The Twelfth Decade

Overview

The twelfth decade was one of several significant developments and events. After 82 years as a Village, Batavia became a City. Batavia came to have its first City Hall. The police department for the first time had its own building. Also for the first time, there were full-time paid firemen. The community finally had a sewer system and sewage treatment plant. The municipal water system was upgraded and a water filtration plant added. And, as was the case with other cities across the Country, Batavia felt the impact of World War I.

Batavia’s population continued to grow rapidly. The number of residents reached 13,541 in 1920 (“Genesee County Information,” Richmond Memorial Library, online, accessed 3 January 2014). This was an increase of 1,928 individuals since 1910.

In the view of the author, this decade may be regarded as Batavia’s “golden age.” Main Street still had most of its mansions. A large number of the major manufacturing concerns that defined Batavia were in place. The housing in the City was still mainly single-family homes. Retail activity was almost entirely in a centralized “downtown.” A trolley ran the length of Main Street and the Tonawanda Creek was a major recreational attraction that drew crowds on summer weekends.

1: Infrastructure

As indicated in the last chapter, work on constructing sewers began in December of 1909. The layout resulted in all of the sewage being conveyed to a central station at the Municipal Building at 3 West Main Street. As of July in 1911, the work on the sewers was well along. Two-thirds of the system had been built and 360 properties had been connected into the system, about one-fourth of the final number. (The Sunday Times, Batavia, N.Y., 23 July 1911)

As this project passed the halfway mark, work began on a treatment plant.

After sewage flowed to the central station, plans called for it to be pumped up to a treatment plant where Lambert Park is now located. The design chosen for the plant was one that had been developed in Germany by Dr. Carl Imhoff. The treated effluent was then to flow into the Tonawanda Creek. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.:
In May of 1911, The Daily News reported that a contract had been signed for construction of the treatment plant (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 25, 27 May 1911). Actual construction started in early June (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 6 June 1911) and by the end of December 1911, the plant was operational (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 20 December 1911).

While the treatment plant was ready to go in 1911, final work on the sewers wasn’t completed until August of 1912 (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 20 August 1912).

A number of problems arose in connection with the sewers and treatment plant. Putting the streets back in shape after the sewer work apparently was more expensive than expected (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 17 August 1912). On at least one occasion, high water on the Creek crippled the pumping station and caused considerable damage. There were big cave-ins on Vine Street and Jefferson Avenue and many other, lesser cave-ins, elsewhere. (Buffalo Courier, Buffalo, N.Y., 20 April 1913) Breaks occurred in the sewer lines (Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, Rochester, N.Y., 24 February 1915). The sewer lines proved not to be adequate for storm run-off (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 12 August 1915). And, in cold weather, the chemicals used in the treatment plant did not work as well as in warm weather (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 8-9).

Then, a catastrophe occurred. On September 16, 1915, an explosion occurred in the sewage collection area of the Municipal Building. It wrecked the whole southwest corner of the building and severely injured John Coleman who was in charge of making daily checks of the sewer well. Coleman died the next day. An auxiliary engine was lowered into the sub-basement to resume pumping sewage to the treatment plant. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 7) No official explanation of the explosion was ever given, but a common belief is that Coleman somehow had inadvertently ignited sewer gas, perhaps by lighting a match. It would be over two years before rebuilding was completed.

Water for the municipal water system came directly out of the Creek from a location near the dam. It was unfiltered and sometimes ill-smelling. The pump for the water system was in the Municipal Building and powered by the same engine that powered the pump for the sewer system. So, when the sewer explosion damaged the Municipal Building, this provided an opportunity to address water and sewage issues simultaneously. In November of 1915, voters were asked to approve a $15,000 bond issue to replace the old pumping apparatus, renovate some of the sewer lines, and build a water filtration plant. The bond issue passed. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 7)
The site chosen for the filtration plant was upstream between South Jackson Street and the Lehigh Railroad tracks. Siting the plant there also meant moving the water intake from near the dam to this more desirable upstream location. Unfortunately, the war in Europe inflated building costs to the point that the $15,000 previously approved became insufficient. Consequently, voters were asked to approve an additional $25,000. When they did so, work continued as planned. Upon completion of the plant, filtered water began to flow through the mains in January of 1918. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 7) Batavia finally had both a decent sewer system and a first-class water system.

Just how bad Batavia’s water was before treatment began is illustrated by a decision that had been made years earlier by officials of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The railroad, for several years, had taken water for its locomotives from the Village’s water mains. However, especially in the Spring, the water was so dirty and full of sediment that it was doing considerable damage to the locomotive boilers. So, in 1903, the company built a private filtering plant to treat the water. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 2 November 1903)

Two other observations about the municipal water system in this decade are worthy of note. By August of 1911 nearly 12,000 ft. of new water mains had been laid (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 9 August 1911). Some of this was for replacement of the original mains which were constructed of wood reinforced with metal bands. Second, water meters were introduced and starting August 1st of 1918, property owners were required to have meters and, thus, pay for water based on the amount used (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 18 July 1918).

As Batavia continued to grow, congestion in the downtown area became an increasingly greater problem. Automobiles were so closely parked along the main streets that pedestrians were able to cross only at intersections. Thereby began a move to consider parking lots. For example, one was suggested for the “large” area south of the Odd Fellows Temple (“Past and Present,” The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 6 June 1914). The area in question appears to have been behind the former St. James Episcopal Church on Ellicott Street. Eventually, Batavia would become covered with parking lots.

In this decade, there seemed to be greater concern with keeping Main Street clean, perhaps the result of the street now being paved. In this regard, farmers were told to put their horses in the farmers’ sheds, generally located on State Street, and hitching posts that had been along Main Street were removed (“Past and Present,” The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 12 July 1913).
1911-1920

After the earlier brick paving of Main and Jackson streets, other streets were also paved. For example, in 1913, Summit Street was paved with brick (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 September 1913), in 1914, East and West Main streets were so paved (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 February 1915), and in 1916, School Street received a brick surface (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 August 1916). Not everyone was happy about the paving that was going on. A case in point were the residents of East Main Street who objected to a brick surface (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 February 1913). Ultimately, such objections were overridden.

Dust produced by traffic on the unpaved streets was typically addressed by watering them with sprinkling wagons. In 1912, a short-lived experiment replaced water with oil (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 May 1912). Less than two months later, Village authorities returned to the use of water (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 July 1912). One suspects that the oil was tracked inside people’s houses and soiled the floors, thus raising objections from homeowners.

With an increase in population, new streets were constructed or old streets lengthened. An example of the latter was East Avenue. In June of 1918, it was announced that the street would be extended to Clinton Avenue. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 June, 1918) Prior to that time, it ran only between Ross and Spruce streets.

As noted in the previous chapter, Batavia had a municipally-owned “dumping ground” on State Street. It was located just outside the City line (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 May 1915). However, it appears that disposal of trash and garbage remained the responsibility of property owners, both in terms of where to dispose of it and transporting it to that location.

In 1919, Mayor Caney recommended a new system for dealing with waste. He proposed that the Health Board handle trash and garbage disposal and be given the authority to make necessary regulations and let contracts. Caney was particularly impressed with the manner in which Jamestown, New York dealt with garbage and suggested adoption of that city’s system. In Jamestown, one firm was awarded a contract to collect garbage. The garbage was then taken to a five-acre piggery, owned by the firm, where 200 hogs ate the garbage. Periodically, the fattened hogs were shipped to slaughter houses. (“Mayor Caney Recommends New System,” *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 July 1919) It does not appear that Caney’s recommendations were immediately adopted, but as the reader will discover in a later chapter, Batavia eventually employed the same arrangement.
By 1915, the signs of the future dominance of the automobile were becoming obvious. For example, one day in June, someone took the trouble to record the number of conveyances traversing the community. During a single 30-minute period, 96 automobiles and 11 motorcycles passed by the observer, but only 17 horse-drawn wagons or carriages were recorded. (*The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 28 June 1915*)

According to Ruth McEvoy, taxi drivers were listed in the City Directory for the first time in 1919. They were called an “auto taxi service” to distinguish them from hack drivers (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 207). “Hack drivers,” in this context, appeared to refer to individuals who, using horse-drawn vehicles, conveyed transients between the railroad stations and hotels.

As mentioned two chapters back, Batavians saw their first automobile in 1899. Only 12 years later, in 1911, they saw their first airplane. On August 20th, 1911, a pilot by the name of Harry Atwood passed over the Village around 4 pm on a flight that had originated in St. Louis and would terminate, after 11 days and 11 stops, in New York City. He had left earlier in the day from Buffalo and followed the New York Central Railroad lines. Alerted in advance to the pilot’s eminent arrival, Engineer J. J. Walker blew the fire whistle at the Municipal Plant, a signal to go outside and peer upwards. Several thousand Batavians gathered on streets and roof tops to witness the aircraft as it flew overhead at an elevation of 300 to 500 ft. (Mark Graczyk, “Hidden History—Notable Batavia Firsts, 1899-1954,” *The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y.,* 19 July 2014) Only a month later, an aviator by the name of Todd Shriver landed an airplane at the Fairgrounds on West Main Street (*The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y.,* 21 September 1911)

Recall that Batavia’s trolley line began service in 1903. However, 10 years later, the Buffalo and Williamsville company that owned the line still had not resurfaced sections of the streets that had been disturbed by construction of the tracks. When the company was pressured to finish the work, it indicated that it might instead close down the line. This threat prompted several local men to eventually form a new company, The Batavia Traction Company; and in 1915 it took over operations. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 21-22) Although, reportedly, the new ownership did not lead to needed improvements in equipment and service, the trolleys continued to draw considerable use. For example, in 1916, 300,000 riders paid trolley fares (*The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y.,* 10 January 1917).
3: Housing

The most imposing house built in this decade was the Rowell mansion located at 71 Ellicott Avenue (the corner of Ellicott and Richmond avenues). In 1914, Edwin Rowell employed the architectural firm of Otto Block to design the home as a wedding gift to his second wife, May Emke. The mansion was completed ca. 1915. (Larry Barnes, Batavia Revisited [Charleston, S. C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2011] p. 127).

In this decade, Henry and Frank Homelius built nine more homes (Jine Monachino, Henry and Frank Homelius [Batavia, N.Y.: Landmark Society of Genesee County, 2000] p 20). However, their work plus that of other contractors was insufficient to meet the needs of a growing population. The Daily News of May 29th, 1918 reported that there was a shortage of housing and families might need to double up (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 29 May 1918). Presumably, the impact of World War I led to this shortage.

4: Energy Sources

Early elevators, such as one in the Hotel Richmond, were operated by a water-powered hydraulic system. Eventually, with encouragement from Village authorities who were concerned about excessive unmetered water consumption, the elevators were converted to the use of electric motors. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 22 July 1912)

Smoke from the boilers at the Municipal Building was an issue. As a consequence, the Aldermen voted to build a 175 ft. chimney that was so tall it could be seen from West Batavia. Louis Wiard was Mayor at the time; and the chimney came to be known as “Wiard’s Monument.” (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p.18)

The Municipal Power Plant, which provided power for Batavia’s street lights, was in poor shape by 1912. Village Aldermen met with a representative of the company providing Niagara power to the area and inquired about the possibility of switching the street lights to the latter source. Because the existing lights operated on DC current and the Niagara power system provided AC, the representative suggested, for the time being, switching over just the street lights in the Main and Jackson streets business district. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 25 January 1912) The Aldermen chose this option.

In 1918, the City Councilmen chose to get out of the electric generation business altogether. A 20-year contract was signed with the Niagara power company for the additional electricity
needed to meet the City’s needs. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 20 June 1918) However, for the next 17 years, each day City workmen turned over the City’s now defunct steam engines, even polishing the brass. The machinery wasn’t scrapped until 1935. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Publishing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 10)

During World War I, many consumers of coal experienced shortages because so much coal was being restricted to plants supplying war material (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 10). In September of 1917, due to an absence of coal, the Municipal Power Plant was shut down, thus turning off street lights in Batavia except for those in the business district of Main and Jackson streets (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 17 September 1917). In early December of 1917, The Daily News reported that the shortage of coal was causing extensive suffering (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 11 December 1917) and in late December, the newspaper reported that “not an ounce” of coal was to be found in local coal yards (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 29 December 1917). By mid-January 1918, businesses and factories were closing to conserve fuel (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 18 January 1918).

This decade was also a witness to natural gas shortages. Articles about shortages appeared in The Daily News during 1917, 1918, and 1919. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 14 September 1917; 4 June 1918; and 3 April 1919) However, unlike the coal shortages, this problem did not seem tied directly to the effects of World War I. Rather, it apparently stemmed from decreasing output at the source.

Ice for cooling purposes continued to be harvested from the Creek. However, the size of the harvest varied considerably from year to year. For example, in 1911, W. W. Buxton cut ice that was 14 inches thick (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 4 January 1911). The year 1912 produced a record harvest (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 2 February 1912). But on the other hand, 1919 was a poor freezing year that led to a poor ice harvest (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 20 March 1919) This situation made manufactured ice particularly attractive. In 1912, Evergreen Farm Dairy started manufacturing ice at 208 East Main Street (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 4 June 1912). In 1917, The Daily News reported that a place called Ebling’s had a new refrigeration plant (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 9 April 1917).

Manufactured ice also allowed for better control over its quality. An advertisement from 1911 made this point when the ad copy stressed that the ice being sold was especially pure since it was made from “double distilled” water (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 20 May 1911).
1911-1920

5: Communication

For many years, ticker tape machines that printed out information on strips of paper had been used by newspapers and others wanting immediate reports of distant events. The signals were transmitted over telegraph wires. (“Ticker Tape,” Wikipedia.com, online, accessed 25 July 2014) In October of 1915, The Daily News reported that its ticker service provider would be transmitting the World Series results as the games were being played (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 8 October 1915)

The post office didn’t have its own building prior to 1919. During most of this decade, it was located in a structure at 12-14 Jackson Street. The erection of today’s free-standing post office building on West Main began in 1916. However, construction was strung out by problems stemming from World War I. The War resulted in escalating costs of both labor and material, leading the original contractor to abandon the job. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 19) It wasn’t until April of 1919 that the building was finally finished (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 14 April 1919).

In 1918, the Home Telephone Company closed its office and its phone operations were taken over by the Bell Telephone Company (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 7 August 1918).

6: County, Village, City boundaries

An oversight at the time of the last charter adoption was corrected when a new charter was approved in 1914. The earlier charter, through inadvertent wording, failed to expand the Village boundaries to include an area south of the Lehigh Railroad right-of-way as had been intended. This expansion was included in the new charter. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 16 April 1932)

7: Government/governing structure

In this decade, Batavia became a city. However, the path to that outcome was a lengthy and difficult one. As mentioned in the last chapter, a committee was appointed in 1904 for the purpose of developing amendments to the existing charter. The provisions of the existing charter made it difficult to proceed with paving of Batavia’s streets. When the paving problem was resolved by State legislation adopted in 1905, the committee ceased to function.
The next event of importance on the path to becoming a city, as also mentioned in the last chapter, occurred in 1907 when a discussion at a dinner of the Batavia Business Men’s Association led to a resolution urging the appointment of a Charter Revision Commission. This was quickly followed by a general meeting in the Municipal Council Chambers at which time a Commission was created with representatives from the Village Aldermen, Business Men’s Association, Board of Trade, and labor unions.

The newly created Charter Revision Commission then prepared a bill for introduction to the State Legislature. The bill featured a city government that eliminated wards, eliminated political parties, and was run by a manager and five councilmen elected at large. When this bill was sent to Albany in the winter of 1908-09, it was defeated. It was introduced again the next year and again defeated.

That brought matters to the decade now under review. The membership of the Charter Revision Commission in this decade continued to include Edward Russell, Chair; Dr. Harvey J. Burkhart (former mayor); William F. Haitz; J. Edward Gubb; Oren C. Steele; Henry A. Clark; and D. W. Tomlinson. And, in this decade, the Commission continued each year sending essentially the same bill to Albany. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 3 February 1914)

In 1913, the Commission’s bill finally passed both the Assembly and Senate, but only after it was heavily amended in a manner consistent with changes advocated by the current Batavia Aldermen. The amendments took away the non-partisan features and the councilmen-at-large provision. This created such a furor among members of the Charter Revision Commission that Governor William Sulzer vetoed the bill. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 10 June 1914)

In January of 1914, the Board of Aldermen formed a Charter Revision Committee made up of its own membership. According to Mayor Wiard, the Board had become frustrated with the Charter Revision Commission and planned to offer its own proposal for a city charter. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 22 January 1914) On February 7th, 1914, The Daily News published a synopsis of the city charter proposed by the Board. According to this synopsis, the main features included: 1) six wards, 2) an elected mayor and one elected councilman from each ward, 3) the mayor serving as chief executive with general supervision of all officers and departments, 4) a common council acting as the governing body with the power to enact ordinances, and 5) a right of the voters of the city to propose ordinances by petition which common council had to then pass or submit to a special vote. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 7 February 1914)
The Board of Aldermen then scheduled a “straw vote” on its charter proposal, a vote to be held on February 10th, 1914. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 February 1914) When the day of the vote arrived, the wording on the ballot presented to voters was, “Shall the charter as prepared by the Aldermen be sent to Albany? Yes or No.” (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 February 1914) The resulting vote was 488 “yes” and 451 “no.” The Aldermen interpreted the vote as a preference by voters for their bill over that of the Charter Revision Commission. The Aldermen’s bill was sent to Albany in competition with the one developed by the Charter Review Commission.

A hearing on the competing proposals, that of the Charter Revision Commission and that of the Aldermen, was held on March 10th before a joint committee from the Assembly and Senate. At the hearing, Edward Russell, Chair of the Charter Revision Commission, complained that the straw vote on the Aldermen’s proposal had not been taken in “a proper or legal manner.” He further complained that support for the Aldermen’s bill over the Charter Revision Commission’s proposal had been gained by “misrepresentation and deceit.” However, these complaints did not dissuade the Assemblymen and Senators present. Only the Aldermen’s bill went forward. (Larry Barnes, *Batavia’s Route to Becoming a City* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2013] pp. 5-6)

Amendments were made to the Aldermen’s proposal. One removed an increase in Batavia’s representation on the County Legislature. The other added a provision for a public referendum on the bill if it passed the State Legislature and was signed by the Governor. The amended Aldermen’s bill was passed in the State Assembly on March 25th, 1914 and in the Senate a few hours later. Governor Martin Glynn signed the bill on April 15th. (Larry Barnes, *Batavia’s Route to Becoming a City* [Batavia, N.Y.,: self-published monograph, 2013] pp. 7-8)

As scheduled, a referendum on the Aldermen’s bill was held on June 9, 1914. The total votes cast, 1,007, was only a little more than half of the normal vote in the Village. However, the bill was approved by a vote of 795 to 212. (“Batavians at the Polls Adopted a City Charter,” *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 June 1914). Thus, it was assured that Batavia would become a city on January 1st, 1915. All that remained was for an election of officers to serve in the new government.

On December 8th, 1914, the new officers were elected to office. They included Dr. Harvey J. Burkhart, as Mayor, and Councilmen Walter W. Buxton, Andrew M. Clough, J. Edward Gubb, Charles W. Hartley, Ernest F. Ware, and George Winters. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 January 1915) Ironically, the new Mayor and one of the Councilmen had served on the Charter Revision Commission and had supported a non-partisan government, one without wards, and
one having a city manager rather than a mayor. Now they had run for and been elected to positions in a government that was essentially the opposite of what they had wanted.

On New Year’s Eve, 1914, a celebration of Batavia’s impending status as a city took place outside Ellicott Hall (the original County Courthouse). A crowd estimated to number between four and five thousand people gathered. A ceremony was held marking the transfer of power to the new government. Then fireworks were set off, the Genesee Band played, church bells rang, factory whistles blew, and car horns blared. A little after midnight, the new Mayor and Councilmen met for a brief meeting of Batavia’s first Common Council. Batavia was now off and running as New York’s 54th city. (Larry Barnes, Batavia’s Route to Becoming a City [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2013] pp. 10-13)

During this decade and sometimes before, the Village used space in Ellicott Hall (the original Court House), space which it rented from the Town. However, this arrangement wasn’t legitimate. Why it wasn’t becomes clear by reviewing the history of the building.

Ellicott Hall was built in 1803 and stood where County Building 1 stands today. The building served as the Court House for Genesee County until 1841 when the stone Court House at the intersection of Main and Ellicott streets was constructed. (Larry Barnes, Hey Mister! Want to Buy a Court House? [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2014] p. 1)

By 1849, the original Court House was in poor shape and the County was contemplating razing the structure. At the same time, the Town of Batavia wanted a Town Hall and had considered buying a piece of land and erecting a building for that purpose. Then someone thought of the idea of acquiring the old Court House and fixing it up for Town purposes. When the County Board of Supervisors was approached with this idea, they accepted the proposition and a deal was made. On November 7th, 1849, the building was leased to the Town. Under the terms of the agreement, the building was to be repaired by the Town and remain under the care of a public officer chosen at the Town’s annual meetings. This person was to have the exclusive power to grant permission for the building’s use and occupancy. Upon failure to meet these and other conditions of the lease, the Court House was to revert back to the County. (Larry Barnes, Hey Mister! Want to Buy a Court House? [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2014] pp. 1-2)

It wasn’t very long before everyone seemed to forget that the old Court House had been leased to the Town, not sold to it. Only 18 months after signing onto the lease, the Town “gave” the building to a group of four men. They, in turn, “sold” the structure. Then, between 1851 and 1898, the building changed hands an incredible 11 more times with no one
apparently aware that it belonged to the County the whole time. (Larry Barnes, *Hey Mister! Want to Buy a Court House?* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2014] p. 2)

The most bizarre point in the story occurred in 1898 when the Town “bought” the building from its most recent “owner.” The building had again fallen into disrepair and again there was talk of razing the structure. However, some residents wanted Ellicott Hall to be preserved for its history. And so, when voters at the annual Spring elections in the Town of Batavia were presented a proposal to purchase the structure, the majority voted to do so. Subsequently, on May 10, 1898, *The Daily News* reported that the Town of Batavia had, the previous day, paid $1,250 to Ione Jameson for title to the property. The Town of Batavia, which didn’t own the old Court House when it gave it to Otis, Pringle, Robertson, and Mallory back in 1851 now “bought” the building from Ione Jameson who didn’t really own it or have the right to sell it, either. The Town proceeded to spend a considerable sum of money renovating the structure. (Larry Barnes, *Hey Mister! Want to Buy a Court House?* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2014] pp. 2-3)

Over the following years, the Village paid rent to the Town for space in Ellicott Hall. Among other uses, the Village Aldermen moved their meetings from the Municipal Building to Ellicott Hall and were in fact meeting there when Batavia became a city on January 1st 1915 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 6). This farce came to an end later in 1915. A meeting was called for March 4th to work out new rental arrangements for additional space the City of Batavia wanted to rent from the Town of Batavia. Prior to the meeting, City Attorney Everest Judd did some research on the history of the building. Among other things, he discovered the fine print in the original agreement between the County and the Town. (See Safford E. North, *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive and Biographical Record of Genesee County, New York* [Boston: Boston History Company, 1899] pp. 322-323) The headline in the next day’s *The Daily News* read, “Ellicott Hall Really Leased. Actual Title Rests In the County, Instead of the Town of Batavia.” (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 March 1915)

Who actually owned the old Court House became a moot point three years later. On the night of February 5th, 1918, the building burned to the ground (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 5)—ground belonging to the County, we should note. The City now needed a city hall.

The City needed a location that could be developed quickly. That location turned out to be the Brisbane mansion at 10 West Main Street. Some history regarding the mansion is in order at this point.
The Brisbane mansion was built in 1855 by George Brisbane, second son of James and Mary Brisbane. When George and his wife, Sarah, had both died, the mansion came into the possession of their only child, James Brisbane. However, after 1911, it was no longer used as a residence. As the next few years went by, both the County and the City expressed interest in the Brisbane land, but neither wanted the mansion. Whether the land was acquired by the County or the City, the intention in both cases was to raze the building. Finally, in 1917, the City obtained an option on the property. Then, on December 1, 1917, the City was deeded the property. (Larry Barnes, *The Brisbanes of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2009] pp. 8-18)

At the time of the mansion’s purchase, the City planned to raze the structure and use all of the land to create what became Austin Park. However, when Ellicott Hall (the original Court House) burned two months later, City leaders reconsidered. An examination of the mansion had proven it to be in excellent shape, contrary to expectations. Subsequently, Frank H. Homelius was engaged to draw up plans and specifications for converting the building into a City Hall. Contracts were awarded by Common Council on February 13, 1918 and work started almost immediately afterwards. By the end of September 1918, the new City Hall was ready for use. (Larry Barnes, *The Brisbanes of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2009] pp. 17-18)

The City now had its first City Hall. It was generally regarded as a fine building. A reporter for *The Daily News* wrote, “Visitors who go to the new City Hall will readily admit that the structure cannot be inferior to similar buildings of cities of greater population and higher rank and importance than Batavia. The dominant note that is sounded everywhere is permanency, solidity, massiveness.” Unfortunately, over the years that were to follow, the building underwent many changes that greatly detracted from its original splendor. (Larry Barnes, *The Brisbanes of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2009] pp. 18-20)

The new City Hall allowed consolidation of offices scattered about the community into a single location. For example, the City Clerk’s office, which had been in the Masonic Temple, was relocated to 10 West Main Street. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 September 1918) Other offices and departments followed suit.

8: Crime, crime control, and law enforcement

As the population of Batavia grew, so did the police force. In 1911, the force was increased from five officers to eight (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 April 1911).
Much of the police activity was devoted to ordinary crime—robberies and burglaries. It appears there was sufficient activity of this sort to keep the police busy. That was demonstrated in a newspaper article of October of 1915 when *The Daily News* reported that “scores” of lads aged 8 to 12 were connected to multiple burglaries.

Traffic violations were another significant area of police activity by this decade. With more traffic and greater speeds, orderly traffic flow was apparently of increasing concern. In 1911, *The Daily News* announced that the police would start enforcing the law requiring motorists to keep right (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 September 1911).

In 1915, Richard Burkhart, son of the Mayor, was sworn in as a special officer to pursue speeders. He used his own car. *The Daily News* of August 27th, 1915 described an incident in which Burkhart reached speeds of 65 m.p.h. in pursuing a speeder on East Main Street. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 August 1915) A year later, officers were using motorcycles to catch speeders (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 December 1916).

One interesting aspect of traffic law enforcement was a debate over whether fire trucks had to obey the speed limit. In 1917, the police arrested a fire truck operator for driving 37 m.p.h. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 17). However, this question didn’t come to the forefront until a Councilman, W. W. Buxton, complained about a fire truck racing through the streets (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 August 1920) and Village officials then decreed that fire trucks had to limit their speed to 25 m.p.h. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 13 August 1920) The State weighed in on the matter by indicating that it favored higher limits for fire trucks (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 September 1920). Reportedly, other communities, upon learning of Batavia’s limits on fire trucks, responded with ridicule (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 13 September 1920). When and how the matter was finally resolved is unknown.

In this same era, newspaper accounts refer to the installation of “silent policemen” which apparently were iron posts at street intersections (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 13 October 1917). From the newspaper descriptions, it appears the posts were put in place to prevent vehicle operators from cutting corners.

One area of police activity, which is not a police responsibility today, was the lodging of tramps. The extent of this activity can be judged by looking at the statistics for a typical year in this decade: 1911. In that year alone over 1,700 tramps were lodged by Batavia police (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 January 1912). Lodging was also provided for those transients who
apparently did not have the wherewithal to stay at a hotel, but unlike tramps were not homeless persons surviving mainly by scavenging or begging for handouts. For example, one night in December of 1913, *The Daily News* reported that the police had not only two tramps in the police station, but 18 lodgers (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 11 December 1913).

In this decade, arguably the most serious problem with which the police had to deal was underworld activity, notably that involving so-called “black hand” gangsters. Robbery, blackmail, arson, intimidation and murder were among the crimes committed by such individuals. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 October 1919) For the most part, both the victims and the perpetrators appeared to be Italian-Americans and the offenses tended to be mainly on the south side.

In 1911, the Center Street home of Charles Colaizzi was blown up (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 September 1911). In 1912, dynamite destroyed a home at 51 Hutchins Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 January 1912). In 1916, there was a bombing on Jackson Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 March 1916). However, the most serious such incident occurred in 1919. On September 25th of that year, three persons were killed and five injured when a homemade bomb was lobbed into a home at 450 Ellicott Street. Killed were Salvatore “Sam” Battaglia, Josephine Battaglia, and Russell Battaglia. Injured were Frances Battaglia, Carmello Trimarchi, Anna Trimarchi, Joseph Trimarchi, and Frances Trimarchi. Carmello Trimarchi operated a restaurant and gambling hangout at 238 Ellicott Street. The bomb had been thrown into his bedroom. (Mark Graczyk, “Hidden History—Three Killed in Mysterious Bombing, 1919,” *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 May 2013)

In the days that followed, police picked up nine members of a local “black hand” gang. They concluded that the attack was plotted in a room over Carmello’s restaurant and the bomb was manufactured in a barn behind 116 Hutchins Street. The motive was allegedly to intimidate Salvatore Battaglia who was refusing to pay extortion money to the gang. Despite the fact that the bomb had been thrown through Carmello Trimarchi’s window, he was believed to be part of the conspiracy. (Mark Graczyk, “Hidden History—Three Killed in Mysterious Bombing, 1919,” *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 May 2013)

Finally, on October 17th, 1919, Charles Scinta and Ignazia Favetta pled guilty to second degree murder and were sentenced to 20 years in Auburn Prison. Carmello Trimarchi was convicted of third degree burglary for an attempted bank robbery in Oakfield and sentenced to seven years and six months in Auburn Prison. (Mark Graczyk, “Hidden History—Three Killed in Mysterious Bombing, 1919,” *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 May 2013)
Prior to January 1, 1915, for many years running the Mayor had served as the Police Chief. However, when the new charter went into effect in 1915, the duties of the Chief fell on one of the regular police officers as designated by Common Council. *(The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 2 January 1915)*

Nearly two years before the national prohibition against alcohol went into effect, Batavians voted to make the community “dry” effective October 1st, 1918. Four propositions were put before voters in April of 1918. They were: 1) Shall liquor be sold to be drunk on the premises?, 2) Shall liquor be sold in bottles and not consumed on the premises?, 3) Shall it be sold by pharmacists on a physician’s prescription?, and 4) Shall liquor be sold by hotels only? The majority of votes cast on each of the propositions was “no.” The outcome was attributed to the women’s vote since a majority of the men who voted purportedly supported the propositions. (“Batavia Bone Dry by Voters’ Decree,” *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 April 1918)

In March of 1920, five of Batavia’s six patrolmen in effect went on strike by submitting their resignations in a protest over new schedules. Acting Mayor Prentice immediately worked out an arrangement with the State Police to have four State Troopers patrol the City until either the former patrolmen returned to work or replacements were found. *(The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 15 March 1920)* It appears that City Council did not accept the resignations and the patrolmen eventually went back to work.

In late 1920, police signal boxes by which help could be summoned were set up in six locations around Batavia. The boxes had telephones connected to police headquarters. *(The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 9 November 1920)*

According to newspaper reports, in the early part of this decade, the jail used by Batavia police was in the basement of Ellicott Hall *(The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 13 February 1911)*. It’s not clear when this location became the lock-up used by the police, but it may have begun in 1903 when the County opened its jail at 14 West Main Street as a replacement for the jail on West Main Street opposite Oak Street. Prior to 1903, it appears that Village and County inmates may have been housed in the same facilities. Between 1903 and 1964, separate facilities were apparently employed.

In February of 1911, the State Commission of Prisons issued a report on the police facilities in Batavia. It was a scathing assessment. It pointed out that the jail was in the basement of an old, highly inflammable structure (the original Court House) with no police officers present to unlock the facility in the case of fire. Officers were in the Municipal Building at 3 West Main
Street) “several blocks” away. The jail consisted of two rooms—a lock-up room 21 x 26 feet and a lodging room 13 x 14 feet. In the lockup room were two cells of brick, each measuring 5-1/3 x 7 feet, and each with just two boards for sleeping rather than cots or beds. The cells had no lavatories. Unsanitary buckets served as toilets. Ventilation was essentially non-existent. There were no separate cells for women or children, despite the fact that both women and children were occasionally detained. The lodging room had wooden benches on which only eight persons could be accommodated despite the fact that sometimes as many as 35 tramps were placed in the room at the same time. The lodging room also had essentially no ventilation. Legal action against the Village was threatened. (“Aldermen Asked to Show Cause,” The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 13 February 1911)

In response to threats from the State, the Village Aldermen hired Henry and Frank Homelius to design a new police station to be located on School Street. The plans called for a structure two stories high and measuring 32 x 60 feet. On the first floor were six steel cells and at the rear of the second floor was a room for tramps. A court room was situated at the front of the second floor. A contractor by the name of Reed was employed to erect the building. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 12 April 1913) The new police headquarters opened in late October of 1913 (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 21 October 1913).

9: Retail establishments/other commercial enterprises

In 1917, plans were made to provide a public restroom for shoppers (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 6 July 1917). On August 10th, 1918, such a facility became operational in a vacant store located at 94 Main Street (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 9 August 1918). It appears to have offered not just toilets and wash basins, but a place to sit and relax, as well, so it was truly a “rest room.”

By 1919, there was a new commercial enterprise that would not have existed in the last century. Parker and Ford, located at 2-4-6 Clark Place, operated a car wash for vehicle owners wanting to keep their cars looking bright and shiny. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 7 October 1919) Park Place was one of the downtown streets, north of Main Street, that disappeared in the urban renewal years of the 1970s.

10: Factories/industries

At least two new firms started operations in Batavia in this decade.
In October of 1918, Joseph Horowitz and Sons, a New York City shirt manufacturer, set up a plant. Initially, the company was located on the second and third floors of 10 Jackson Street. Then, in July of 1920, the company moved to a one-story building on Liberty Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 188)

In August of 1920, a Buffalo firm started a railroad car repair shop on Clinton Street. It was named, “The Batavia Car Works.” The intention was to move railroad cars through the shop using Henry Ford’s assembly line method. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 187)

11: Banking/financial services

There do not appear to have been any significant changes in the area of banking and financial services during the decade.

12: Education

According to Ruth McEvoy, in 1914 Genesee County offered college-level courses to local residents under an Emergency Education Act. However, the classes were poorly attended and did not continue for long. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p.91)

As of 1917, there were 2,400 children of school age in Batavia (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 2 October 1917).

In early October of 1920, The Daily News carried an article announcing that a “continuation school” was opening on October 11th. Located on Bank Street, perhaps in the former Universalist Church, it was to be operated by the Batavia Board of Education for students who came under the provisions of the “part-time law.” According to this law, all children had to attend full-time day school until they were 16, unless they had working papers. Working papers could be obtained by those children who were 14 or 15 and had completed a certain minimum amount of schooling. Students with working papers were required to attend a continuation school on a part-time basis. Persons or corporations employing 14- and 15-year-old children who were not in attendance at a continuation school were subject to fines, imprisonment, or both. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 5 October 1920)
In 1914, a kindergarten building was erected at the State School for the Blind (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 20 March 1914). Two years later, a small hospital was built on the campus (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 28 March 1916).

13: Religion

In 1911, Orthodox Jews purchased a house at 232 Liberty Street to use as a synagogue (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 26 October). The following year the synagogue opened as the Shomrei Emunah Temple (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y. 9 September 1912). The congregation survived until about 1960 when it merged with the congregation of Temple Beth El. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 121)

Reportedly there were 450 Spiritualists in Batavia in 1912 (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 13 June 1912). Catholics were warned to avoid them (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 17 March 1913). Whether this warning had any effect is unknown.

The Salvation Army in Batavia was first organized in 1890, but then disbanded not too long afterwards. In 1907, the Salvation Army started up again, this time with long-term success. It had the first building of its own in 1913. Known as the Trumbull building, it was located at 30-32 Jackson Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 127)

Batavia had what was billed as its “first great tabernacle campaign” in 1916. In early November of 1915, the Rev. C. W. Walker, Chairman of a committee from the Batavia Ministers’ Club, announced that evangelistic services would be held in Batavia the following February and continued over a four- to six-week period. Services were to be led by the Rev. Herbert C. Hart, President of the Interdenominational Association of Evangelists. (Larry Barnes, Batavia’s “First Great Tabernacle Campaign” [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published, 2010] p. 1)

In early February of 1916, a lease was obtained for erecting a tabernacle on the Brisbane property on Jefferson Avenue, at the current location of Austin Park. A few days later, the men of Batavia were urged to volunteer to help construct a temporary tabernacle. Over 1,000 volunteers were anticipated. (Larry Barnes, Batavia’s “First Great Tabernacle Campaign” [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published, 2010] p. 1)

The tabernacle itself was an imposing structure designed to seat 2,000 persons. It had a frontage of 90 ft. and a depth of 130 ft. The exterior was covered with tar paper. There were 14 entrances and many windows. Five furnaces and three stoves provided warmth. (Larry

A total of over 3,500 persons showed up for the three services on the first day of the campaign and attendance remained strong throughout the five-plus weeks of services. A major focus was securing conversions. According to tabulations kept by the organizers, the number of persons who “[went] forward” included 500 adults and well over 400 children. The five local churches who sponsored the campaign claimed to have gained over 800 new members.  (Larry Barnes, *Batavia’s First Great Tabernacle Campaign*” [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published, 2010] p. 2)

14: Libraries/archives/museums

The Richmond Memorial Library received an addition on the north side of the building in 1912. It was built by John Pickert and partially funded by Adelaide Kenny Richmond, granddaughter of Mary Richmond, the woman who had funded the original structure.  (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 January 1912)

15: Cemeteries

There were no significant developments of record during this decade.

16: Firefighting

*The Daily News*, on February 16th, 1916, reported that voters had approved what was called “a semi-paid fire department” (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 February 1916). The following month, the fire department was set up with six men employed full-time, each receiving $60 per month, 12 men on call at $0.12 per hour, and a paid Fire Chief earning $1,000 per year (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 17)

The volunteer fire companies that had been serving Batavia disbanded in 1916. However, several continued for years as social clubs and as late as 1980, widows of volunteer firemen were drawing pensions paid by fire company insurance funds.  (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 17)

When the semi-paid fire department was established, the men were placed in two fire halls. One fire quarters was on Court Street adjacent to Ellicott Hall (the old Court House). A second
1911-1920


Some motorized fire equipment first went into service in December of 1916. However, horses were still used as late as 1920. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 17)

17: Healthcare

In 1917, Rose Jerome left her house to the Sisters of Mercy in memory of her sister, Mary Jerome. She suggested that the house be used by the Sisters for either a hospital or a home for working girls. Sister Mary Dominic of the Sisters of Mercy believed a hospital was the better choice and so that became the use of the Jerome home. (Larry Barnes, A Brief History of Batavia’s Public Hospitals [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2013] p. 3)

The Sisters of Mercy obtained a loan to remodel the Jerome house. At the same time, the adjoining house, owned by Rose Jerome’s nephew, Frank J. DeCot, became available and plans were made to combine the two structures into a single facility. John Glade and son were hired to undertake the transformation. By the Fall of 1917, St. Jerome Hospital was ready to receive patients and on October 4th, 1917, the Rev. Dennis J. Dougherty blessed and dedicated the new hospital. (Larry Barnes, A Brief History of Batavia’s Public Hospitals [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2013] p. 3)

Dr. Charles Gray of the Primrose Hospital died either in 1916 or 1917, leaving the facility without a doctor. However, this problem was resolved in August of 1917 when Dr. William Johnson, chief surgeon at the Batavia Hospital, left there and began performing surgery at the Primrose facility. However, only a year later, in 1918, Johnson moved to the St. Jerome Hospital and became its Chief of Staff. Once more without a doctor, the Primrose Hospital soon closed its doors and permanently ceased operations. (Larry Barnes, A Brief History of Batavia’s Public Hospitals [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2013] p. 4)

During this decade, Batavia experienced serious outbreaks of both diphtheria and the flu. A diphtheria outbreak in the fall of 1911 resulted in the deaths of several children. Schools and motion picture theaters were both closed in an effort to stop the spread of the illness. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 243)

A more severe health crisis occurred in the fall of 1918 with the outbreak of an influenza called “Spanish Flu.” It began in September. Again, schools were closed. Houses were
quarantined by Health Officer John LeSeur. Travelers were allowed to pass through Batavia, but not to remain overnight. For the first time in memory, St. Joseph’s Church cancelled services. By the end of October, there had been 18 deaths and 35-40 new cases were occurring every 24 hours. Among the deaths was the operator of Batavia Dry Cleaning. By early December, additional deaths included the pastor at St. Anthony’s and two nurses at St. Jerome Hospital.

Abortions were illegal at this time. In 1914, Dr. Alice G. Sharon was convicted of aborting a fetus (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 7 March 1914) and sentenced to Auburn Prison for one year (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 10 March 1914).

18: Care of the handicapped, aged, poor, and young

In 1914, nearly 90 leaders of local women’s organizations met at the home of Alice G. Fisher and organized the Social Welfare Federation. Together, they represented over 2,800 women. The purpose of the Federation was to provide relief to those who, through no fault of their own, were in need of charity. The goal was to provide help until conditions and circumstances bettered their fortunes. (“More Relief Work Inaugurated,” The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 18 December 1914)

At the same time as the women’s organization was formed, men met at Ellicott Hall (the old Court House) to form the Batavia Relief Association. The newspaper report about the meeting noted that A. R. Whiton of Batavia, apparently one of the men gathered at the Hall, had donated a load of potatoes from his South Byron farm to be used for relief causes. (“New Relief Association Will Meet This Evening,” The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 18 December 1914) It is not clear why the men and women in the community chose to establish separate relief organizations.

The Children’s Home Association was incorporated in April of 1919. Its goal was to provide temporary refuge for children living in troubled homes or to give children without parents a safe and permanent place to live. The first home was located at 19 Bank St. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 163-164) In 1920, the Association purchased the former Farrell house at the corner of Elm and East Main streets and moved to this location (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 11 March 1920).

In 1913, The Daily News reported that the First Baptists were planning to open a settlement house at 411 Ellicott Street. A Helen Carley, who had been studying settlement work in Rochester and Buffalo, planned to reside in the house and serve as a settlement worker. (The
1911-1920

Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 23 January 1913) Sewing classes were offered. Young men from the Baptist Church taught “foreign men” how to read and write in English. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 24 September 1913) Five years later, the newspaper reported that the First Baptists and Emanuel Baptists together were planning to build a new settlement house, apparently as a replacement for the one at 411 Ellicott. Plans called for an auditorium for religious services, club rooms, and reading rooms, among other features. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 13 May 1918) According to Wikipedia, settlement houses were typically established in poor urban areas and provided services such as daycare, education, and healthcare to improve the lives of the poor. (“Settlement Movement,” Wikipedia.com, online, accessed 30 July 2014)

19: Disasters

In March of 1916, a major flood occurred. It was described at the time as Batavia’s greatest flood within memory. According to The Daily News, hundreds were marooned in their homes. Boats floated on West Main and South Main streets. The Trolley line was under water at some points. The Municipal Power Plant had to be shut down. And water was in the basements of many businesses located on Main and Jackson streets. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 28 March 1916)

Two years later, on May 10th, 1918, about 12:30 in the afternoon, a tornado swept through Batavia. It caused thousands of dollars in property damage in the western and northern part of the City, but no one was seriously hurt. Destruction along the tornado’s path, running diagonally from the southwest to the northeast, was about two blocks wide. Portions of houses, roofs of buildings, garages and trees were destroyed, leaving some streets blocked by debris. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 10 May 1918).

20: Entertainment and recreation

Boating on the Tonawanda Creek continued to be a popular activity. In May of 1912, an advertisement in The Daily News informed the reader that unsinkable steel boats and canoes could be rented at 35 Walnut Street (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 4 May 1912). A canoe club was incorporated in 1913 (The Daily News, Batavia, 29 January 1913). An advertisement in a July 1915 issue of The Daily News revealed that picnic parties to Meadow Park could take the Blue Bird passenger boat at any hour for a roundtrip charge of $0.15. The Blue Bird departed from 35 Walnut Street. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 13 July 1915) On August 6th, 1915, The Daily News reported that there would be a canoe and motor boat parade on the Creek that night (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 6 August 1915).
The Meadow Park mentioned above was apparently on the Tonawanda Creek upstream from Batavia, but before Whiskey Point. It had a dance pavilion among other features (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 27 June 1911). Unlike Whiskey Point, it appears to have been accessible from both Creek Road and the Creek. Unfortunately, the park was also the scene of a drowning in 1914. A baseball game was being played when a ball went into the creek. Two brothers took a canoe and went after the ball. When the canoe overturned, the crowd at first laughed at the thrashing about, not realizing that one of the brothers couldn’t swim and was drowning. Several hours passed before his body was located about 15 feet downstream from where the canoe overturned. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 17 June 1914)

Reportedly, there was another recreation area on the creek called, “Hampton Park.” It was described as an amusement park south of Chestnut Street. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 4 October 1913) Nothing further is known about the facility.

Batavians had a choice of indoor entertainment for the Fourth of July in 1913 that was not available in the previous century. Batavia’s Family Theater that year presented a vaudeville show plus four reels of moving pictures, all for an admission price of one dime. Meanwhile, the Dellinger Opera House presented the latest break-through by Thomas Edison, a motion picture with sound. Admission to these “talking pictures” was $0.25, $0.35, or $.50, presumably varying according to seating location. (Mark Graczyk, “Hidden History—Four of July in Batavia, 100 Years Ago,” The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 1 July 2013)

George Austin, who operated the Austin and Prescott jewelry store, died in October of 1914. He left $30,000 to the Village to be used to develop a public park. (Ruth M. McEvoy, History of the City of Batavia [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 36) After the City purchased the Brisbane property behind the current post office, Austin’s money was used to create a park—hence the name, “Austin Park.” In December of 1919, a municipal ice skating rink was set up in this location (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 6 December 1919). The following year, 1920, plans for a grandstand were announced (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 5 May 1920).

21: War/impact of war

World War I began on July 28th, 1914 and lasted until November 11th, 1918. The United States did not enter the war as a combatant until April 6th, 1917.
When the United States declared war on its enemies in 1917, war fever was high. In Batavia, a “monster” parade supporting our involvement took place and speeches were given by local patriots. Common Council went on record supporting the war effort. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 5 April 1917; 7 April 1917) The first 14 draftees left on August 31, 1917 (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 31 August 1917).

Aside from local men marching off to war, there were numerous other ways in which World War I impacted Batavia. As mentioned in the section on “Energy,” coal shortages developed. Scrap drives took place (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 23 September 1918). Gasoline was in short supply and driving was restricted (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 30 September 1918). Munitions were produced in a plant on Evans Street (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 15 February 1918). By the end of the war, 63 men from Genesee County were dead (Deaths listed on the War Memorial at the corner of Bank Street and Washington Avenue, viewed 22 August 2014). Marine Glenn Loomis was the first to die (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 28 June 1918). Later, an American Legion Post would be named in his honor.

When World War I ended on November 11th, 1918, a great celebration began before dawn. According to The Daily News, Batavia gave over the entire day to demonstrations of joy. All business was suspended and the doors of factories, stores, and schools were closed. The celebrations got underway when a City fire truck made a “mad race through Main Street, bells clanging and siren screeching.” Shortly afterwards, the bell at St. Joseph’s Church began ringing out and then was joined by other church bells “hour after hour all day long.” Similarly, whistles at local factories blew in celebration. Half a dozen small processions formed and began parading in City streets. The Italians and Poles each had a parade. Italians borrowed a handcar from one of the railroads, gaily decorated it, put it on the trolley tracks, and ran it up and down Main Street with a load of cheering celebrants on board. In the afternoon there was a great parade that began at the Court House and proceeded east, north, west, south, and east again before ending back at the Court House. Reportedly, there were 3,000 people in the procession while on-lookers downtown packed the 18-ft. wide sidewalks. (The Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 11 November 1918)

22: Families/persons of note

The first immigrant “outsiders” to make themselves felt in any significant way in Batavia had been the Irish. Many had been drawn to Western New York by the need for laborers when the Erie Canal was under construction and others were driven by famine in Ireland. As has been true with immigrant groups in general, there was not immediate acceptance. However, as Ruth McEvoy pointed out, by 1915 the Irish had become sufficiently integrated that the Fire Chief
was a McBride, the Chief of Police a McCulley, and the Postmaster a Ryan (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993, p. 251)

23: Private clubs/social organizations/service organizations/non-profit groups providing services

Numerous organizations first appeared in this decade:

The Polish Falcons, Nest No. 493, was organized in October of 1913. During most of its existence, its club house has been located on South Swan Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 161-162)


In 1917, on August 25th, the Genesee County Farm Bureau was organized (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 153). Also in 1917, the Batavia Chamber of Commerce was created as a successor to the Business Men’s Association and Board of Trade (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Hodgins Printing Co., Inc. 1993] pp. 154-155). In March of the same year, the local Red Cross chapter was organized in a meeting at the home of Mrs. Watts Richmond (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 March 1917). Finally, in 1917, historical societies in the area set up a federation (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 30 June 1917).

The first Girl Scout troop in Batavia was formed in 1918 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 144)

The Glenn S. Loomis Post of the American Legion was organized in January of 1919. As noted in the above section on war, Loomis was the first local man to be killed in World War I. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1992] p. 147). The Ware Class of the First Presbyterian Church was incorporated in 1919. Its efforts led to the formation of the Children’s Home Association (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 April 1919). The Rotary Club organized this year, as well (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 May 1919). Finally, the Garden & Bird Club began in June of 1919. Members planted flowers in many locations such as on the grounds of the Library, Batavia Hospital, and Holland Land Office Museum. They also successfully protested against bill boards on West Main Street at River Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *The History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 148)
In 1920, the Court of St. Rita of the Catholic Daughters of America was organized (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 144).

24: Sex/sexual services/sexual entertainment

There were no apparent changes in this area during this decade.

25: Urban renewal

There was no urban renewal in this decade.