

The Thirteenth Decade

Overview

This decade encompasses what has been called “The Roaring Twenties.” It falls between two great calamities: World War I and the Great Depression. It’s also when the United States attempted some infamous social engineering via a Constitutional Amendment that prohibited the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcohol and alcoholic beverages. The latter led to widespread law-breaking and the creation of a new breed of gangsters who capitalized on Prohibition.

The thirteenth decade in Batavia was, however, remarkably quiet. The only thing that really stood out was the record population growth and the building boom that accompanied it. By 1930, the population reached 17,375 (“Genesee County Information,” *Richmond Memorial Library*, online, accessed 3 January 2014). This was an increase of 3,834 residents since 1920. As of 1930, it was the biggest growth during any single decade in the history of Batavia. That record still stands in 2015.

1: Infrastructure

When the sewer lines were laid out, the hope was to do so in a manner that would allow gravity feed throughout the system. However, as *The Daily News* reported in 1922, that goal proved elusive. When new areas in the northeastern part of the City began to go on line, there was a problem. This area in general was lower than the rest of the City. Consequently, a lift had to be constructed to pump the sewage into the other sewers that ran by gravity to the central collection point near the Municipal Building. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 December 1922)

Infrastructure improvements are hardly ever final. Eventually, they nearly all require replacement. A good example are water mains. The original mains were made of wood wrapped by metal bands. In 1924, *The Daily News* reported that the old water mains of this nature on Mix Place had reached the end of their service life and were being replaced with iron pipes (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 January 1924).

In this decade, street paving continued and, as in the decade before, not everyone was happy about it. In 1924, Ellicott Avenue residents north of Washington Avenue petitioned the

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Common Council to leave the surface unpaved. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 February 1924) The street was paved anyway.

For several years, dealing with garbage had been a recurring issue for City leaders. It would be destined to remain an issue for decades to come. In 1926, the Common Council enacted a law giving the Council complete control over garbage disposal (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., Batavia, N.Y., 8 July 1926). That same year, Frank Marciniak was awarded a contract to collect and remove garbage. Marciniak trucked the garbage to his farm on Pearl Street Road where he dumped it in a ravine. The garbage was collected twice a week. ("Garbage Collector to Remove Menace," *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 29 September 1926)

Many Batavians were apparently indifferent when it came to disposing of junk. Twice in 1926, *The Daily News* carried articles about residents simply dumping junk in their backyards (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 July 1926; *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 May 1926). Three years later, junked cars deposited in the Creek had become a serious problem. Several were reportedly dumped there in a single week. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 13 June 1929)

In 1926, City leaders announced that the City would remove snow from City sidewalks, but residents would be charged for the service (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 30 December 1926). That was not the final word on the matter of sidewalk snow removal; in fact, clearing of sidewalks still continues to be an issue.

As the City's population was growing and a building boom was underway, *The Daily News* of April 2nd, 1927 reported that sewer lines were being extended to seven outlying streets (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 April 1927).

In 1927, the City's Department of Public Works found itself pumping twice as much effluent as fresh water (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 October 1927). Later research would reveal that this difference was mainly due to two factors: 1) infiltration of ground water into the sewer mains, and 2) water from residential sump pumps being discharged into the sanitary sewers.

Sometimes the progress in creating new streets was surprisingly slow. In the last chapter, it was mentioned that a plan to extend East Avenue to Clinton Street had been announced in 1918. However, it wasn't until 1924 that the necessary land was fully acquired (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 December 1924). And it wasn't until 1929 that extension of the Avenue was actually completed (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 August 1929).

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2: Transportation

This is the decade that motorized vehicles pretty much took over. In 1922, a local merchant who sold carriages lamented the development. Batavia was now motorized, he said. The carriage business was gone. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 June 1922)

Early in this decade, taxi cabs had become sufficiently numerous to pose problems if not regulated. The City moved cab drivers to a stand on the west side of Court Street. Taxi cabs standing on Main Street waiting for a chance fare, the City asserted, were a nuisance. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 December 1921)

By 1927, there was sufficient automobile traffic that the Common Council decided to order automatic traffic signals for five intersections. They were purchased at a cost of \$2,500. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 May 1927)

The effect of automobiles on railroad passenger traffic was also in evidence by this decade. In 1927, the Erie Railroad announced that it was ending passenger service on October 1st. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 September 1927) From this point forward, the only railroad passenger service into and out of downtown Batavia was on the New York Central.

Railroads were also in the news this decade in two other ways of interest. In 1928, excavation work being done on property owned by W. W. Buxton unearthed old railroad track and a turntable in the Court Street area (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 June 1928). Most likely, these were remnants of the railroad between Rochester and Batavia that first began service in 1837. Also in the news during this decade was a proposal to move the mainline of the railroads south of the City (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 July 1930). This proposal was largely driven by the growing problem of fatal collisions between trains and vehicles. However, it would be a quarter century before anything was done.

The trolley line, which had been taken over by local investors, deteriorated severely. By 1926, the trolley service was described as poor, the equipment broke down frequently, and apparently any pretense of operating on schedule had disappeared (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 December 1926). In June of 1927, the trolley line ceased operation (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 June 1927).

According to Ruth McEvoy, bus service to Buffalo and Rochester began in 1921 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 23-24). However, bus service within the City began only after the trolley operation ended. In

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December of 1927, the Common Council granted a permit to the Batavia Motor Coach Line for two 34-passenger busses to run City line to City line (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 December 1927). In mid-January 1928, local merchants agreed to subsidize the cost of the bus service (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 January 1928) and operation began on January 17, 1928 (Ruth M. McEvoy [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc. 1993] pp. 22-23).

In this decade, land where Bogue Avenue is now located was used as a landing strip for airplanes. It was known as “Bogue’s 40 acres.” A night-landing by an aviator named Randy Enslow made *The Daily News* in October of 1925. Enslow reportedly used only moonlight and a small searchlight on his craft to find his way down. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 October 1925) Two years later, the newspaper announced that a 40-acre field belonging to Warren Hawley had been leased by Edward C. Walker, President of the Kozak Company, for use as an airport. The land was on the north side of Bank Street Road. It was to be named, “Kozak-Batavia Field.” Purportedly, flights from there to either Buffalo or Rochester took only 15 to 20 minutes in a moderately-powered airplane. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 July 1927).

3: Housing

Readers may recall from the last chapter that by 1918 there was a housing shortage in Batavia. There was a concern that families might need to double up. However, by 1921, a “house building boom” was on (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 October 1921). It was still going strong at mid-decade. For example, in 1924, 79 new houses and 163 garages were built (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y. 6 November 1924). And in 1926, 97 new residences were erected (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y. 1 December 1926).

4: Energy Sources

The surge in the number of automobiles led to a proliferation of gasoline stations to serve them. One such station was the Go-Gas station at the corner of West Main Street and Porter Avenue. When the station opened in 1921, it sold gas at \$0.275/gallon. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 June 1921)

In 1925, *The Daily News* reported the expectation that ice harvest on the Creek was now a thing of the past. It was anticipated that ice in the future would only be that which is artificially frozen (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 January 1925). However, this sounding of the death knell for Creek ice was apparently somewhat premature. A year later, the newspaper reported that Benjamin Suttell was putting ice in his ice house located at 460 South Jackson (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 January 1926).

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In 1924, the Niagara Power Company built a supplemental transformer station on Franklin Street (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 11). This supplemented the power station already in operation on Ellicott Street.

Beginning in 1926, the City Hall at 10 West Main Street began to be heated by steam from the Municipal Building at 3 West Main Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 July 1926). The steam lines ran under West Main Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 July 1926). This arrangement was later abandoned.

In 1926, a gas line carrying manufactured gas was laid from the Buffalo area to Batavia. This gas was then mixed with the natural gas piped from Pavilion. The mixing took place at a mixing station located at Pearl Street and Brooklyn Avenue. This was expected to end long-running City-wide problems with both gas shortages and insufficient gas pressure. ("Pipe Line Carrying Manufactured Gas..." *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 September 1926)

5: Communication

In the early 1920s, radio broadcasting was in its infancy. KDKA, the country's first commercial radio station, located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania had only gone on the air in 1920 ("KDKA," *Wikipedia.com*, online, accessed August 5, 2014). A radio station in Batavia was still two decades away. Nevertheless, broadcasts could be received in Batavia including one from Buffalo that was of special note for local residents. In June of 1922, the Smith Electric Shop, 116 Main Street, remained open after hours so individuals without radio receivers could hear a "wireless" concert by Batavians being broadcast over WGR (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 June 1922).

Readers will recall from the chapter on the years 1891 to 1900 that the whistle of the Johnston Harvester Company had then been used to transmit weather information. At some point, that practice ended. However, in 1922, *The Daily News* reported that the Harvester whistle was again being used for this purpose. Each day, about 11 a.m., the U.S. Weather Bureau at Ithaca telegraphed a weather forecast to the Farm Bureau in Batavia. This forecast was then communicated by workmen at the Harvester plant following a 15-20 second warning whistle. One long blast meant fair weather, two long meant rain, and three long blasts meant localized rain. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 13 June 1922)

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6: County and village boundaries

There were no changes in the County or City boundaries in this decade.

7: Government, governing structure

Several minor changes were made to the City charter in 1921. In 1923, a further revision occurred that gave the City the right to enact any laws that did not conflict with laws of the State. This enactment, called "Home Rule Law," was approved by local voters in November of 1923 and became effective January 1st 1924. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 3)

Prior to this decade, building permits were apparently required. However, there was no zoning. In 1925, a Zoning Commission was created (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 July 1925) and, the next year, Batavia's first zoning ordinance went into effect (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 June 1926). For the first time, restrictions were imposed regarding where residential, commercial, and manufacturing structures could be built, effectively ending indiscriminate mixing of these uses.

In June of 1927, *The Daily News* reported that County Building 1 was finished (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 June 1927). Located at the northwest corner of Main and Court streets, it was constructed at the former location of Ellicott Hall which had burned down in 1918. A year later, the Surrogate Court Building, located between the stone Court House and County Building 1, was razed and the area landscaped (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 August 1927).

8: Crime, crime control, and law enforcement

During this decade, enforcement of the Constitutional Prohibition Amendment kept City police busy. Throughout this time period, newspapers were replete with reports of arrests and convictions. Three examples, spread across the decade, provide a sample. In 1922, police found a still in a barn at 227 South Liberty Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 October 1922) and the landlord of the Ellicott Square Hotel was arrested (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 October 1922). In 1924, Harry Barsuk was arrested for having liquor at both his furniture store at 50 Jackson Street and his home at 40 Buell Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 August 1924). And in 1927, John Bojanowski of 421 Ellicott Street, a baker, was arrested for having whiskey in his truck (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 June 1927). Despite on-going

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arrests such as these, local ministers complained about what they saw as a lack of enforcement of the law (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 17 February 1930).

In 1921, *The Daily News* carried an article about two local “candy bandits,” age 10 or under, who were sent to jail for 24 hours (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 August 1921). It may have been instances such as this that led to a new State law requiring juvenile courts where children would be treated separately from adults (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 May 1922). A Children’s Court was set up locally in January of 1923 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 15).

In 1921, *The Daily News* reported that Black Hand gangsters were still posing a threat in the community (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 November 1921).

At a meeting held at the YWCA in 1921, a “permanent committee” was established with the goal of censoring movies it found unacceptable. The “committee” was made up of two or more women from each of 28 women’s organizations plus an advisory board of three pastors and three businessmen. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 July 1921)

Individuals playing slot machines seems to have been another significant concern in this decade. In early 1929, it was reported that police had picked up 708 of the machines in recent months. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 28 February 1929)

In addition to dealing with violators of Prohibition, gangsters, and places promoting slot machines, the police had many other more ordinary crimes to handle. For example, in May of 1924, the newspaper of May 5th reported that burglars had recently entered 30 houses and garages (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 May 1924). It would seem that individuals who look back fondly on earlier times “when no one had to lock their doors” may be recalling eras that never really existed.

9: Retail establishments/ other commercial enterprises

The public restroom, established in the last decade, was apparently very popular with shoppers and others using the downtown area. At one point, over 50,000 patrons were reported to have used it during a single 12-month period (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 August 1918). In 1921, a new restroom was set up that was described as better lit and easier to heat (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 January 1921) Then, four years later, yet another restroom in the bus terminal at Court and Ellicott streets was formally opened (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 July 1925).

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In 1928, there were 16 restaurants in the City. All but two were on the north side of Main Street, the east side of State Street, or the west side of Jackson Street. There were also two lunch carts. ("Past and Present," *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 March 1928)

In 1928, the City's 25 merchants who operated groceries and fruit stores organized to set uniform closing times. They agreed to close at 6 pm except Saturdays and Wednesdays. On Wednesdays, they decided to close at 12:30 pm. No groceries or stores were to be open on Sunday. These times were chosen to match the operating hours of non-food merchants in the City. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 June 1928)

10: Factories/industries

The Daily News of July 1921 reported that an empty factory building on Evans Street was to be used for manufacturing Adria automobiles (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 July 1921). The cars were already being built in Cleveland. Louis Vremsak, President of the company, described the vehicle as having features not yet available in other cars then being built. Production in Batavia evidently got underway, but in November of 1922 Vremsak closed down the Batavia operation and abandoned unfinished vehicles in the factory. This appears to be the last time that anyone here tried to build automobiles commercially. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 185)

Also in 1921, the Doehler Die Casting Company of Brooklyn came to Batavia. The company, which had been founded in 1908, chose Batavia because of the City's proximity to Eastman Kodak. Kodak was a major customer. By 1922, the company occupied several large buildings on Robertson Street that had previously been used by the now defunct Batavia Rubber Company. Doehler grew over the years and became one of Batavia's most important industries. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 184-186).

The Kozak Company was started about 1928 by Edward C. Walker III. Walker had a degree in chemistry and the product his company sold, Kozak Cloth, was impregnated with a chemical that allowed it to be used for cleaning cars without using water. During most of its existence, the Kozak Company was located on South Lyon Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 179)

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11: Banking/financial services

The Bank of Genesee became the Genesee Trust Company in 1928 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 66).

12: Education

With the major growth in Batavia's population, there was a corresponding growth in the City's public school system. It began with a new high school building on Ross Street that opened in May of 1924 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 May 1924). It replaced a building at the same location that had been expected to be sufficient for many decades longer, but had proven to be too small. The next year, a portable classroom had to be added to the Pringle School (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 October 1925). Then new schools on Union Street, Jackson Street, and Brooklyn Avenue were all dedicated in 1929 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 88).

The new school on Union Street was named, "Robert Morris," by the request of local parents who wanted to honor Morris (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 88). The same year, the school on Williams Street was renamed, "Lincoln" (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26 January 1929)

In the area of parochial education, a new St. Anthony's School was built in 1930. It replaced a structure that had been in use since 1909. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p.94)

There was also activity in the private sector during this decade. In April of 1927, Sarah Blount sold her business school, established in 1892, to former instructors who, in turn, sold it to the Rochester Business Institute (RBI). Under RBI's direction, the school survived for nearly 30 more years. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., inc., 1993] p. 237)

13: Religion

Two new Protestant churches were organized in this decade. The Seventh Day Adventists organized in 1924. However, they did not have their own building for another 16 years. The Church of the Nazarene was organized about 1925. In 1926, the congregation built a basement church at 315 West Main Street. The name of the church later became, "Wesleyan Methodist

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Church.” More recently, it has become, “First Wesleyan Church of Batavia.” (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 123)

14: Libraries/archives/museums

During this decade, there were no new developments of significance.

15: Cemeteries

As seemed to keep happening over the years, in 1925, workmen excavating on South Lyon Street again chanced upon human remains from when there was a cemetery at that location (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 January 1925).

16: Firefighting

In November of 1921, voters approved a proposal to increase the size of the fire department to 12 full-time men plus a Fire Chief (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 17)

By the 1920s, the Court Street fire station located next to County Building 1 was generally judged to be an eyesore (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 January 1928). However, it would be 20 years before it would be replaced.

17: Healthcare

In its initial 1917 configuration, St. Jerome Hospital consisted of two frame houses joined together. Then an adjoining four-story brick building, immediately to the south, was built and opened in 1922. This brought the number of beds to 50, 18 of which were in the original two houses. (Larry Barnes, *A Brief History of Batavia's Public Hospitals* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published, 2013] p. 6)

The Batavia Hospital remained as it had been after its first 10 years. There was the original frame building erected by John Pickert, an addition to that building, a contagion cottage, and a home for nursing students. (Larry Barnes, *A Brief History of Batavia's Public Hospitals* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published, 2013] p. 7)

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In 1923, a mental health clinic opened in the City Hall (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 January 1923).

In 1925, the former Primrose Hospital building was made into apartments (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 May 1925).

In this decade, the scourge of diphtheria was finally ended. Beginning in 1924, school children in Batavia received inoculations. By 1926, the success of the inoculation program was so great that not a single case of diphtheria had occurred among school children in nearly a year. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 March 1926)

Unfortunately, the dangers of cigarette smoking were not recognized. Efforts to reduce smoking were still decades into the future. The challenge that lay ahead can be appreciated by noting the level of smoking near the end of this decade. According to an article in *The Daily News*, in 1928 alone, Batavians smoked 13,832,462 cigarettes (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 28 February 1929).

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

When Adelaide Richmond Thomas died, the Richmond mansion passed on to Watts Richmond, her brother (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 31 December 1925). However, he didn't want it and the mansion was purchased by C. C. Bradley (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 April 1926). He also did not have a personal use for it and the mansion next became the property of the Stroh family in the summer of 1927 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 August 1927). Within months, the Strohs sold the mansion to the Children's Home Association (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 29 December 1927). The Children's Home then moved to this location from 437 East Main Street where it had been operating since 1920. The mansion continued to serve as the Children's Home for the next four decades.

While conditions in Batavia were nothing like what was to follow during the Great Depression, not everyone was sharing in the prosperity of the Roaring Twenties. Care of the poor cost \$39,000 in 1924 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 December 1924). In 1928, the City was helping 30 families stay afloat (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 January 1928). By 1930, five percent of those living in the City were defined as "needy" (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26 November 1930). In December of 1930, Batavians went to the polls to vote on a proposed \$25,000 bond issue to fund jobs for the unemployed (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 November 1930). The proposal was voted down (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 December 1930).

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The Ware Class of the First Presbyterian Church had been instrumental in the establishment of the Children's Home in 1919. In 1928, the same group urged creation of a home for the aged (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 11 February 1928). This time around, it was less successful.

19: Disasters

In December of 1921, the City was struck by a massive ice storm, causing heavy property damage and affecting both telephone and electrical service. It was judged to be the worst storm in memory. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 December 1921) Then, almost exactly eight years later, another ice storm accompanied by high winds again caused major damage. Local residents apparently judged it to be even worse than the 1921 storm. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 December 1929)

By 1921, much of the space in the farmers' horse sheds had been given over to automobiles. Four years later, on December 18, 1925, a fire broke out that destroyed 85 vehicles. Some were cars belonging to City residents who didn't have garage. Some were automobiles held by the police as evidence against bootleggers. A few belonged to a local car dealer. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 198)

20: Entertainment and recreation

Someone laid out an unauthorized golf course in what is today's Centennial Park south of the State School for the Blind. Subsequent damage from golfers became a problem, so in the Fall of 1922, the City announced that golf in the park was thereafter prohibited. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 September 1922)

Readers may recall a tragic boating accident on the creek in 1883 that was precipitated by a boy skinny dipping. Apparently 40 years later, boys skinny dipping in the Tonawanda remained a common practice. In 1925, Police Chief Daniel Elliott noted that there had been many complaints from numerous residents near the Creek about boys undressing in public before entering the water. A popular location was near either the Erie Railroad bridge or the New York Central bridge, the exact location differently identified depending on the newspaper account one reads. The Chief believed construction of a bathhouse would alleviate the problem. According to *The Daily News*, the Kiwanis Club subsequently responded to the Chief's suggestion and erected a simple shelter measuring 8 x 16 ft. *The Daily News* also reported that the Rev. Alfred Britain and the Rev. William C. Kirby were receiving contributions for the cost of clearing out the Creek in front of the bathhouse and constructing a small dock. Purportedly the

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spot was going to be named, "Elliott Beach," in honor of the Chief because he had instigated construction of the bathhouse. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 June 1925; 10 June 1925; 16 June 1925)

Ice skating remained popular in this decade. An area at Brooklyn and Pearl streets was flooded when weather turned cold (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 December 1924). A surface for ice skating was also created on Bank Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 January 1926).

Horse racing at the Fairgrounds drew crowds. However, no betting was permitted. Racing fans attempted to get around this restriction through placing what were termed, "donations." A "donations and returns" tent was erected for the purpose. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 September 1926) This led to an apparently successful challenge to the legality of this arrangement under the State's gambling laws (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 September 1926)

In 1926, hundreds of Batavians looked on as a Massachusetts man, termed "a human fly," climbed the front of the Commercial Building on Main Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26 August 1926).

The Family Theater on Jackson Street installed sound for movies early in 1928 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 February 1928).

Boxing matches, commonly featuring local fighters, were very popular in this decade. For example, in February of 1925, *The Daily News* reported that between 1,000 and 1,100 spectators showed up one night at the Odd Fellows club house to see boxing matches (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 28 February 1925). And, one night in May of 1930, nearly 1,000 spectators attended boxing matches at St. Anthony's Community Center (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 May 1930).

By the beginning of this decade, recreational boating on the Creek had dramatically fallen in popularity. One observer living at the time later stated, "I never saw a fad die out so quickly. There were hundreds of people on the Creek every Saturday and Sunday. [Then people bought automobiles and they]... took the place of boats. No one seemed to care about the Creek anymore and as a result, the boats were practically worthless. Some of them were allowed to drift down the stream. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 May 1937)

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21: War/impact of war

World War I was over. World War II, which most did not foresee, was a decade or more into the future. It was a quiet time, in terms of warfare affecting Batavians.

22: Families, persons of note

One especially interesting individual of this decade was William Coon, Batavia's first appointed City Historian and also the longest serving. Coon was appointed Historian in 1919 and remained in office until his death in 1953. William Coon was also an attorney who was employed over the years in a variety of positions including Town of Batavia Justice of the Peace, District Attorney of Genesee County, City Attorney, and State Attorney for the Tonawanda Nation of Seneca Indians. Coon also was a professional musician and, at one point, a newspaper reporter. He was a private in the Army during the Spanish-American War. Additionally, he was a Village trustee, Honorary Chief of the Turtle Clan, trustee of the First Baptist Church, a football coach at Batavia High School, and a gymnastic instructor at the YMCA. (Larry Barnes, *A Brief History of Batavia's City Historians* [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published monograph, 2009] no pagination)

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

Relatively few new groups appeared in this decade. In 1921, The Business and Professional Women's Club, a group with no national affiliation, began meeting (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 144). That same year, the Community Chest (later the United Way) was organized (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 October 1921). The local Kiwanis Club received its charter in April of 1923. One of its objectives was the promotion of opportunities for outdoor recreation for people of all ages. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 154-155) In 1927, the Knights of Malta and the Dames of Malta were organized (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 138). In 1928, the Veness-Strollo Post No. 1602, Veterans of Foreign Wars, was organized (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 147). That same year, the Optimists Club was formed (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 11 September 1928).

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One other group made its presence felt in this decade, a group that most present-day Batavians are probably sorry ever set foot in our community. In November of 1922, a Ku Klux Klan branch was started in Batavia (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 17 November 1922). A few days later, a meeting was held in Majestic Hall on Park Place and around 200 people attended. Activities continued including one night in May of 1923 when KKK booklets were thrown onto the porches of most homes. Several months later, a huge cross was burned in State Park (now Centennial Park). (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 166-168) In August of 1924, the Ku Klux Klan requested permission to hold a picnic on Labor Day in Exposition Park at the west end of the City. Common Council voted 4 to 2 to grant permission for the picnic and also for a parade from the Park to the business district and back. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 August 1924) Both events took place. In our area, the thrust of the KKK movement was directed toward Italian-Americans. Eventually, the Ku Klux Klan faded away, but even today one occasionally hears of someone discovering KKK hoods and robes hidden away in a family attic.

24: Sex/sexual services/sexual entertainment

The Daily News in an article from May of 1922 stated that the Court House Park (where County Building 1 and the stone Court House are now located) was called "pick-up park." Allegedly, individuals hung out in a tree-shaded area looking for sexual partners and, thus, the name. The police indicated that they intended to put a stop to the behavior. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 May 1922)

In 1923, John Muscarella, who operated the Iroquois Hotel in the Ellicott Square area, was indicted for keeping a disorderly house (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 April 1923). A month later, during court proceedings, a young woman testified that sexual orgies took place at the hotel (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 31 May 1923).

Edna Gruber, who became Batavia's best known Madam, purchased the Central Hotel on Jackson Street in 1926 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 August 1926). Batavia's treatment of Gruber was complicated by the fact that she operated a house of prostitution, on one hand, but did good works that benefited the community, on the other. More about Edna Gruber will follow in the next chapter.

25: Urban renewal

There was no urban renewal in this decade.