interest yourself in the matter. I enclose a New York City Park Department photograph of the monument.

I have the honor to be

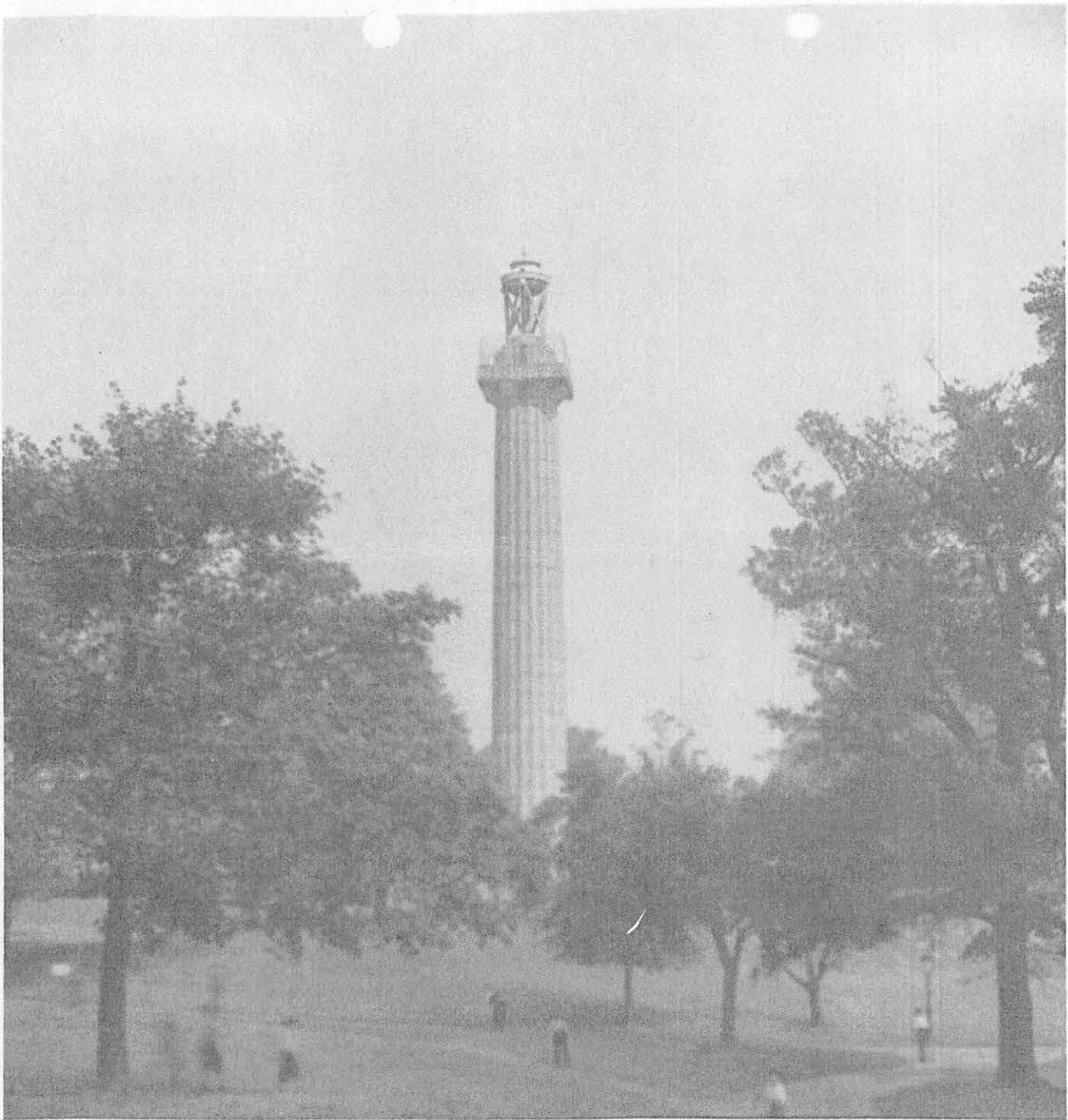
Most respectfully,



Evelyn Dirck Benson

HDB:MB

23 Halsey Street,
Brooklyn, New York.



HEVLYN DIRCK BENSON

Plk Dept. (# 4044 negative number)
City of N.Y.

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JUN 3 1939

May 29, 1939

National Park Service,
Dept. of Interior,
Washington, D. C.

In Brooklyn, we have a Park known as Fort Greene which contains an area of approximately 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres.

The area later became a Park in the City but still retains in a degree much of its original topography.

During the Administration of President Taft, a monument was erected above the tomb.

There has been a very considerable feeling among our Citizens that the Park and Monument should be a National one. I am, therefore, writing to ask some questions.

If it is decided to have this a National Park and Monument, how should we proceed?

// I will be obliged if you can give me the desired information.

Ernie A. Letcher

EDWIN H. THATCHER
172 DUFFIELD ST.
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

JUN 19 1939

NATIONAL PARK
RECEIVED
JUN 19 1939

*Letter referred to
June 19, 1939
Jiles!
P.C.
please
file*

National Park Service,
Dept. of Interior,
Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen:

Under date of May 29th I wrote you in reference to Fort
Greene Park and the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument.

May I expect an answer shortly?

Very truly yours,

Edwin H. Thatcher

EHT:MA

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON

ADDRESS ONLY
THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

June 22, 1939.

0-36
JH
H. H. H. H.

Mr. Evelyn Dirck Benson,
23 Halsey Street,
Brooklyn, New York.

Dear Mr. Benson:

Your letter of May 26, to President Roosevelt, concerning the Fort Greene Monument in Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn, has been referred to the National Park Service for reply.

Under authority of the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935, the National Park Service is making a survey of historic sites throughout the Nation. The results of the survey are from time to time presented to an Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments. The Advisory Board classifies the sites as to their national, state or local importance. This survey is proceeding chronologically and when the period of the American Revolution is reached you may be sure that the Site of Fort Greene will be presented to the Advisory Board for its consideration.

Your interest in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

(SGD.) RONALD F. LEE

Ronald F. Lee,
Supervisor of Historic Sites.

cc: Region I
Attention Mr. Appleman.

FSR:mm

Battle of Long Island Again Center of a Fight

Hevlyn Dirck Benson of 23 Halsey Street, Brooklyn, an enthusiast on local history, came forward yesterday with an explanation for recurrent delays in the gaining of national recognition of the Battle of Long Island or a Federal title for Fort Greene Park, site of the Prison Ship Martyr's Monument.

"I have written to President Roosevelt about this and he turned my letter over to the only body that now has authority to make recommendations to Congress for historic site claims: namely, that headed by Ronald F. Lee," Mr. Benson said. "I quote from a note signed by Mr. Lee: 'Under authority of the Historic Sites Act, Aug. 21, 1935, the National Park Service is making a survey throughout the nation.

"Results are from time to time presented to an advisory board which classifies them as to national, state or local importance. This survey is proceeding chronologically and when the period of the American Revolution is reached you may be sure that the site of Fort Greene will be presented for consideration.'"

O. 36
JH Greene

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON

ADDRESS ONLY
THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

July 12, 1939

Mr. Edwin H. Thatcher,
172 Duffield Street,
Brooklyn, New York.

Dear Mr. Thatcher:

We have received your letter of recent date, concerning Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn.

For your information, we are enclosing a copy of the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935 (49 Stat. 665). Under authority of this Act, the National Park Service is conducting a Nation-wide survey of historic sites and buildings. The Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments must first pass on the national historic significance of a site before it could become eligible for consideration as a national historic site.

If the Advisory Board should find that the site is one of national historic significance, the Secretary of the Interior would next have to declare the Fort a national historic site, and funds would have to be made available by the Congress for its proper preservation and maintenance before it could come under the administration of the National Park Service.

Sincerely yours,

Francis S. Ronalds,
Acting Supervisor of Historic
Sites.

Enclosure 1924755
cc-FSR/tvt

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7/14
Francis S. Ronalds

EDWIN H. THATCHER
172 DUFFIELD ST.
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

JUL 28 1939

July 26, 1939

Mr. Ronald F. Lee,
Supervisor of Historical Sites,
Dept. of Interior,
National Park Service,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I have received from Mr. Helvyn Dirck Benson a copy of your letter of June 22nd in reference to the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument and Fort Green Park, Brooklyn, and have noted its contents.

Regarding this matter, would say that I am Chairman of a Committee of the Long Island Historical Society having this matter in hand.

I enclose a copy of one of the Society's Quarterlies that contains an article on Fort Greene and the Martyrs' Monument. This will no doubt be of interest to you and may prove of value to your Advisory Board.

Yours very truly,

Edwin H. Thatcher

encl.

*O. 36
J. H. Greene*

(Handwritten notes and signatures)
acknowledged 7/28/39
File

EDWIN H. THATCHER
172 DUFFIELD ST.
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

July 26, 1939

Mr. Francis S. Ronalds,
Acting Supervisor of Historic Sites,
U. S. Dept. of Interior,
National Park Service,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I wish to thank you for yours of July 12th.

I am enclosing a copy of the Long Island Historical Society Quarterly which contains an article on Fort Greene Park and the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument. This may be of interest both to you and the Advisory Board.

Yours very truly,

Edwin H. Thatcher

encl.

7 B Q L

FORT GREENE URGED FOR NATIONAL PARK

Long Island Historical Group
Asks Government to Take
Over Brooklyn Area

PRISONERS BURIED THERE

Society Stresses That Ground
Is Sacred to Sailors Who
Died for America

The Long Island Historical Society has recommended to Washington, Albany and the city government that Fort Greene Park in downtown Brooklyn be placed under the jurisdiction of Federal authorities as a national monument.

A resolution adopted by the group at a recent meeting is published in the current issue of its quarterly bulletin. The wording runs:

"Whereas, some thousands of Americans, for the most part sailors engaged in crippling British commerce and bringing home much needed supplies, were held prisoners in the prison ship Jersey and other prison ships stationed in Wallabout Bay, under conditions vile and cruel beyond words; and

"Whereas, they refused to recant their belief in American independence and swear allegiance to the British flag, although by so doing they would escape from the prison ships to the relative comfort of service on a British man-of-war; and,

"Whereas, many thousands of them succumbed to the tortures inflicted upon them, gave their lives to keep faith, and now lie buried at Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn; and,

"Whereas, Fort Putnam was located in the area now known as Fort Greene Park, and was a strategic part of Washington's line of defense, which extended from Wallabout Bay to Gowanus Bay, in the Battle of Long Island, and was the scene of stout resistance to the British, now therefore be it,

Asks Federal Protection

"Resolved, that the Long Island Historical Society earnestly recommends to the Congress of the United States, that the Tomb of the Prison Ship Martyrs be designated as a national monument, under the protection of the National Park Service, and that Fort Greene Park (which includes the martyr's column) be known as Fort Greene National Monument."

Rear Admiral Reginald R. Belknap, retired, writes of this area under the title "Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers." The park is bounded by De Kalb Avenue, Washington Park, Willoughby Street, St. Edwards Street and Myrtle Avenue. It contains twenty-six acres and was approved in 1847.

"Here lie the remains of 12,000 sailors of the Revolution," said Admiral Belknap. "Such men deserve unfailing honor and respect. Their nation's recognition is long overdue and should no longer be postponed. Fitting, also, is it that this shrine's existence shall no more be known only within small compass. These men gave all they had, and while their names will remain unknown their patriotic service marked by this monument should be known throughout the land."

The quarterly contains articles on the monument and park, treating the latter through reprints of sketches originally written in 1869 and 1878. Concerning the burial ground, it is noted:

"The first prison ship to arrive at the Wallabout anchored near Remsen's mill on the west shore of the bay about Oct. 20, 1776. In 1777 it was reported that each ship buried ten or twelve prisoners a day. Shallow graves were dug in the sand.

Tammany Collected Bones

"John Jackson acquired the mill property about 1791 and the following year citizens of Brooklyn decided to inter the remains in the graveyard of the Reformed Dutch Church, but this was not done. Changes preparatory to the establishment of the Navy Yard in 1803 led to the discovery of a further quantity of bones. The Tammany Society presented a petition to Congress without success.

"Major Benjamin Ayer, a Sachem of the society, engaged a man to collect the bones two years later. Jackson donated land for a vault and the remains were deposited in thirteen coffins outside the Navy Yard wall at the corner of York and Hudson Streets. Benjamin Romaine, Grand Sachem of the Tammany Society, laid the cornerstone.

"Himself a prisoner during the war, Romaine acquired the property in 1839. He was buried there. Fort Greene was designated by the Martyrs' Monument Association in 1855 when the earlier vault had deteriorated. Finally, by 1873, continued agitation brought action from the City of Brooklyn and a brick vault was constructed on the side of a hill known as Fort Putnam. The bodies were transferred quietly by Park Department employees."

Monument Dedicated in 1908

The Society of Old Brooklynites opened in 1887 a campaign for a proper monument. It received fresh impetus in 1900 when additional bodies were unearthed in the Navy Yard. Private subscribers contributed \$25,000, the city appropriated \$50,000, the State granted another \$25,000 and Washington matched their total with \$100,000.

Stanford White, the famous architect, created the design of the Prison's Ship Martyrs' Memorial. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, then Governor of New York, presided in 1908 at the dedication ceremonies. President-elect William Howard Taft delivered the oration.

The monument is approached by a broad flight of steps from Myrtle Avenue and St. Edward's Street. In the center of the steps is the entrance to the tomb. The towering shaft is of granite. Two Civil War cannon and bronze eagles embellish the plaza.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON

ADDRESS ONLY
THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

July 28, 1939.

Mr. Edwin H. Thatcher,
172 Duffield St.,
Brooklyn, New York.

Dear Sir:

I have received your letter of July 26, transmitting a copy of the Long Island Historical Society quarterly containing articles on Fort Greene Park and the Frison Ship Martyrs' Monument.

It was most kind of you to send us this interesting material which I am sure will prove of great value to us.

Sincerely yours,

(SGD) Francis S. Ronalds

Francis S. Ronalds,
Acting Supervisor of Historic Sites.

fsr:ch

Treasurer
HENRY J. HOOPS

Commander
THOMAS F. CALLAHAN

Adjutant
ANGELO J. CINCOTTA

The American Legion ~ Kings County

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK

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POST OFFICE BOX 102

ROOM 1, BOROUGH HALL

BROOKLYN 2, N. Y.
Phone TRiangle 5-9140

177

Executive Committee

Term Expires 1947
JACOB YUDELMAN
VINCENT GIULIANO
STANLEY ASTORGA
MICHAEL SISTI
JOSEPH CREA

Term Expires 1948

CARL KUHNLE
JAMES C. VARLEY
DANIEL J. TOBIN
AL LARKIN

RECEIVED
FEB 28 1947
NATIONAL
PARK SERVICE

Feb. 27th, 1947.

*Kassner sent
File*

The Secretary of the Interior,
Department of the Interior,
Washington, D.C.

Esteemed Sir:-

As a result of a resolution adopted by the 131 posts of the Kings County American Legion, the Historical Monuments & Battle Sites Committee has been directed to make inquiry to determine what agency of the United States Government has the responsibility of the upkeep and maintenance of a memorial in the form of a tall granite shaft now in the Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn, N.Y. This shaft was built over a tomb of some 11000 soldiers of the American Revolution who died in the British prisons ships in Wallabout Basin, Brooklyn, N.Y.

The late President Howard Taft dedicated the monument either in 1907 or 1908. Information at hand discloses that an eternal light is suppose to burn at the top of the shaft. The shaft itself houses an elevator which does not operate. An inspection of the grounds and monument discloses no caretaker and nobody seems to be in charge.

Our committee has been informed that it is a national shrine.

We shall be pleased to be advised if the monument in question is a government project and if so what provisions have been made to keep it in good repair and condition.

Yours very truly

Angelo J. Cincotta
A. J. Cincotta
Chairman Historical Monuments
& Battle Sites Committee,
Kings County American Legion.

MAR 4 1947

AJC/SO

Part 7

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
54

ADDRESS ONLY
THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

March 5, 1947.

Mr. A. J. Cincotta,
Kings County American Legion,
Post Office Box 102,
Brooklyn 2, New York.

Dear Mr. Cincotta:

Your letter of February 27, addressed to the Secretary of the Interior, in Washington, D. C., regarding the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument in Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn, New York, has been referred to this Office for reply.

We regret that we are unable to give you any information regarding the responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of this memorial which is not under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and in the first quarter of the twentieth century, monuments of this type were frequently erected by the Federal Government with the understanding that they should be preserved and maintained by the communities or cities in which they were located.

It is possible that information concerning the monument in Fort Greene Park might be obtained from the Secretary of the U. S. War Department, Washington, D. C., inasmuch as many of these older war memorials were constructed under the direction of the War Department. Another possibility would be to address your inquiry to the Mayor of the City of New York, who could have a land title study made of the property on which the monument stands.

We regret that we are unable to give you further information, but appreciate your thoughtfulness in writing to us about this matter.

Sincerely yours,

(SGN) HILLORY A. TOLSON

Hillory A. Tolson,
Acting Director.

CWP:lt

cc: Mr. Demaray.

