

WORDS OF TRIBUTE

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

A parade honoring our Veterans has been, and will continue to be, a tradition in Richfield Springs. This honor was given to the veterans of the 121st and 152nd New York Volunteers in 1900 with appropriate ceremonies. (The 121st Regiment, also known as Upton's Regulars) was a unit from Otsego and Herkimer counties that served from 1862-1865 and had approximately 39 officers and 946 men. The 152nd Regiment was a unit raised from Herkimer and Mohawk, organized in October of 1862.)

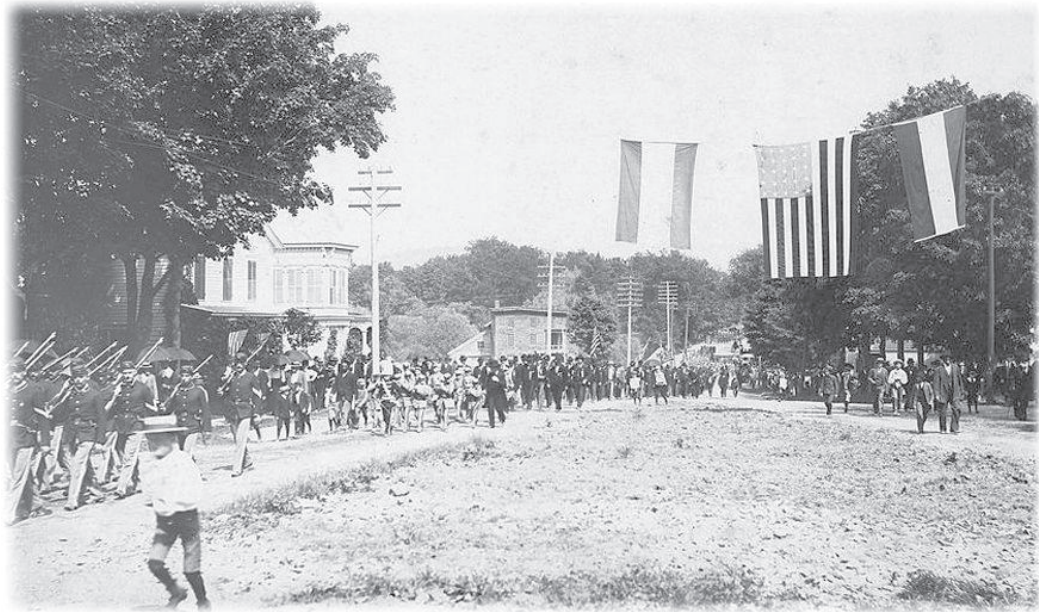
The words spoken by the Honorable L. N. Henry that day, were as meaningful then as they are today, reminding us of the sacrifices of so many in defense of our country through the years. It is time, especially during the year of America 250th Anniversary, to reflect again on his message. A time to honor. A time to be grateful. A time to learn from our history.

"Richfield provided all that could have been asked for by those who had participated in the fortunes of the Civil War. The parade formed in front of the Darrow House (Lake Street) led by Dr. W. P. Borland, Marshall of the day. He was followed by the Richfield Citizens Band, the members of the Weldon Post G.A.R. and the members of the visiting companies (about one hundred from each regiment present.) Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant and Mrs. Nellie Grant Sarlorie, who occupied prominent positions on the Earlington piazza, were saluted and responded by smiling and bowing. The line of march ended at Monument Park where several selections were rendered by the band, and a bountiful dinner was served to the large concourse of people. Before this, the exercises of the day took place, opening with prayer by the Rev. Ward, followed by an address of welcome by the Hon. L. Henry. A brief but interesting talk on Andersonville Prison was given by Wallace Young of Millers Mills and the benediction pronounced by the Rev. Scott Cooke, closed the program."

The Hon. L. S. Henry said, in part: "I bid you welcome to Richfield Springs on this, one of your annual reunions. These reunions are a means of cementing old friendships and of recalling the events of your youth when, in answer to your country's call, you rallied in arms to the defense of our glorious union. The 121st joined the army of the Potomac just as General McClellan had fought the battle of Antietam. I can remember your gallant services in those campaigns and your participation in some of the severest battles of the war at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and the battle of the Wilderness on the march to Richmond during the year 1864. There were the terrible battles of Cold Harbor, Spotsylvania Court House and the siege of Petersburg and in 1865 of the surrender of the rebel army under General Lee - all glories in which you had the honor of partaking and rejoicing. You were in active service almost from the moment of your enlistment until the close of the war. You fought through the whole struggle; you stayed until the final conflict was over and until a lasting and permanent victory had been attained.

As veterans you have been made aware many times of the great value of your services upon the battlefield, so it is useless for me to repeat them. I will say, however, that the services of the Boys in Blue can never, and will never, be fully appreciated. But, my friends, there is a partial compensation for your services in knowing that you have the heartfelt thanks of the whole nation and that a patriotic people appreciates the sacrifices you made in risking your lives, not for your self or family, but for a whole nation might live and the greatest and best government upon the face of the earth should not perish, but should survive and continue on the path marked out and foreordained for it in the history of the world. You also know that all people respect you and wish you well. You know from the manner in which Memorial Day is observed all over the country that the old soldier and his service are not forgotten.

Observances are so fixed and regular by force of law that the obligations of the people to the veterans who helped save the country will never be overlooked. These reunions serve to remind you of many incidents in your experience. You make new acquaintances and cement old friendships and thus preserve the order to which you belong, keeping in remembrance the motto 'All for one and one for all.' The Union was not to be destroyed to further the ambitions of any man or to protect any particular idle founded upon wrong principles or based on human slavery.



Richfield Springs July 4th Parade to Monument Park

It was a glorious opportunity for men who had fought each other in other days, to join hands in the work of humanity in defending and freeing the oppressed upon our own and foreign soil. Your services have been valuable in more ways than one. In a war so terrible as that, the world presents no examples which compare in grandeur with the loyal devotion of the women, wives and mothers, and the daughters at home. It was from the hearthstone that your hearts were cheered to perform your duty, and many were the prayers that were offered at home for the safety of the absent one in the service.

From many an altar at home, prayers ascended to the great Ruler of the universe imploring victory to those strongest in the right. Sustained and soothed by virtues so constant and so living and so just and heartfelt, the cause of the Union could not fail, but must certainly succeed. Behold the result of your patriotic sacrifices! The more perfect Union; the perfected American Union. More than this cannot be said. Less than this should not be said.

In those years of bloody strife, fathers were in the field fighting, dying for the old flag. At home in the great northland, there was a hand rocking the cradle, bringing to manhood sons to emulate their fathers' deeds and add new glory to the Republic, eclipsing forever from this new world the dominion of the power that first discovered it.

Among the great questions of the day, these are asked: 'Is liberty safe? Is the republican institution secure and permanent? Will the work you did be preserved through all time? Will free institutions survive the conflicts of political strife?' The answer is that they will never fall by the hand of a foreign enemy and that they will be saved or lost through the patriotism or lack of patriotism of the American people. The affection that we have for our native soil should loyally sustain in adverse seasons the public authority when rightfully exercised for the public good.

Posterity must be taught that our institutions must be preserved in all their original purity and that loyalty to one's country should be first inculcated in the hearts and minds of the growing generation. With this education in patriotism, our institutions are safe. We are proving to the nations of the globe that we are a world power, and that in all questions of importance among nations, the United States is to be considered and their wishes treated with respect. We are to prove to a taunting and watchful world that we are not to lower our standard to the degradation that disgraces others.

Veterans, one by one your ranks are being depleted, age tells upon you and in a few years more the Grand Army of the Republic will have passed on to the other shore. A score of years and your order will be no more. Who will take your places as the objects of the country's regard and affection? Let us trust that a grateful people will cherish the memories of the G. A. R., and all those who served their country upon the battlefields of the Republic by a continued observance of that Memorial Day instituted years ago. When none of our current veterans can march, the Sons of Veterans and others can still meet on Memorial Day and carry on those services so dear to you now and assist in preserving the memories of those who have served."