

April 2013

I thought I would give some history on the Aisle of Pines for those who could not attend our program. I found a couple of pages that had been torn out of an unknown booklet and an article by an unknown author: "Aisle of Pines" House of Mystery.

A place of mystery, to many, is the once-resplendent huge square house near Wayne which has been known as "Aisle of Pines." The late Ada B. Turner of Wayne, related to a man who worked there as caretaker, once published a small booklet about the old home with Gothic columns on three sides, a total of 24 pillars.

Samuel Hallett hired the three-story mansion built, and called it Lake Home. Some of the original furnishings were said to have belonged to Louis Phillipe of France.

Samuel Hallett was first in the lumber business which prospered, then became a banker, and later still was one of the men backing the development of the Nautilus Diving Bell, a forerunner of the submarine. His family always contended they failed to get patent rights due them from the project.

One of his last investments was in railroads. Hallett was ambushed and killed while riding horseback in Kansas in 1864.

His Lake Home began to fall victim of neglect, disuse and misuse. His ailing widow sometimes rode a white horse over the estate to her husband's grave, and lovers of tall tales told, after her death, of seeing the white horse and rider on the grounds. For a time, folks called it the "Haunted House on the Hill."

Many years later, George K. Birge, a millionaire involved in the manufacture of the Pierce-Arrow car, secured a long term lease on the home which the younger Samuel Hallett refused to sell. The few remaining family possessions were sent to the son.

The huge house was moved some distance away from the road and turned to face Keuka Lake. The new site was prepared by removing the center section of a growth of pines and creating an aisle of the evergreens through which it was approached, "Aisle of Pines."

Of the original furnishings, the floor-to-ceiling mirrors from France remained as did the Hallett library. A large wing was added for kitchen, pantries and servants' rooms. There was a basement under the entire structure and in it were rooms and bath for the butler, plus heating facilities, a water tank and storage spaces.

After Birge died in 1918, it again fell to near abandonment. The State of New York became the owner through Mrs. Hallett's will, long contested by relatives who lost. It was intended; the Aisle of Pines should become a public institution. It never did. Lately, it has passed through several private ownerships, none of which has restored it fully.

This account of the old Hallett place in Wayne was written to Lola Austin Morse by Margaret Hallett Lang of Norway Hill, Hancock New Hampshire on February 12, 1951.

If ever four children had an idyllic childhood it was the four children of Robert Leslie Hallett and Mary E. Bartlett Hallett at Lake Home, New York, or as the villagers called it – Big House. Some referred to it as the White House but for what reason I do not know.

I personally lived there from the time I was six weeks old until my mother died in 1896 when I was 10 years old. During those ten years Grandmother Hallett was always in her bed, and we children went in every morning or once a day to say "Good Morning," and ask if she were well. My grandmother Bartlett used to visit us twice a year on her trips to her native state of Maine from Kansas City, Kansas, to which my Grandfather had moved

because of tuberculosis. He and Grandmother Bartlett also owned an orange plantation in Florida from whence came the annual boxes of oranges which were then a rarity in Wayne.

Mother used to read to Grandmother Hallett several hours a day, and I can remember Uncle Frank and Uncle George McDowell visiting her often on business, and hosts of kin folk always coming and going, visiting, signing, great parties on the lawn, picnics and swimming in the two lakes, Keuka and Waneta. In Waneta were many blood suckers which frightened me.

The family owned vineyards and shares in the steamboat lines that used to operate on Lake Keuka and I can well remember the Halsey and the Mary Belle. I also remember the resentful faces of passengers once when we arrived late at Keuka Landing for the boat going to Penn Yan. We were taking guests to the boat and they wanted to leave at a certain time from Penn Yan. We had an owner's flag put up and the boat had to return for us.

These relatives and friends who had summer homes around the lakes entertained in return, many families at one time, and the summer months were full of gaiety. At these parties we children always ate at a separate table whether served inside or outside.

It would be wrong to enumerate our family without giving due attention to our cook, Maria Simmons, whom I loved with passionate devotion, and her husband George, who sometimes worked for us and sometimes did not. I was his favorite and whenever the horses had to be shod he would ask Mother if "Little Margit" could go to the blacksmith shop with him, and there I would watch the blaze of the fire as the leather bellows forced air into the fuel container, the glow of the horseshoes, and I can still see the blacksmith hold up the horse's foot as the shoes were put on. I also remember seeing the hooves being peeled to fit the shoe, and the group of men on the other side of the shop talking and smoking their pipes. It was George Simmons who put me on his lap in the kitchen and blew smoke in my ears "to stop the earache."

Maria Simmons made the best ginger cookies and pancakes I have ever eaten. I still have a violet colored glass she brought me from the fair at Dundee. Her granddaughters, Violet and Sallie Griffin, helped out when guests were numerous and acted as nursemaids at other times. We loved them also. In fact the first ten years of my life were full of loving and gracious surroundings, beauty within and without, and strong traditions of culture, of noblesse oblige and of past grandeur. When my mother read aloud to us from the Youth's Companion about the eligible princes of Europe, it grieved me considerably that Alphonso of Spain was the only one about my age. I wanted to marry an American – but I expected to marry a prince – and if a Spaniard was the only available prince I thought it would just have to be. Just where I obtained those delusions of grandeur I do not know unless it was the talk I heard as a very young child of presentations at courts, of Duke This and Count That, and the international conversations in the home. Also Mother and Grandmother Hallett conversed frequently in French, possibly to keep up their familiarity with the language or in order to discuss something they did not wish us children to know about.

I am of no importance in this story of the Hallett house, but I must relate it as I saw it. My brother Sam was born there and it was generally understood that he was to inherit it.

The place was rebuilt in 1850, the white colonial part being added to the former house, and Grandfather Hallett brought over an Italian landscape gardener of some European fame to supervise the landscaping.

If one were approaching the house from the Wayne Road, the main house would be on the right of the road, and the tenant farm and house and buildings to the left. This was supposed to go to Uncle Erving eventually.

At the time of my earliest memory, Dan Warren and his wife farmed the place. Their daughter Eva was especially fond of animals, sheep, cats and dogs, and had unusual talent for drawing, and became our childhood companion and faithful friend.

I think the tenant farm would be on the south of the road, as the sun set over the woods around the private cemetery, so that would make the rear of the house face the north, and the parlor side would be on the east

facing the village. The front door would face south, and was protected from the road by a white fence which had square posts between the top and bottom, and the top of the fence was broad and angled up in the center. The posts were big enough to sit on comfortably.

A gate led to the front of the house, around which was a piazza that ran around the entire front and two sides of the new addition, and it extended to the top of the three story house. Columns of Grecian fluted pillars held up the roof of the piazza. Front and side of the piazza were broken in the middle by two "horseblocks" between which were steps. The horseblocks were supposed to enable a woman to step easily into a side saddle. I can remember Aunt Ella's and Aunt Margaret's side saddles, the seat of one being blue velvet and the other red velvet.

On each side in front of the house about 20 feet were two circles of evergreen trees under which were a carpet of myrtle. Lilacs grew in clumps near the fence and around the foundations of the house as well as beautiful shrubs imported from Italy. Somewhere in front were two white painted urns planted in summertime with hanging ivy, geraniums and other flowers.

Farther down the hill and east was a very large circle of evergreen trees and running toward the north on that side were two fountains imported from Italy. One was of Neptune. Neptune stood on shells and wore a crown and carried a trident. The other fountain has as its central figure a child's figure. Both of these fountains were large in circumference. In between were clusters of peony beds, iris, mock orange and syringas.

To the west of the house the carriage road ran back to the carriage house and barn, circled a bit and went north again thru the apple orchard and then thru an opening in the line of trees which formed a three and four line avenue of trees, which ran from the road going down to Keuka from the four corners to the wood in which was the cemetery. Later the two inner rows of trees were cut down by Mr. Birge who leased the place, thus forming a bridle path from which he derived the name "Isle of Pines." By no extent of the imagination could an automobile or carriage have been driven thru them. Back of this avenue or windbreak of evergreens at the north of the house was the racetrack built by my grandfather Hallett and used by the family and guests, the inside of which had been converted into a hayfield when I lived there, although the circular road was still in good condition.

In the orchard were apples, pears, cherries, plums and "gillyflowers" and on either side of the road, beds of red, white, and black currants. A vegetable garden was placed west of the house and was partially surrounded by catalpa trees. There were horse chestnuts, hickory nut, willow and maple trees on the place. There was one circle of arbor vitae west of the kitchen door. West of the vegetable garden was a lovely rose garden. Farther west and north of the catalpa was the road which led to the cemetery. A rarely beautiful monument brought from Italy and surmounted by a cross, the Hallett's were Episcopalians, formed the center of the cemetery. Samuel Hallett and his wife Ann Eliza, and their two sons, my father Robert Leslie and Samuel Irving are still buried there. I believe the other bodies have been removed.

At the west of the house and immediately in front of that central horseblock was another circle but not of trees. It had a pebble walk around it and the center was another fountain, the central figure of which was a little boy standing up and hugging a fish as large as he was. Some dolphins and starfishes were at the base. Back of this was another circle of trees in which we children had a playhouse with an imitation fireplace and back of it was a brook which meandered through the fields beyond and across the road to the tenant farm. As it approached the road it was planted with willows, and we children had a tree house built in it, climbing up into it by cleats nailed to the tree trunk.

On the tenant farm were large woods, known as "Irving's Woods," and the reservoir which supplied the fountains and the main house with water. Lake Home was the first house in Western New York to have a bathtub and bathroom. The bathtub was sort of galvanized iron affair and had a rounded yellow pine edge.

The interior of the house was on the same scale as the exterior. Seven coats of white enamel paint, and after each coat a thorough sanding, had produced a finish which lasted in perfect condition half a century and would have lasted longer had not vandal hands repainted it. As one entered the front hall, on the right was the front parlor separated from the back parlor by doors which slid into the partition so the effect was one large room. There were French doors leading onto the piazza, and green looped draperies at the windows, which were held in place by gold cord and were hung under valances covered with the same material and edged with gold.

At the south between the windows was a long French pier glass mirror resting on a marble shelf held up by golden brackets. Sea shells in pinkish shades lay on these shelves. The furniture was of carved rosewood brought from France, delicate and upholstered in light or pastel green silk damask. In the southeast and southwest corner respectively stood the busts of Grandfather Hallett and Grandmother Hallett done by Lont Thompson in Carrara marble. Lont Thompson's statues now grace the Metropolitan Museum in New York. In the front parlor was the Marie Antoinette secretary and table brought from France by my grandparents through the influence of Madame de Choud, niece of Louis Philippe and a friend of my grandparents. The friends visited them later at Wayne and brought them as a gift a Louis Philippe pudding dish and cream pitcher in white Sevres. The white plumes of Navarre formed the handle of the pudding dish. The gold crown of France is engraved on one side of each dish and the initials of Louis Philippe on the other. There was one small chair for a child in the rosewood set, all of which burned without insurance while in storage in Tyrone.

In the northwest corner of this room was a carved rosewood cabinet. The top doors on the lower portion were intricately carved around a large open oval, behind which was a curtain of powder blue China silk. The effect was lovely. The chandeliers centered the ceiling and were of crystal and gilt and brought from France. The wallpaper, also brought from France was a pigeon grey background, and bouquets of gilt violets. Something like it can be seen in the Hawthorne house in Concord, MA. There was also an easel in carved rosewood which belonged to my father, and on it was one of his newly finished oils. A Spanish guitar was in one corner.

The back parlor was furnished in identical manner and also with some oval rosewood marble topped tables. There were vases and other ornaments on the white marble fireplace at the north end of the room, and over it hung a large French plate glass mirror with beveled edges which went to the ceiling. All the house ceilings were high and the mouldings ornamental.

Behind the back parlor was another room which at the time I lived there was occupied by my Grandmother Hallett who took to her bed at the death of her husband in 1865 and did not get up until a week before her death in 1893.

If you followed thru the front hall you entered into what was called the alcove, the back of which entered into Grandmother's room and the west side into the state dining room which could thus be made very large indeed. At the left of the front hall entry (on the south side) was the library with the walnut bookcases running from floor to ceiling. They had glass doors. The curtains were the same as the parlor. An oval framed oil portrait of my Grandfather hung over the door leading into the hall. Sliding doors opened into the state dining room. These doors were of wood, the lower half, and the upper half had a peculiar etched glass of beautiful pattern. I can vaguely remember sprays of fern, leaves and tiny deer. The bookcases were filled with books in French, German, Italian, and English. Histories, novels, biographies, natural histories, maps, books about court life and rare old books bound in vellum; all of which have disappeared, but all of them delighted us as children. Mother had many of her books there, and there were whole editions of Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, and bound volumes of Harper's Magazine; dictionaries and an encyclopedia bound in calf.

On rainy days my sister Louise, Eva Warren, Sam and I used to take the books from the library, lay them on the floor (a green carpeted one) and Louise and Eva would copy illustrations in them while Sam played with his toys and I read glibly aloud from all sorts of books for children or adults. In the center of this room was a large knee-hole desk in walnut, and with a large blotter in the center. The chairs were covered in horsehair.

The library opened into the State dining room which could also be entered from the front hall. In it was a Hallett and Davis piano and on the walls were hung the Audubon pictures. I forgot to mention that oil paintings, many by Gifford and Hart hung in the parlors, and there was one flower picture done in rich paper in a gold frame and a cork picture of Sterling Castle. The draperies in this room were of red damask, but nothing remains but pieces to remember them by. At the north end was a central white marble fireplace, and a huge carved walnut sideboard brought from Switzerland. The extension table was covered with a blue Persian coverlet, and somehow I remember a picture of Laocoon. The snakes writhing about him made a definite impression on me. Above the fireplace was another French mirror.

Perhaps it would be wise here to state that Lake Home was never expected to be a year-round home. The family lived on Columbia Heights in Brooklyn next door to Henry Ward Beecher in a brownstone front with a dining room overlooking the East River. It was only when financial disaster overtook the family that Lake Home was used in winter and some stoves were added in the bedrooms and the state and regular dining room. After that, the state dining room was used as a general living room, and Mother and we three children used the alcove as a bedroom.

Under the front hall stair and opening into the alcove was a closet. In the front hall were many engravings and paintings. Among them was a series of the Voyage of Life; showing the Voyage of Youth, the Voyage of Manhood and the Voyage of Old Age, the latter being a funeral affair. All the Voyages depicted a figure in a boat on a river. The Voyage of Youth was my favorite. In a woodland scene there was a river in swift motion, in the boat stood a young man facing a resplendent light, and in it and engulfed by white clouds, if you watched closely enough, you could see the vision of a wondrous castle, and the young man was holding his arms uplifted toward it.

Somewhere there was an engraving of Burns seated at his desk, quill in hand; the Siege of Yorktown, and Pulling Down the Statue of George the Third. There were some beautiful watercolors of Sorrento and the Isle of Capri. On the fireplace in the dining room were three gilt candelabra – one large center piece and two smaller, and the figures at the base were Uncas, Chingacook and Hawkeye.

The everyday china was the Florentine or Florence pattern of Spode. There was another English set of pure white background with a gold edging and a thin band of blue. Grandfather always bought everything in sets of two dozen because of his unlimited hospitality. The glass was in sets of both red and white Bohemia. One of the greatest delights of my childhood was the privilege of my sixth birthday for being allowed to drink my milk out of a red Bohemia goblet. We children were seated at the table in the alcove while the older ones were at the large table in the State Dining room. None of the other children, of whom I was the youngest, was allowed to use any of the Bohemia glass.

In back of this square set up of parlors, dining room and library, was the original house. Down the steps from the state dining room (and also two steps from my Grandmother's bedroom) was the regular dining room. In this room were town carved mahogany sideboards, one of which I now possess, a white marble fireplace and mirror above. Out of the dining room a butler panty led to the kitchen, but it was flanked on the left by a large storeroom, where flour and brown and white sugar was kept, in three bins, and two closets for dishes and glassware. At the right, a door led into the cellar; at the end of the pantry was the kitchen. In the butler's pantry on the east was a window and under it a stone sink usually covered with a board top.

There was a wood stove in the kitchen, pantries and closets, and at the north end was an old Colonial Dutch brick oven built into the walls with crane, a central fireplace opening and ovens built into the brick work at both ends. There was also a sink at the north end which had a pump in it, and above the sink a window, and window on the other side of the fireplace. Outside was another well and a cistern for rain water. One door opened east toward the wells and the other west door led out onto the road which went toward the barn. There was also a backstairs which led to three maids' rooms overhead. After the family began living there in winter, and ungainly woodhouse was added on the west and undoubtedly it added to the family comfort. On the second

floor the arrangement duplicated that of downstairs. The guest room was furnished in carved rosewood, the room in back of it and at the head of the stairs was furnished in a cherry suite, originally belonging to my Grandmother Bartlett and given to mother by her. It too has vanished with the wind. On the other side two rooms were furnished in black carved walnut belonging to my mother, and the third, my brother Robert's room was furnished in pine. Two sets of rosewood originally in these rooms had been given at marriage to Aunt Ella and Aunt Margaret. The back hall on the second floor was shut off from the front by a door, and in this back hall were two linen closets on the left side and extending from floor to ceiling. There was an open space on the east side in part of which was a built in chest. Back of the linen closet was a large bathroom with closets. At the north of this back hall were four steps leading down into the school room where my father, Uncle Irving, Aunt Ella and Margaret were taught at home until the girls were sent to Packer Institute, a finishing school in Brooklyn, and the boys were sent to Prep School. This aside from their European education.

To us, the third floor seemed mysterious. At the top of the stairs there was a large open space filled with trunks and wonderful clothes and laces and fans. One little black trunk was filled with laces brought from Europe. In another were the dresses Grandmother Hallett had worn when presented at several courts in Europe, including that of Victoria and the ill-starred Eugenie. There was Grandfather's Court suit and a leather case from London in which to carry a high hat. Margaret's and Ella's wedding veils were there also, and some linen suits of Grandfather Hallett.

At the right of the stairs was the "Museum" filled with all sorts of articles brought from travel abroad and in the United States. There was a set of Texas long-horn cattle horns brought from Texas when my father went there when quite young. There were toys and dolls brought from Europe, tennis rackets, fencing foils, snowshoes, Indian moccasins and beadwork, and the original model of a rustic summerhouse which has been built in the center of the racetrack.

There was a trap door in the roof which could be lifted and whenever there were northern lights, someone was sure to open the door, climb the stair, and wrapped in blankets over sleeping robes go up and admire the changing lights.

But it was the cellar or basement which most fascinated me, because it was dark and dungeon like. Whenever I could I would beg Mrs. Simmons to let me go down with into it. Holding her hand or her skirts, I would explore the whole extent.

The cellar has been excavated from slate rock and lay under all of the new (1850) part of the house. Steps led down east from the pantry and at the bottom lay a large dark place with ditches dug around on all sides to catch and drain off the water which was almost always oozing from the slate strata. Centrally, two sets of shelves were suspended from the floor joists, and in the rock on the south side were dug out two sets of cupboards, in which shelves were made of wood and laid on projections of rock left for that purpose. On these shelves were kept the milk in tin pans, butter, cheese and eggs and meat, as the running water in the slate kept it always cool in summer.

Running south of this room was tunnel cut from the rock and it too had ditches running along its two sides. Boards nailed to heavy cleats lifted the walk about eight inches above the ditches to keep the feet dry while going into the farther cellar. Mrs. Simmons always had to carry a lantern in the cellar and in its flickering light the running water and the drops that collected on the walls, gleamed with sinister suggestion to a child brought up on fairy tales with witches, giants, dwarves, dungeons, robbers, pirates and castles. The sound of trickling water or the scurry of a mouse frightened one deliciously.

At one end of the tunnel the cellar was divided into two parts, one of which had a long central table in which were large vegetable bins. Off from it was another large room for the storing of canned vegetables, fruits and jellies, and under it was the wine cellar which was kept under lock and key, as was the fruit cellar. In the fruit cellar were apples and crates of grapes also.

I can remember one winter when manure was hauled and laid around the foundation to keep the house warm and I can also remember when my mother read in some French magazine that the French were experimenting

with the canning of milk, so she canned quite a quantity and put it in quart jars for use when milk would be scarce. The experiment was a success. In the third cellar, were kept the mincemeat and pickles.

Perhaps it might be interesting to pay a debt of devotion to a wonderful teacher, Miss Weger, in the village school. Her methods are completely modern today. For instance in geography, she made sand maps of continents and states out-of-doors and used imagination to demark them with rivers, lakes, cities and industries. We made toothpick trees of sponge which we colored green, used silver foil for rivers, glass for lakes, and all sorts of inventions to denote occupations and industries.

At home mother read aloud to us for an hour every night before we went to sleep. Among the books were the Alcott books, Bird's Christmas Carol, Little Saint Elizabeth, Sarah Crew, Sweet William, Little Lord Fauntleroy, The Lamplighter, Lady Jane, Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, Pilgrim's Progress, Don Quixote, Hans Christian Anderson's and Grimm's Fairy Tales, Arabian Nights, Hawthorne's Tales, The Youth's Companion and Saint Nicholas. This background before I was ten has proved of inestimable value.

Some of the guests entertained by my grandparents included the Jay Gould's and Livingston's of New York, Belle Spencer, the author, and James Gordon Bennett, Gov. William Barrows of Tennessee, General and Mrs. Fremont, Alonzo Crittendon and wife (Crittendon was the founder and first President of Packer Institute in Brooklyn, NY) James Fennimore Cooper and Mrs. Cooper, Washington Irving for whom my Uncle Samuel Irving Hallett was named, President and Mrs. Fillmore, the Vanderbilt's, Madame de Mauzier and Madam de Cloud.

It has been said that Mrs. Samuel Hallett became a spiritualist. That is not true. For a time she became a Theosophist, but she and Grandfather Hallett gave the Episcopalian Church to the town of Wayne and a pew was retained in the church even to the third generation.

When my sister Louise and I heard that some of the town people believed ghosts haunted our house, we had a lot of fun when Mother was in the hospital, dressing up in sheets, putting phosphorous on our face and hands and walking back and forth on top of the front fence on moonlit nights. As people drove by, we would shout in ghostly tones to each other.

One more note might be added. My mother's father A. B. Bartlett was a law partner of Gov. Hal of Kansas City, Kansas. Gov. Hale had married an Indian Princess who inherited vast land areas. Bartlett and Hale attended to the legal dealings of the Union Pacific and Kansas City Railroads and Grandfather Hallett was often a guest of the Bartlett's in Kansas City or Wyandotte as it was then called. It was natural that when Leslie Hallett went west after graduating from NY University that he should call on the friends of his father. That was how he met my mother. The first time he called, he wore lavender trousers and black coat.

The four Hallett children; Margaret, Ella, Leslie and Irving were left for a two year period in Paris with a governess in a pension that they might learn Parisian French, and for a one year period in Hanover, Germany to learn German. Grandmother and Grandfather Hallett visited then frequently. I have heard that Grandmother Hallett made 26 trips to Europe.

Having visited Wayne several times since Birge from Buffalo leased it either in late 1912 or early 1913 for a period of 20 years with the understanding that he was to put \$60, 000.00 of repairs in the place. I am qualified to write of the changes he made, although my Uncle and Aunt told me he was not supposed to make any alterations in the house.

He had the house removed from its original site and back toward the racetrack. He did put in a swimming pool on the property but filled in the old cellar, removed the barns and carriage house, smoke house, ice house, hen houses, orchards and berry gardens, tore out lovely white marble fireplaces and replaced them with inferior wooden fireplaces which were painted a battleship grey to match the rest of the woodwork he had painted in that horrible color. The floors were removed and replaced on the first floor with cement. He used it as hunting and fishing lodge. The kitchen was altered; the historic kitchen fireplace was destroyed. The white marble lavatories originally in four bedrooms upstairs were left in them. He added a pergola to the main building and a caretaker's cottage at the left of the front gate entrance.

At its heyday, Wayne, Keuka and other small towns boasted large and wealthy summer colonies. The land was poor and the estates were not supposed to be self-supporting. The villagers augmented their income by working on these estates and the depressions of 1873 and 1893 which hit the wealthy owners deprived the others of income. Today the fall of the House of Hallett can be aptly compared to the fall of the House of Usher.

Grandfather Hallett was a banker in New York City and Hornellsville. He was a partner of General Fremont for several years. Frank McDowell worked at the firm in New York City.

Signed: Margaret Hope Hallett Lang, Hancock New Hampshire

The Aisle of Pines went through many changes after the Hallett family left their Lake Home. Mr. Birge had more plans for improvements that weren't completed. The Birge family never returned to the Aisle of Pines after the death of Mr. Birge in 1918. The home was only opened for cleaning and airing.

When the Birge's lease expired in 1923, the Birge family attempted to purchase or renew the lease. Julia Hallett, the owner at that time, refused to do either. When she died in 1933, her heirs immediately began litigation over a will which gave the Wayne property, and all but \$25,000 of her estate, to the State of New York for creation of a home for aged gentlewomen. The family argued that she was incompetent and had torn this will to bits in front of a friend. New York State lost the first trial as she had not been declared incompetent by a Colorado court until a date later than the destruction of the will. Later, the heirs deeded the Wayne property and \$12,000 for its upkeep to the State of New York with the understanding that it was to be used or sold as a public institution. The mansion was visited by a reporter from the Star Gazette in November of 1933 and it was reported that the condition of the Lake Home was desolate, and the only sign of life was in the caretaker's lodge. The state hired a care taker, but no work was done to the exterior of the home. The caretaker allowed tourists to go through the building and grounds, and on July 4th, 1939, a careless tourist threw a cigarette from a balcony to a roof below starting a fire. The Wayne Fire Department was quick to extinguish the fire.

In 1947 the Rev. Thomas J. Toole purchased the Aisle of Pines to convert it to a summer camp for children. In 1950 the interior of the building was damaged by vandals. Antique mirrors above the fireplaces were smashed, the glass door panels were shattered, plaster was torn from the walls, and banisters and plumbing removed.

In 1957 the Aisle of Pines was sold to Col. J. S. Pease who began to remodel, replace and repair what vandals had damaged. He stated "that it took more than 300 gallons of paint to restore the outside beauty of the massive mansion."

In 1972 Mrs. Morse leased the Aisle of Pines from Col. Pease with the intentions of operating a riding camp as well as offering tours of the legendary structure for fifty cents per person.

In March of 1974 the Aisle of Pines was destroyed by fire, the only thing that remained were three chimneys. It took about 100 firemen from Wayne, Tyrone and Dundee to battle the blaze.

The Aisle of Pines was struck by tragedy again in 1980 when the owners of the Gatehouse were murdered. The Gatehouse served as servants quarters for the "Big House."