

2017-J1565

Senate Resolution No. 1565

BY: Senator BRESLIN

COMMENDING the Honorary Committee for the Ninth Annual Holiday Celebration for the Watervliet Historical Society Museum, and paying tribute to The John S. Tilley Ladder Company on May 19, 2017

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize the achievements of those individuals and businesses which substantially contributed to the economic vitality of their communities and the entire Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend the Honorary Committee for the Ninth Annual Holiday Celebration for the Watervliet Historical Society Museum, and to pay tribute to The John S. Tilley Ladder Company on Friday, May 19, 2017, at the Watervliet Senior Center in Watervliet, New York; and

WHEREAS, Born in 1806, John Tilley, a resident of Grafton, New York, established a cooperage business, head linings and coopers tools; he also manufactured ladders; in 1855, he moved to West Troy, which became Watervliet in 1896, and concentrated on manufacturing ladders and scaffolding; his son, John S. (Sullivan) took over the business after his father died in 1878; and

WHEREAS, Originally founded as a shop at First Avenue and Second Street, The John S. Tilley Ladder Company moved to a modest rectangular commercial building with double loading doors at the first and second story of the building in 1886; a 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows that the store had become a small complex comprised of a three story building where sawing and planning was done, five dwellings, and several lumber sheds of various sizes; and

WHEREAS, John S. Tilley filed several patents related to improvements to his step and extension ladders, and ladder hooks in 1886, 1887, and 1896; his goal was to increase ladder strength and make them easier to operate; in 1907, a trade journal reported that the Company had doubled its manufacturing capacity because of demand for ladders, scaffolding, staging ladder hooks, and brackets, as well as flag poles; and

WHEREAS, The complex was burned to the ground in a catastrophic fire in July of 1915; a new 30,000 square feet, two-story brick factory was built between First and Second Streets; under the luminous leadership of John S. Tilley's son-in-law, Herman B. Gaffers, the plant more than doubled in size with the 1924 construction of a three story brick masonry building, joining the original building; and

WHEREAS, John S. Tilley advertised in trade magazines and displayed products at trade shows, such as the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, and the International Convention of the Master Painters in 1923; and

WHEREAS, By the 1930s, Tilley Ladders were being shipped throughout the United States, to Puerto Rico, the Bahamas and South Africa; and

WHEREAS, In January of 2004, the John S. Tilley Ladder Company

closed its factory after 149 years of sparkling success; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, the John S. Tilley Ladder Company positively impacted the industry it represented, and in doing so, enhanced the economic vitality of Watervliet, and the entire State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the Honorary Committee for the Ninth Annual Holiday Celebration for the Watervliet Historical Society Museum, and paying tribute to The John S. Tilley Ladder Company; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Thomas A. Ragosta, President, Watervliet Historical Society.