

## WHY THE MILLER HOUSE SHOULD BE SAVED

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By John Noona

It has been said that "a generation which ignores history has no past---and no future."

The year is 2210. The United States is suffering through a deep recession. The jobless rate is 10%. U.S. troops are once more fighting on foreign soil. There is a huge budget deficit. The Vietnam War Memorial Wall in Washington is in a state of disrepair and about to collapse. The Wall has not been maintained for many years. A Congressman whose great-great-great grandfather fought in Vietnam has proposed a \$50 million project to renovate the wall. A bill in the House of Representatives to authorize this appropriation is defeated. The opposition stated that in these difficult economic times, there are other priorities and we cannot afford to spend this amount of money for an old monument.

I lived through the Vietnam War. Although I did not serve in Vietnam, I served on active duty in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. I had friends who served and lost their lives in that war. I visited that Wall many times and shed tears every time I stood in front of the Wall. I and many others who lived through that war, whether veterans or not, would turn over in our graves in 2210 if the nation allowed this monument to collapse and disappear. Will our ancestors two hundred years from now appreciate what the Wall represents?

Do we appreciate the historical monuments of our time? The Miller House is a monument to the Revolutionary War and the special place in the history of that war occupied by the Battle of White Plains. It is one of the few relics of the Revolutionary War in Westchester County. Historical scholarship has established that it was the headquarters of George Washington during the Battle of White Plains. The Miller House is equally as important as a chronicle of the role of women in the Revolutionary War. Anna Miller and her daughters nursed the wounded patriots of the Continental Army at their home. One of the Miller daughters was a spy for George Washington. In years past, school children visited the Miller House to learn first hand about the Battle of White Plains and the American Revolution. We cannot let this precious relic of our heritage die disgracefully as a result of our neglect and apathy.

Westchester County assumed the responsibility to maintain this site which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We own the problem. We cannot pawn it off to an historical society or not for profit group. We have to accept responsibility for our failure to maintain the Miller House. Prior to this year, the County had already allocated \$1.2 million for the Miller House restoration in its capital plan. This is the amount of a bond that would be paid over fifteen years. The amount of the bond was determined as a result of a detailed study by an architectural firm that specializes in historic preservation. We realized, however, that it makes no sense to spend these funds to renovate the Miller House in its current location, a commercial zone, across the street from a cement plant. So at the suggestion of the architectural firm, which has relocated other historical buildings, we found a site on county land near the Kensico Dam. Here, the Miller House will be accessible to more visitors and to school children as it was in past. The cost of the restoration and move is higher (approximately \$1.9 million). But, rather than seek additional bond funds, the remainder of the funds will be supplied through private donations. A North Castle citizens committee is in the process of establishing a not for profit corporation to accept donations, scheduling a fundraiser and soliciting pledges. The County can recoup part of its \$1.2 million contribution by selling the land that the Miller House now occupies. A sale would also put this property back on the tax rolls.

We cannot let our heritage be lost to our children and grandchildren. We must preserve the memory of those who fought and died for us throughout all of our history --back to the Revolutionary War- where it all began.