

## Veterans Timeline - Battle to Stop the Ava, NY Landfill

**1934-1944** - Beginning of land purchases and creation of Oneida County Reforestation of nearly 800 acres of farm land straddling both sides of what is now Route 294 in the Town of Ava, between Boonville and West Leyden, New York, under the leadership of Superintendent Wallace Brown.

**1950** - Theodore Wooschlager, a forester and World War I veteran, involved with the creation of the Oneida County Reforestation, promotes the idea of creating a Veterans' Memorial Forest in Ava.

**1951** - Boonville's 2 veterans' posts, 1) Harland J. Hennessey Post No. 5538 V.F.W., and 2) Charles J. Love D.S.C. American Legion Post No. 406, petition the Oneida County Board of Supervisors to designate the reforestation area as a "Veterans' Memorial Forest."

**1952** - Local organizations and businesses from the towns of Boonville and West Leyden donate materials and labor to create the Veterans' Memorial Forest.

**May 30, 1953** - The dedication of the Veterans' Memorial Forest takes place with Dr. Foster Brown, President of Oswego College, and son of Wallace Brown, giving the main address. A bronze marker is dedicated to the memory of all veterans who have served their country.

**Summer, 1953** - *North Country Life* publishes an article by T. P. Wooschlager entitled, *Oneida County's Veterans' Memorial Forest*.

- "A living memorial - nearly 800 acres of waving green trees near Boonville in Oneida County - was dedicated last spring to the veterans who have fought and won our wars so that freedom and democracy might live."
- "Oneida County is justly proud of this living memorial, one of the finest Veterans' Memorials in New York State, or perhaps the whole Northeast."

**1952-1960s** - Byron Trainor of West Leyden makes sure the flag is raised and lowered every day while keeping up the appearance of the area surrounding the marker.

**February 1993** - Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority (OHSWA) secretly begins digging test pits near Pohl Road, 2 miles south of the Veterans' Memorial Forest, in Ava; activity discovered by Ava residents, Alex Stempien and Ron Rushford

- OHSWA abandons Pohl Road site and targets the Veterans' Memorial Forest as the ideal place to construct a 104 year dump. OHSWA sites the preference for using public land and claim that only the marker on Rt.294 comprises the entire Memorial.

**May 1993** - Meetings held by OHSWA are held at Adirondack Central High School. hundreds of local citizens turn out to protest proposed dump on Veterans' Memorial Forest.

- May 26, 1993 - Boonville Herald headline reads, DARK DAY FOR AVA AND VETERANS when Ava, NY is chosen as primary site for dump
- May 27, 1993 - ACAL is organized at Adirondack Central High School and committees are formed,
- Activist group, Ava's Voice Against Landfill (AVAL) is created
- Local veterans hold annual Memorial Day service at the Veterans' Memorial Forest
- Local leaders view damage to Veterans' Memorial Forest due to OHSWA digging test pits

**June 9, 1993** - Boonville Herald headline, STAND AND FIGHT; ACAL committee chairpersons and phone numbers are printed in newspaper

**June 16, 1993** - Boonville Herald headline, NO VET DEAL, NO DUMP

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**June 1993** - Oneida County American Legion Posts unanimously pass resolution against OHSWA's selection of the Veterans' Memorial Forest in Ava as a landfill site.

- Attorney Michael Gerrard, a partner of Arnold & Porter law firm in New York City and heads the firm's environmental practice, is selected to represent ACAL

**July 1993** - A contentious meeting OHSWA and Town and Village board members held at the Boonville Municipal Commission. OHSWA board member Barbara Freeman states to a packed audience of residents, "The big fish eats the little fish" when referring to OHSWA selecting their dump site. OHSWA board members and attorney are jeered and harassed by a handful of protesters. The single incident is quickly used against everyone opposed to the dump.

- NO DUMP AT ALL COSTS, Boonville Herald headline, July 7, 1993
- OHSWA insists the Veterans' Memorial Forest is their only choice for a dump. They claim the Memorial is public land and a country reforestation area, and viewed as being a favorable dump site despite opposing views from the public. Paraphrased from Daily Sentinel, July 20, 1993

**August 12, 1993** - ADIRONDACK COMMUNITIES ADVISORY LEAGUE (ACAL) is incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization

**September 15, 1993** - Member of the Boonville Hennessey Post and Disable American Veterans (Korean War), [New York State Senator William R. Sears] is adamant in his objections to use of the Veterans' Memorial Forest as a landfill. "I cannot emphasize this enough. I have been against this right from the start," he said. - Boonville Herald

**October 13, 1993** - TRACK-HOE OPERATOR THREATENS EDITOR/OTHERS ON VET FOREST - Editor Michael Parker of the Boonville Herald, is almost hit in the head by a track-hoe while trying to take photos in the Veterans' Memorial Forest. The track-hoe operator, from Marcy Excavation, Inc., was hired by OHSWA. "Every time I went to take the photograph the track-hoe's bucket was placed between my camera and the driver." - Boonville Herald

**June 1994** - Ava resident, Helmet Schmeichel, proposes idea to create a Veterans' Cemetery in the Memorial Forest

**September 1994** - Oneida County Legislature refuses to help transfer ownership of the Veterans' Memorial Forest to OHSWA

**November 1994** - OHSWA meeting at Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, NY, relocates proposed dump site in Ava to the east the Veterans' Memorial Forest. Local veterans and residents unhappy with new location of the proposed dump site, only feet from the Memorial Forest. Ned Ross, chairman of ACAL, vehemently vows to continue the fight against the dump.

- Local veterans hold Veterans' Day Ceremony at the Memorial Forest

**November 1995** - ACAL sponsors conference in Boonville to discuss waste management alternatives; led by internationally known St. Lawrence University chemist professor, Dr. Paul Connert

**1996** - Local veterans continue to hold special ceremonies at the Veterans' Memorial Forest, including Memorial Day and Veterans' Day

**September 1997** - Charles J. Love American Legion Post #406 donates \$5,000 to support ACAL's efforts to fight the dump

**March 1998** - Veterans and citizens continue to speak out against the Ava dump at a public hearing in Boonville

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**January 1999** - Charles J. Love American Legion Post #406 donates \$10,000 to support ACAL's continued efforts to fight the dump

**August 2000** - Veterans Reclaim Memorial Forest; Veterans Defending Our Memorial Forest (VDOMF) occupy the Memorial Forest with an encampment to protest the proposed dump site, located feet from the Veterans' Memorial Forest

- Photograph of Vietnam Veteran Bob Willson makes Associated Press wire photo and is seen all over the United States. He was quoted as saying, "In Vietnam, I didn't know what I was fighting for. Here, I do."

**September 2000** - Miss America 2000, Heather Renee French, pledges her support to the Veterans Defending Our Memorial Forest. She is horrified that a memorial site could be a neighbor to a waste site. Observer Dispatch, September 16, 2000

**February 2001** - New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Administrative Law Judge Edward Buhrmaster dismisses Veterans' Memorial Forest as being an irrelevant issue to be adjudicated with regards to the Ava dump

**September 19, 2002** - New York State DEC hearing to discuss air and water issues with regards to Ava dump

**June 2003** - Daily Sentinel photograph of a sign showing the distance in miles from Veterans' Memorial Forest, Ava, NY to various battle sites throughout U.S. history. In large letters, the sign reads, "OHSWA Dump - adjacent"

**March 19, 2004** - New York State DEC Commission Erin Crotty grants OHSWA a dump permit while deliberately ignoring all facts relating to dump, including wetlands issues and the Veterans' Memorial Forest.

**November 2004** - Local veterans hold annual Veterans' Day ceremony at the Memorial Forest, while OHSWA construction crews continued to work on landfill. Construction equipment could be heard as area residents gathered to honor the fallen.

**May 2005** - Annual Memorial Day ceremony held at the Veterans' Memorial Forest

**Summer 2005** - OHSWA construction crews continue to strip the land adjacent to the Memorial Forest, while newly constructed storm retention ponds repeatedly fail, sending excessive sediment and silt into nearby Moose Creek, a trout spawning stream.

**November 2005** - Local veterans gather for annual Veterans' Day ceremony at the Memorial Forest.

**Spring 2006** - Battle to protect the Veterans' Memorial Forest forever continues . . .