

Northbrook Lodge is located in the Town of Brighton, Franklin County, New York, 12 miles north of the Village of Saranac Lake. The property occupies 10 acres at the end of a wooded peninsula with 4000' of frontage on Osgood Lake. One of the few other camps along its banks is White Pine Camp, used by President Calvin Coolidge in 1926 as his Summer White House.

On April 14, 1919, Lelia Sinclair Gordon Barnett of Washington, D. C., deeded land to Wilfred L. McDougald of Montreal for \$21,000. The deed description begins: "First - All of the five (5) acres surveyed for one A. A. Smith, January 16, 1889." A. A. Smith was the legendary hotelman and raconteur Apollos A. (Paul) Smith, whose hotel property became Paul Smith's College. Second was another parcel of five acres,"together with the buildings and improvements" and certain personal property. These lands had been conveyed by Paul Smith's Hotel Company to Henry B. Wilson and Basil B. Gordon in three deeds, in 1889, 1899 and 1900. "Whereas the said premises are not situated upon any highway," Paul Smith's Hotel Company had already given McDougald a right-of-way for pedestrians, horses, teams, automobiles and all other vehicles and conveyances across the lands at the base of the peninsula on January 4, 1919, for \$500. The Osgood Lake section of Paul Smith's Park showing the right-of-way was mapped by surveyor E. M. "Lem" Merrill of Saranac Lake.

Dr. McDougald had Northbrook Lodge built as his summer camp between 1920 and 1930, reportedly at a total cost of \$500,000.<sup>1</sup> Both design and construction appear to be the work of master builder Benjamin Muncil of Keeses Mills. Muncil is best known for two nearby construction projects: White Pine Camp (1907), on which he worked with NYC architect William G. Massarene, where he introduced "brainstorm" siding; and Topridge (beginning in 1921), where he constructed major improvements with architect Theodore Blake.<sup>2</sup> In Neil Surprenant's interview with Ben's daughter, Leah Meagher, she spoke of "sitting up at night and reading correspondence courses to her father until she was hoarse. First, it was blueprint reading. Later, when building other people's designs was not enough, it was architectural drawing."<sup>3</sup> While there is no completely reliable way to determine which projects Muncil designed himself as well as built, no other architect has been associated with Northbrook Lodge in local tradition. (See the appendix for articles on Muncil.)

It is not known whether the "buildings and improvements" of the Wilson-Gordon property were demolished or incorporated into the present camp design. Muncil's site plan took into account how both owners and guests approached the

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<sup>1</sup> Dates supplied by owner Laura-Jean Schwartau, 8/4/97; price is from a real estate advertisement, *Adirondack Enterprise*, 29 June 1944.

<sup>2</sup> "Benjamin Muncil, Victim of Crossing Mishap, Had Part in Resort Building," *Adirondack Enterprise* [Saranac Lake, N.Y.], 18 December 1930. This attribution is supported (in a negative sense) by the lack of any reference to this client or property in the contemporary files of either Scopes & Feustmann, Architects, or Branch & Callanan, a major camp construction company, both of Saranac Lake.

<sup>3</sup> Neil Surprenant, "Ben Muncil: Builder of Great Camps," *Adirondac*, July 1986, 20-22.

property, the order in which they saw its various elements, the point at which they would "arrive." Unlike earlier camps in the area, the site of Northbrook Lodge was accessible by road from the time it was developed. The main approach to the camp was always by land, not by water, so that the boathouse served primarily for recreational use, rather than as the grand gateway to the camp that some other boathouses had been in the past.

As guests do today, McDougald approached his Adirondack camp from the White Pine Road near Paul Smiths, turning left on the shared road which took him out to the peninsula, through the gate, and passing the first of his camp buildings, the caretaker's house (now rebuilt) and the nine-car garage on the right, and a small boathouse on the left. Today's guests turn right, into a parking lot at the center of the camp, where the office is appended to a large woodshed, and the centrally located pavilion once sheltered fire protection equipment. But McDougald's driver would have borne left along the water, crossing a low stone arch bridge and passing today's staff housing, called Fairfield, on the right. Next on the left was his fenced clay tennis court and substantial tennis house. Now called the Cottage, the huge room with fireplace and screened porch houses guests instead of entertaining *apres* tennis revelers. No longer used, the court is returning to woodland. The narrow road edged in cobblestones ends in a teardrop-shaped cul-de-sac beside the two-part Dining building, the main feature of McDougald's camp and one of its first buildings. In his time, the near cottage was the dining room and kitchen, while the cottage opposite the dining room by the covered stone porch, now also used for meals and for ping-pong on its

screened porch, contained the library/living room. Connecting these two cottages, which directly face the island, is an open veranda, reached by low stairs on the water side of each building, and exiting between them through a roofed pavilion to the central lawn around which all the buildings of the camp pivot. Under this main building is a locked wine and liquor cellar.

Continuing around the shoreline of the peninsula on foot, the next building, Marcy, the original owner's bedroom cottage, is arranged with four guest bedrooms today. Out front on the water side is a shuffleboard court. Marcy faces Osgood Pond across the grassy Point, swimming spot and day-time gathering place. Just to the right along the shore is a pavilion in a little cove, housing three canoe slips. Next, McDougald's main boat house extends out over the water, with an upstairs play room fitted out as the lounge, and a small screened porch over the water. Tucked in behind the boathouse is two-room Gabriels, the smallest of the guest cabins, remembered as the McDougald's "Granny's house." What is called the Main building today is said to have been built as a second and larger family cabin, one which provided separate bedrooms for Mr. and Mrs. McDougald, as well as private living and dining rooms and kitchen; the building is converted to five guest bedrooms today. Beyond Main along the shoreline, the last cabin, four-bedroom Whiteface, was once a guest cottage, with chauffeur's quarters in the rear. It is said to have been moved from the site of Marcy when that cabin was built.<sup>4</sup> Between the principal buildings and across the lawn

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Lou Schwartau and Laura-Jean Schwartau to author, fall 1996 and June 8, 1997.

are walks made of triangles of Redford stone, built in a later ownership by an employee of Bill Schwartau's.

All of the principal camp buildings share a common style, the one-story cedar-shingled bungalow so characteristic of Ben Muncil's work. Distinctive details include low-pitched roofs supported by square hewn porch posts, with vergeboards whose inner curves give the illusion that the deep eaves are drooping toward the ground. The circular layout of this camp and the mushroom-like shapes of the buildings combine to remind a fanciful visitor of a giant fairy ring.

On June 22, 1922, McDougald expanded his U. S. holdings, purchasing the present Asplin Tree Farms property on the Harrietstown Road from John M. Hooey and his wife Susie M. Hooey. Muncil is also credited with building the farm buildings, including a dairy barn said to be for Guernsey milk cows. McDougald reportedly sent the cream produced on the farm to his home and friends in Quebec.

In the summer of 1926, President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge arrived at nearby White Pine Camp on July 7, and stayed until September 18. In a newspaper dated July 12 that year, it was reported that

Mr. Coolidge may be visited by Arthur Meighen, premier of Canada. It is customary for the Canadian prime minister to be entertained each summer at the camp of Wilfred McDougald of Montreal which adjoins the Summer White House property. Mr. McDougald is expected soon and Mr. Meighen's visit it is expected may follow shortly.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Unidentified newspaper, dated 12 July 1926 (probably from scrapbooks in the Paul Smith's College historical collection), reported by Howard Kirschenbaum in a letter to Laura-Jean and Mary Lou Schwartau, 22 September 1994.

This bit of wishful thinking on the part of the writer *was* based on fact, as later information will show. The following item appeared in the *Kansas City Star*:

July 17. [President Coolidge] witnessed the rescue from the lake of four youths whose sail boat had capsized in a heavy blow a quarter mile from shore. [He was] attracted by the cries of the boy[s], who included Wilfred McDougold, son of Senator McDougold of the Canadian Parliament whose camp adjoins the Summer White House, and those of his companions 16 and 17 years old.<sup>6</sup>

A Philadelphia paper reported on the same incident under the headline: "Coolidge Sees 4 Boys Saved As Boat Overturns in Lake":

They were taken across the lake to the camp of Dr. Wilfred L. McDougald, where they were the guests of the doctor's son. Thanks of Dr. McDougald have been received at the camp. He is one of the leading surgeons of Canada, and his camp is one of the finest in the region.<sup>7</sup>

The following summer, on June 25, 1927, a local newspaper wrote that

Honorable W. L. McDougald of Montreal, Canadian Senator, is returning with his family to occupy his Osgood Lake Camp. . . . Senator and Mrs. McDougald are expected about July 1.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 17 July 1926, quoted in Kirschenbaum letter, 22 September 1994.

<sup>7</sup> *Public Ledger and North American*, Philadelphia, 28 July 1926, quoted in Kirschenbaum letter, 22 September 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Unidentified local newspaper, dated 25 June 1927, quoted in Kirschenbaum letter, 22 September 1994.

Just who was this W. L. McDougald?

U. S. newspapers of the time called him "Senator McDougold [sic] of the Canadian Parliament,"<sup>9</sup> "Honorable W. L. McDougald of Montreal, Canadian Senator,"<sup>10</sup> and "one of the leading surgeons of Canada."<sup>11</sup> It is said that he was instrumental in building the Jacques Cartier Bridge.<sup>12</sup>

Alvin Doty, son of Orman Doty, one of President Coolidge's guides, has written that "Dr. MacDougal later became involved in a timber deal similar to our own [Teapot] Dome deal and was jailed for a long term and naturally lost his job as a [Member of Parliament]."<sup>13</sup>

William P. Schwartau, who bought the camp property in 1952, told his daughter that McDougald was a rum-runner who sent liquor back from Canada for his own use while returning the farm's milk and cream containers, and who may have had ties with the Chicago Mafia. Eva Reese, one of the camp's former owners, shared some hearsay with Mary Lou Schwartau to the effect that McDougald was associated

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<sup>9</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 18 July 1926, quoted in Kirschenbaum letter, 22 September 1994.

<sup>10</sup> A "local newspaper," 25 June 1927, quoted in Kirschenbaum letter, 22 September 1994.

<sup>11</sup> *Public Ledger and North American*, 28 July 1926, quoted in Kirschenbaum letter, 22 September 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Lou Schwartau to author, fall 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Alvin Doty, letter to Pat Willis, Rainbow Lake, quoted in Willis' letter to author, 27 May 1996.

with gangster Dutch Schultz, who *was* jailed and tried in Malone.<sup>14</sup> Tending to confirm these rumors is the presence under the main building of a cellar with 90 individual compartments for wine bottles and several shelves for liquor behind a door with a combination lock.

Bronson Trevor, who purchased the Asplin Tree Farms property after McDougald's death, supplied his understanding of events in a 1996 interview. He explained that Wilfred Laurier McDougald was a Senator, and named for a Prime Minister of Canada. As a director of the Beauharnois Power Company, he went with all of the directors on a \$25,000 cruise to Bermuda.<sup>15</sup> When the company received a government contract, even though -- in Mr. Trevor's judgment -- it was very good business, the cruise was considered bribery. McDougald was expelled from the Senate and subsequently declared bankruptcy. Trevor thought the McDougalds lost the farm (and probably the camp, too) because during World War II, exchange controls prevented funds being sent across the border, and the family could not pay the taxes. Mr. Trevor felt that McDougald was not a bootlegger. Though gangster Dutch Schultz was jailed and tried in Malone, Mrs. Trevor termed the story that McDougald had hosted him at camp "far-fetched."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Note from Schwartau family, 8/4/97 .

<sup>15</sup> F. A. Kunz, *The Modern Senate of Canada, 1925-1963: A Re-appraisal*, Canadian Government Series, Vol. 15 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 142.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Bronson and Eleanor Trevor at Trevallyn, 9/14/96.

For all McDougald's touted prominence, no documentation of any of these statements can be found in standard Canadian biographical references.<sup>17</sup> However, Canadian political histories confirm that Wilfrid Laurier McDougald (Wilfrid is the French spelling) was a medical doctor, a Roman Catholic,<sup>18</sup> and a member of the Liberal Party of Canada. Further, there is documentary evidence to support Alvin Doty and Bronson Trevor's stories of political misdeeds. The following quotations are taken from an article by S. J. Donovan and R. B. Winmill entitled "The Beauharnois Power Scandal," which appears as Chapter 5 in *Political Corruption in Canada: Cases, Causes and Cures*. Their account has been condensed to concentrate on McDougald's part in the scandal. A complete copy of the article is attached for reference.

In 1928 a syndicate headed by Mr. R. O. Sweezey of the Beauharnois Light, Heat and Power Corporation had been formed. Sweezey, a Montreal businessman with an engineering background, had, like many before him, realized the great power potential of the short fifteen-mile stretch of the St. Lawrence River between Lake St. Francis and Lake St. Louis. However, in order to build the power plant to tap this natural resource it was necessary for a canal to be built. The construction of this canal could only be realized if an appropriate Order-in-Council was passed by the [William Lyon Mackenzie] King government. Sweezey set about to appropriate all of the political influence he could summon, and finally in 1929 the necessary Order-in-Council was passed allowing the canal to be built, and permitting the Corporation the right to withdraw 40,000 cubic feet of water per second from the canal. . . .

The issue of the Beauharnois Light, Heat and Power Corporation was first raised in the House on May 22, 1930 . . . . [enquiring] how a company with capital assets of \$1,280,000 in 1927 had been capitalized

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<sup>17</sup> The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, *Canadian Men & Women of the Time*, *Canadian Who's Who* and the *MacMillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography* were checked by an experienced Montreal researcher.

<sup>18</sup> Kunz, 50.

at over \$30,000,000 by 1930. The Liberal Government, still in power at this time, declined to launch an inquiry.<sup>19</sup>

When an investigation was finally made, the situation proved to be a

classic case in political graft. The committee's findings revealed that the federal granting of the water rights to Beauharnois allowed the owners not only an immediate return on their investment, but a cash profit of \$2,189,000, and in addition left the owners with 1,000,000 Class A shares -- which were at one time worth \$17,000,000 on the market. . . . As the pages of the report unfolded, the reputation of a number of prominent Liberals rapidly evaporated. . . .

The most suggestively subversive act of a Liberal Party member was that of Senator Wilfrid Laurier McDougald. Senator McDougald, a doctor turned politician, held four positions from which he could influence the decision to allow the Beauharnois Corporation the canal rights. He was, prior to the passing of the appropriate Order-in-Council, Chairman of the Montreal Harbour Commission, a member of the National Advisory Council on the St. Lawrence Waterway and a member of the Senate's special committee on the St. Lawrence. In these three positions there existed no conflict of interest, but combined with his elaborately concealed fourth position, as a major shareholder of the Beauharnois Corporation, they represented a blatant conflict of interest.<sup>20</sup>

Note that in the above paragraph "the words 'suggestively subversive' are used to distinguish the Senator's actions from any legal sense of subversion -- as this case was never heard in the courts -- only in the Upper and lower Houses."<sup>21</sup>

McDougald also had a

relationship with a very powerful civil servant by the name of Robert A. C. Henry. Before the issuing of the Order-in-Council giving the Beauharnois Corporation the necessary rights, the two . . . set up a

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<sup>19</sup> S. J. Donovan and R. B. Winmill, "The Beauharnois Power Scandal," Chapter 5 in *Political Corruption in Canada: Cases, Causes and Cures*, Kenneth M. Gibbons and Donald C. Rowat, eds. (Ottawa: Carleton University/McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1976), 57-58.

<sup>20</sup> Donovan and Winmill, 58-59.

<sup>21</sup> Donovan and Winmill, note #12, 65.

dummy company to superficially appear as if it were in direct competition with Sweezy and his syndicate for the rights. They advised Sweezy that it would be expedient, in order to secure his own application, to buy out their (worthless) company. Sweezy promptly responded by purchasing their company in exchange for shares in the Beauharnois Corporation with an approximate market value of \$1,000,000. Referring to this incident, Allen argues that, '[McDougald] acquired his first million dollars worth of stock as an outright gouge and split it down the middle with Robert A. C. Henry, an influential civil servant who helped him extract it.'<sup>22</sup> . . .

Almost immediately McDougald and Henry, by virtue of their stock holdings, took over outright control of the Beauharnois Corporation. McDougald became Chairman of the Board and Henry vice-president of the company. This of course put King's government in the embarrassing position of having an influential Senator, McDougald, who incidentally was also a close friend of King, and a powerful former bureaucrat, Henry, at the head of an organization which depended on the Government for its very existence. . . .

The last crushing blow came as the somewhat amazed and shaken committee presented an authentic voucher of a bill, paid for by the Beauharnois Corporation, for a holiday taken jointly by Prime Minister King, Senator Haydon and Beauharnois board chairman, Senator McDougald. Needless to say it would be improper for a Prime Minister to accept any offer from a corporation with which the Government was doing business. For King, this scandal had now touched [close] to home . . . for by means of the voucher, he was directly implicated in the Beauharnois Affair.<sup>23</sup>

It was necessary for the Prime Minister to disassociate himself from the free vacation for his own "political future but also for the Liberal Party's reputation. As for the paid holiday, King maintained that he thought McDougald had personally paid for

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<sup>22</sup> R. Allen, *Ordeal by Fire* (Toronto: n.p., 1961), 313, quoted in Donovan and Winmill, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Donovan and Winmill, 59-60.

the trip."<sup>24</sup> Apparently McDougald did pay King's hotel bill himself, later submitting it to the Beauharnois company for reimbursement.<sup>25</sup>

During the time that the scandal was being investigated, Canada was also fully entrenched in the effects of the depression. Conceivably some pressure was removed for a more complete tabling of the facts surrounding the Beauharnois Affair, as the many personal tragedies began to pile up.

The committee of the House of Commons reached the unanimous finding 'that Senators Donat Raymond, Andrew Haydon and Wilfrid Laurier McDougald had acted improperly and inconsistently with their positions of public trust on behalf of Sweezey and his Company.' Although all three Senators maintained that they had acted perfectly legitimately, McDougald eventually resigned his seat in the Senate. . . . P. Reading summarized the situation well, when he argued that "it has not actually been shown that political influence was bought in any quarter, though it may have been generously paid for."<sup>26</sup>

From another source comes the information that "the Commons committee 'strongly condemned' Haydon and McDougald, but left punitive action to the Senate. King urged McDougald to resign, but McDougald refused, then acquiesced when the Senate committee censured him."<sup>27</sup>

Kunz elaborates on McDougald's "enforced resignation":

On May 3, 1932, the Senate adopted on a partisan vote the report of the Tanner committee, which upheld the charges of dishonourable conduct in manipulating campaign contributions laid against three Liberal

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<sup>24</sup> Donovan and Winmill, 60.

<sup>25</sup> John R. Williams, *The Conservative Party of Canada: 1920-1949* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1956), 145.

<sup>26</sup> P. Reading, *Ottawa Citizen*, 23 July 1931. This concludes the long quotation from Donovan and Winmill, 57-61, & notes, 64-65.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Simpson, *Spoils of Power: The Politics of Patronage* (Don Mills, Ontario: Collins Toronto, 1988), 136-139.

members of the Senate by a special committee of the House of Commons the previous year. . . There were no mitigating circumstances for Sen. W. L. McDougald, of whom the Report concluded that his "actions were not fitting or consistent with his duties and standing as a Senator." At this point the issue raised the constitutional problem of expulsion. Although both Sen. McDougald and his counsel argued that the Senate had no legal right to expel, the fact remained that "the Senate could pass a vote of censure . . . and . . . no man would care to run that risk and dream of sitting with others who had thus expressed their opinion of him." In other words, even if the Senate lacks the power of impeachment, the moral effects of a threat of censuring have been considered strong enough to be relied upon for achieving the same end. And this is what in fact happened. Although Sen. McDougald was first reluctant to resign, at an interview with Dandurand he was bluntly told that if he refused to resign from the Senate there would be a vote of censure passed upon him. As Dandurand later said, "this seemed to shake McDougald and the latter promised to think the matter over. . ." Indeed, immediately following the division upon the adoption of the committee's report, Dandurand read a letter from Sen. McDougald to which was attached another letter, addressed to the Governor General, containing the Senator's resignation from the Senate.<sup>28</sup>

The 1926 newspaper report previously quoted that "it is customary for the Canadian prime minister to be entertained each summer at the camp of Wilfred McDougald" is given substance by the confirmation above that McDougald was "a close friend of King." McDougald may very well have customarily entertained Mackenzie King at camp. Not realizing that the visits were motivated by personal friendship, the reporter probably assumed that they were a political activity that would continue.

Very interesting, in light of rumors in the U.S. that McDougald was a bootlegger, is the following note: "By virtue of holding power during the period of

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<sup>28</sup> Kunz, 166-167.

prohibition in the United States the Liberals had an especial advantage which enabled them to exploit the distilleries and breweries more than could the Conservatives."<sup>29</sup>

The serious and well-documented charges of the Beauharnois Affair certainly cast the character of W. L. McDougald in an unfavorable light. Whether or not rumors of bootlegging from his Franklin County, New York, properties can be confirmed, his lack of scruples was amply proven, leaving open the possibility of other kinds of misbehavior.

With his departure from the Senate, McDougald's finances and his health both fell apart. Tending to confirm Bronson Trevor's allegation of bankruptcy is a sheaf of correspondence regarding unpaid utility bills for McDougald's properties, preserved in the records of the Paul Smith's Electric Light & Power & Railroad Company in the museum at Paul Smith's College.<sup>30</sup> The letters are dated between September 27, 1934, and July 10, 1937, when both McDougald and the power company were clearly having a great deal of financial difficulty. In the earlier letters, McDougald's accounts were handled by Joseph N. Frank, Secretary, from an office in Victoria Square, Montreal. In his letter of November 1, 1934, to Dick Longtin, Esq., Frank writes:

Dr. McDougald sustained a serious illness in New York a few weeks ago which necessitated an operation. I am happy to report he is now out of danger but we have got him home confined to his bed where he will be for a month or so.

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<sup>29</sup> Williams, note, 145.

<sup>30</sup> A complete set of copies of these letters is included in the appendix.

By November 17, 1936, Frank was out of the picture. A letter to R. Longtin at Paul Smith's Hotel was sent on letterhead of the Federal Fuel Company, 417 St. Peter Street, Montreal, apparently signed by McDougald himself. He wrote: "Our man at the Camp wrote saying his lights were out and I wonder if you can explain this to me, as he of course will need lights at the caretaker's cottage." McDougald wrote these ingenuous lines at a time when he owed the company \$1,002.44 for electric service at the camp alone!

McDougald's was undoubtedly one of "the many personal tragedies" of the depression, though equally of his own making. He died June 19, 1942, in the City of Westmount, Quebec, leaving a widow, Mary C. H. McDougald, of 342 Redfern Avenue there.<sup>31</sup> Reportedly, the two McDougald sons, including Wilfred, whose rescue President Coolidge had witnessed, were not pleased when their mother lost the camp for taxes.<sup>32</sup>

On November 17, 1944, Cornelius (Con) F. Meagher, Ben Muncil's son-in-law and secretary-treasurer of his corporation,<sup>33</sup> acting as administrator of McDougald's estate, sold the Northbrook Lodge property to O. Rundle Gilbert of Putnam County,

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<sup>31</sup> The death date and place was given in a note from an unidentified source, supplied to the author by Mary Lou Schwartau, June 8, 1997. The widow's name and address were found by Howard Kirschenbaum in Book 244, page 193, Franklin County Clerk's Office, Malone, New York.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Lou Schwartau to author, fall 1996. A cousin of the McDougalds owned nearby Camp Brigadoon.

<sup>33</sup> Geraldine Collins, *The Brighton Story*, second edition (Saranac Lake, NY: Chauncy Press, 1986), 166.

New York.<sup>34</sup> However, Gilbert, an auctioneer, had already re-sold the camp and its rich furnishings on the previous July 12-15, 1944. A controversy erupted over the auction, as clippings from a local newspaper show.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Book 244, page 12, Franklin County Clerk's Office, Malone, New York. (Kirschenbaum research.) Bronson Trevor thought that Meagher was a state-appointed administrator, as McDougald's widow could not be the executor because she would then be liable for her husband's debt.

<sup>35</sup> Adirondack Collection, Saranac Lake Free Library, vertical file.