Patriotic Societies at July Memorial Service to Recognize Samuel Wilson of Troy, N. Y., as the original Uncle Sam.

The original Uncle Sam, now definitely identified as Samuel Wilson, genial meat packer of Troy, N. Y., will be honored by patriotic societies of America at a memorial service. The tribute, nearly 82 years after the death of "Uncle Sam" Wilson, follows confirmation of his right to the title by investigators employed in preparing the American Guide, the comprehensive travel handbook employing the talent of jobless writers through the Works Progress Administration.

The memorial service has been arranged as part of the program of the New York state convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which will be held at Troy, July 8 - 11. Other organizations participating in the observance will be the Grand Army of the Republic, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the War of 1812, the American Legion and the United Spanish-American War Veterans.

The Uncle Sam Memorial Committee, headed by William M. Bartlett of North Troy, N. Y., as general chairman, is in charge of arrangements and hopes to broadcast the services over a national hook-up.

Invitations to attend the Uncle Sam Day celebration will be extended to President Roosevelt, Secretary of War Dern, Governor Lehman of New York, Governor Curley of Massachusetts and U. S. Senator Royal S. Copeland.

The only known living descendant of Uncle Sam Wilson, Carlton W. Sheldon of Kansas City, Mo., also will attend. Mr. Sheldon is a great-grandson.

S. M. Flint will play taps on the bugle he carried while serving under General Ulysses S. Grant in the Civil War. Princess Cantacuzene, granddaughter of General Grant, will lead the salute to the flag.
Though the nation has been slow to accept the story on which are based Samuel Wilson's claim to be the original Uncle Sam, the members of the Wilson family have always contended that their ancestor and none other was entitled to such recognition. On May 16, 1931, Mrs. Marion Wilson Sheldon, of Los Angeles, Calif., now deceased, widow of Frederick C. Sheldon of Kansas City, Mo., and granddaughter of Samuel Wilson, erected a monument to his memory in Oakwood Cemetery, Troy, N. Y. This consists of a four-ton Barre granite boulder, four feet high, a yard wide and two feet thick. Embedded on one side is a rectangular bronze tablet, topped by an American eagle, which bears the inscription:

U. S.
In Loving Memory
of
"Uncle Sam"
The Name
Originating with
Samuel Wilson
1766 — 1854
During the War of 1812
and Since Adopted by
the United States
Erected 1931
by his Granddaughter
Marion Wilson (Sheldon)

A few feet in front of the boulder is a plain marble slab, the original grave stone, bearing the simple inscription:

Samuel Wilson, died July 31, 1854, aged 88 years."

"Uncle Sam" was born September 16, 1766, and was the sixth child of Edward Wilson and the former Lucy Francis of Medford, Mass. His birthplace was West Cambridge, now Arlington, Mass.

He was 46 years old, when an incident during the War of 1812 started his nickname on its way to fame. At least four versions of this anecdote, substantially the same, were published during his lifetime, and similar accounts appeared while many friends and relatives of the Troy meat packer were alive to verify the statements.

One of the latest versions, by a relative of "Uncle Sam" Wilson, in general agreement with the others, was given by the late Lucius E. Wilson of New York City about 20 years ago and published as recently as May 16, 1931, in The Times of Troy, N. Y. Mr. Wilson said this story was told to him by his
great-uncles, Ebenezer and "Uncle Sam", partners in a meatpacking concern which helped supply the American army in the War of 1812 through arrangement with Elbert Anderson, Jr., a government contractor.

A large consignment of beef and pork lay on the wharves at the foot of Ferry street, Troy, awaiting shipment to the Army cantonments at Greenbush and Newburgh, when a party of passengers landed from a boat at the docks. Pausing to survey the pile, they noted that each cask and package bore the letters "E.A.--U.S."

"What do these letters mean?", one inquired of the watchman, an Irishman employed by the Wilson brothers.

"I dunno," he replied, "unless it means that they belong to Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam."

"Uncle Sam who?" asked the stranger.

"Why, don't you know" Uncle Sam Wilson, of course. He owns near all about here and he's feeding the Army."

The watchman's words caused a general laugh. The story quickly went the rounds and the joke was more readily appreciated because Samuel Wilson was extremely popular with everyone in Troy and was called "Uncle Sam" by friends and employees alike. Many of the laborers who were working on the dock and who took part in the laugh carried the story with them when they entered the Army and saw packages arrive from Troy bearing the familiar letters.

American Guide writers investigated the Samuel Wilson records in many cities and towns—Arlington, Mass.; Mason, N. H.; Troy, Albany and New York City, N. Y.; Los Angeles, Calif.; Kansas City, Mo.; Washington, D. C., and elsewhere. The editors feel that there is no good reason to doubt the general accuracy of the anecdote related above, which first found its way into print in 1842, a dozen years before Samuel Wilson passed on, when it was told with some variations by John Frost in his "Book of the Navy." John F. Watson published two variations of the story in 1844 and 1846. The story was repeated by Bartlett in his "Dictionary of Americanisms" published in 1848. Practically the same account, also, was published in Arthur J. Weise's "Troy's One Hundred Years" which appeared in 1876.
Are the cartoonists right in depicting Uncle Sam as a tall, lean, be-whiskered individual? They are, according to relatives familiar with a photograph that the investigators of the American Guide have trailed unsuccessfully from the Atlantic to the Pacific. However, in the oldest extent cartoon in which he was pictured, he was clean-shaven. This was drawn by F. Bellew and appeared on March 13, 1852, in "The Lantern", a comic weekly published in New York City.

Thomas Nast added the goatee in his drawings which were published in the 60's and 70's.

Uncle Sam was not without a rival in soliciting the favor of cartoonists. An effort was made to personify the United States by a character known as "Brother Jonathan", but Uncle Sam was so much more popular that he gradually gained entire possession of the field. The name, "Brother Jonathan", is still sometimes used, but the public now accepts it as merely a synonym for Uncle Sam. Historians say that the success of the Uncle Sam caricature was largely due to the fact that the name incorporated the initials of the United States; while the name "Brother Jonathan" is only a derivative from "John Bull", the character representing the British nation.

In the Bellew cartoon, Uncle Sam already wore striped trousers and a top hat. Nast added his starry vest.

Lucius E. Wilson often wrote or spoke about his great-uncle, Samuel Wilson, and about his home at 76 Ferry Street, Troy, N. Y. The following are extracts from his reminiscences:

"Samuel engaged in many enterprises, employed many hands, had extensive acquaintance, was jolly, genial, generous and was known and called 'Uncle Sam' by everyone. His wife, like him, was widely known. She was called 'Aunt Betsy'......

"In the army, the soldiers soon called the beef and pork 'Uncle Sam's Beef' and 'Uncle Sam's Pork' and said 'Uncle Sam is caring for us'. Many of his acquaintances would constantly rally and joke about his increasing possessions. There was also a popular song started at the time about 'Uncle Sam is Rich Enough to Buy us all a Farm'.


Original from NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
"I have often seen in print what concerns the origin of using 'Uncle Sam' for the United States. All I have read is much the same and is nearer right than the pictures shown of him. Uncle Sam was a very fine-looking, well-proportioned, well-preserved man, and the type of the well-to-do, old gentleman of his time."

Uncle Sam's wife, Aunt Betsy Mann Wilson, whom he married at Mason in 1797, died on July 13, 1863, and was buried beside him in Oakwood Cemetery.

A character description of Samuel Wilson was contained in an obituary signed "Trojan" which appeared in the Troy Daily Budget a few days after his death on July 31, 1854. It read:

"When an individual passes from us, who has been long known, and whose business connections have been very extensive, it is proper that something more than a mere passing notice should be taken of his death, as well as a just allusion to some of the principal acts of his life. The subject of this brief notice was an early pioneer in the settlement of this place, commencing in 1793. He took an active part in the extension of all the business facilities adopted by himself and his associates and prosecuted successfully at least four distinct kinds of business, employing about 200 hands constantly; while he took the over-sight of each particular branch in connection with his brother Eben. He prosecuted the mercantile business in connection with slooping, the brick-making business very extensively, the distillery business, farming on a pretty large scale and the slaughtering business on an extensive plan.

"During the war of 1812, he supplied the army very generally, especially at the north, from his extensive yards. His tact for managing laborers was very peculiar; he would always say 'Come, boys,' instead of 'Go' and thereby secured a greater amount of labor than ordinary men. His success in business he mainly attributed to a strict system in his plans and the constant habit of early rising, and to this habit he undoubtedly owed his uniform good health and his useful life. He had eight brothers and two sisters all of whom were tenacious of this habit and all but two are now dead, but their ages averaged full 80 years each.

"In his political creed, he was strictly Republican and was warmly attached to the Democratic party. In the election of General Jackson to the Presidency, he took a very active part, serving as a standing chairman of the
"In his religious creed he was tolerant to all. He was united to no church; but at the age of three score years his mind became deeply imbued with religion and, feeling his responsibility to his Maker, he solemnly dedicated himself to God and united with the Presbyterian Church in this city. His walk and conversation since the solemn transition evinced the sincerity of his profession, and he has left a pleasing assurance both to the church and his friends that now he 'Rests from his labors and his works do follow him.'"

In 1880 when Samuel was twelve years old, the Wilsons moved by ox-cart to Mason, in southern New Hampshire, about 25 miles from Manchester. There they built on a hilltop a small, frame cottage of one and a half stories with windows made up of many tiny panes and a huge chimney. The building was never painted. There five more brothers and sisters were born. The cottage still stands and is now part of a hamlet containing a dozen or more dwellings. It remained in the Wilson family for 123 years. The present owners and occupants are Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Wharff. In front of the building a sign proclaims, "The Uncle Sam House."

When Samuel was 21 years old, he started out from Mason with his brother Ebenezer to seek his fortune. Insofar as is known, the brothers went directly to Troy, N. Y., and liked it. The town was beginning to develop and the Wilsons engaged in the manufacture of bricks. The Wilsons prospered and soon began to buy up farm lands in the vicinity of the city. A house in Ferry Street, above Seventh Avenue, is pointed out as a home which Samuel built and long occupied. In the 1860's the brothers entered the meat-packing business through which the nickname "Uncle Sam" became identified with the United States.