

THE SEARCH FOR THE GEN. GEORGE WINGATE "SOLDIER OF MARATHON" TROPHY

as originally posted by the late Col. William Economos, 11/97, in the NYSRPA's Bulletin.



This trophy was presented to the New York State Rifle & Pistol Association by General George W. Wingate at the turn of the century. This trophy has been in our hands, carefully maintained and guarded by our predecessors, over these many years.

In the 1970s this magnificent bronze was presented anew at the State Championship Matches to the high scoring individual in the high power standing slow-fire 200-yard match, also known as High Power Match # 1. During the early 1930's this match consisted of the aggregate of standing slow-fire at 200-yards, sitting rapid-fire at 200 yards, and prone rapid-fire at 300 yards. It may come as a surprise to many newer shooters that the 300-yard rapid-fire kneeling position was discontinued in the mid-thirties. I went through this ordeal, which required strong physical endurance and stamina. At the time, we were armed with the US Springfield rifle model 1903.

In 1974 the winner of this trophy was Sgt. Roger A. Sayward, and in 1975 it was my pleasure to present this trophy to Sgt. Julian Alfonso, the winner of the State Championship Matches.

In the past, the trophy was returned to Henry Ristau (the caretaker and guardian) directly after the matches were over.

The winner was presented with a laminated plaque, on which was included a picture of the trophy, duly inscribed, to keep permanently and attest to his achievement. It was awarded to the match winner in 1976; however, I cannot recall the name of this individual. Perhaps one of our members has a better memory for that year's NYS championship match. After my tenure succeeding directors pre-sented the trophy anew to the winner. Sometime after 1976, this trophy disappeared out of our control. At present, no one seems to remember what individual last won this trophy or the last time it was seen. I do not believe this trophy was stolen; I would rather think that the person who won it may believe it was his to keep or has kept it in its original case and completely forgotten that it belongs to the State Association. This bronze sculpture is an important historical treasure and part of our Heritage Trophies which are at present placed in a vault under the care of our staff in the Troy office.

The historical aspect of this sculpture is very interesting; to begin with, it was to commemorate the Battle of Marathon, which was fought in ancient Greece some 2,580 years ago. The Athenian Greeks, greatly outnumbered and under the command of General Miltiades, fought an invasion of Persians led by King Darius the Great. The battle was joined on the plains of Marathon, about 25 miles from the city of Athens. The Greeks won this fierce battle and one of their athletes, named Pheidippides, was chosen to run some 25 miles to proclaim the victory to the Athenians, that the city was saved. He accomplished his mission with the announcement of "Rejoice, we have conquered," after which he fell dead upon his shield. This bronze trophy depicts that scene and, thus, the Marathon race was born and became part of the Olympic games. I believe General Wingate was quite aware of the true meaning of the Soldier of Marathon sculpture, since he presented an almost life-size trophy to the National Board to become one of our National Trophies.

Please help us recover this trophy, which enhances a part of our history. Any information will be greatly appreciated! The above history is intended to illustrate the importance of this magnificent treasure. Ladies and gentlemen, start your search!