

The Fourteenth Decade

Overview

This decade was one of severe economic distress. The stock market crash on so-called “Black Friday,” October 29th, 1929 is commonly identified as the beginning of what has come to be called, “the Great Depression.” However, the real depth of this depression was not felt until the 1930s. Batavia suffered greatly during this decade, as did virtually all other communities across the country. No significant economic recovery occurred until after the beginning of World War II.

This decade also marks the first time that Batavia’s population underwent a decline. The population in 1940 was 17,267 (“Genesee County Information,” *Richmond Memorial Library*, online, accessed 3 January 2014), a decrease of 108 residents since 1930.

It was also in this decade that one of the saddest events relating to preservation of Batavia’s historic treasures came to pass. The mansion built in 1817 by Trumbull Cary was acquired by a descendant, restored to its original condition, and given to the City for service as a tourist attraction. Shortly afterwards, the City returned the mansion, an action that set off a chain of events eventually leading to the structure’s demolition. More about this story is in the following section labeled, “Housing.”

1: Infrastructure

Indiscriminate disposal of garbage and trash continued to be a problem. The reader may recall from the last chapter that by the late 1920s, junked automobiles were being dumped in the Tonawanda, sometimes several in just a week’s time. Two years later, in 1931, *The Daily News* reported that business places were dumping garbage in the Creek (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26 August 1931). In 1932, the City requested that residents dispose of trash only in one of three dump sites set aside for that purpose: a dump on Tracy Avenue Extension, “Mot’s Pit” on East Main Street next to Gonyo’s service station, and a pit at the intersection of South Swan and South Jackson streets. However, no garbage or automobile bodies were permitted at these locations. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, 25 April 1932)

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Until the mid-thirties, Richmond Avenue made a “jog” to the north at the point where it intersected with Oak Street. In 1934, Common Council authorized the purchase of the Fanny Dubitsky property at 77 Oak Street in order to straighten Richmond Avenue. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 June 1934)

Until 1936, automobiles on Main Street were parked diagonally. Then, that year, parallel parking began. According to *The Daily News*, this change was judged to have improved the appearance of the street. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 September 1936)

In 1938, the River Street bridge was widened and lengthened. One of the purposes of the work was to facilitate flood relief by improving flow downstream from the areas of Batavia which had been most prone to flooding. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 January 1938)

Main Street was widened in 1940. This required moving several things back 5-1/2 ft. including a hotel marquee, a clock mounted on a pedestal, and gas pumps. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 January 1940) However, in the eyes of many residents, the most significant impact of the project was the removal of the W.C.T.U. fountain at the southeast corner of Main and Jackson streets. This drinking fountain had been erected in 1904 by the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union to provide refreshment for both humans and animals. The fountain had a metal base topped by a figure of Hebe, the cupbearer of the immortal gods on Olympus. It disappeared after its removal, perhaps a contribution to one of the scrap drives during World War II. (Larry D. Barnes, *Batavia Revisited* [Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011] p. 115)

In 1938, construction of a water tower, located behind the current County Courthouse on Ellicott Street, was authorized by Common Council (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 July 1938). Work on the tank began a month later (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 August 1938). By July of 1939, *The Daily News* was able to report that the tank was being filled (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 July 1939). The construction of the water tank resulted in a “big saving” in the pumping of water (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 January 1940). This downtown water tank served as a landmark in Batavia for more than 60 years before it was torn down early in the current century.

By 1939, the sewage treatment plant was often overloaded, necessitating sending some of the raw sewage directly into the Creek. A consultant recommended a new plant. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y., Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 8. However, it would be a quarter century before the old plant would be taken out of service and replaced by a new one.

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2: Transportation

In 1911, the first airplane passed over Batavia. Twenty years later, the first “auto-gyro” did so (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 May 1931). Auto-gyros were what we today call helicopters. Also in 1931, *The Daily News* reported that a blimp circled over the City and then landed (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 October 1931).

Traffic signals were first installed in Batavia in 1927. Ten years later, the first stop-and-go blinker lights were erected (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 January 1937).

Automobile licenses had been required by the State since 1910. In 1939, the City began requiring bicycle licenses (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 March 1939). According to Dan Winegar who wrote about the licensing requirement years later, the requirement grew out of a concern over bicycle thefts. Licenses cost \$0.25 annually. A Chandler Robinson received license no. 1. It was auctioned off for \$27.50 in an estate auction ca. 1990. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 August 1990)

3: Housing

Readers will recall that the first airplane landing strip in the area was a field known as “Bogue’s 40 acres.” It was where today’s Bogue Avenue is located. By 1937, airplanes were using a landing strip north of Bank Street Road and the land making up Bogue’s 40 acres was offered for building lots (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 August 1937).

This book’s earlier chapter for the years 1811-1820 included a description of the mansion built by Trumbull Cary in 1817. One of Batavia’s finest homes ever, it was built by Trumbull to please his wife, Margaret Brisbane Trumbull. For the next 147 years, the mansion remained an East Main Street landmark.

In 1922, the Cary Mansion was purchased from Cary family members by Harry E. Turner who remodeled the interior for service as a mortuary. However, over the next decade, George Cary, a grandson of Trumbull Cary and a noted Buffalo architect, came to conceive of the structure as better suited for being something on the order of Monticello or Mount Vernon. He thought it should be preserved as a colonial home for the education and enjoyment of the public.

Cary, after obtaining a commitment from Harry Turner to sell him the mansion, approached Common Council with an offer to restore the structure, providing the City would maintain it as a tourist attraction. On August 15th, 1934, Common Council accepted the offer. The title

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passed to the City on June 15th, 1935. As he had promised, George Cary restored the mansion at his expense. It was his intention to make it possible for a visitor to step into the restored home and find it just as he or she would have when Trumbull and Margaret Cary lived there. In the course of restoration, several pieces of early American handicraft were obtained on permanent loan from the Metropolitan Art Museum in New York. Furnishings and other objects that had originally been in the mansion were located and retrieved. A curator was hired. Finally, the mansion was scheduled to open to the public in the summer of 1936.

Then an unfortunate and unexpected turn of events took place. Although a special committee appointed to study the future of the mansion concluded otherwise, Common Council decided that it had made a mistake in accepting the mansion and the structure could not be maintained except at considerable and prohibitive expense to the City of Batavia. In essentially a complete about face, in October of 1936, the mansion was returned to George Cary despite his strenuous objections. At this point, perhaps out of anger over the City's actions, Cary abandoned his goal of seeing the mansion serve as a tourist attraction. The sad story of what subsequently happened to the mansion over the next three decades is described in later chapters.

4: Energy sources

In the winter of 1931-1932, as usual there was ice on the Tonawanda, but for the first time in 55 years, none was harvested (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 March 1932).

It may have been the decade of the Great Depression, but people were still buying cars and gasoline to fuel them. In December of 1937, *The Daily News* noted that there had been a big increase in gas stations and pumps since 1929 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 December 1937)

Electric power, until the mid-thirties, had been 25-cycle current. One disadvantage of low frequency cycling was the flickering of electric lights that resulted. In February of 1936, plans were announced for Batavia and the rest of the County to change to 60-cycle current (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 17 February 1936). By May of 1937, the City's change-over to 60-cycle power was complete (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 May 1937). This made obsolete the equipment in the Municipal Power Plant that had been preserved since 1918 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 February 1937). It was subsequently junked (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 May 1940). Readers may recall from an earlier chapter that the engine and generator had been turned over daily to keep them operational.

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5: Communication

The first official airmail flight from Batavia flew out of a temporary airstrip on State Street Road in May of 1938. The flight was to Buffalo. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 May 1938)

Radio broadcasts could be received by the early 1920s, but Batavia itself did not have a radio station until the early 1940s. In January of 1940, *The Daily News* reported that E. R. Gamble was President of the newly formed Batavia Broadcasting System (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 January 1940). In June, the Batavia Broadcasting System applied to the FCC for a license (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y. 24 June 1940). By December of 1940, work was underway for station facilities in rooms over 90 Main Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 December 1940). Plans called for broadcasts to begin two months later.

6: County and city boundaries

In 1932, the City's boundaries in the northwest part of the community were expanded to include the property on which the Veterans Administration Hospital was to be built. Care was taken by Common Council to keep the boundary inside the right-of-way for Park Road in order to avoid future responsibility for maintaining, widening, or paving the road. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 30 December 1932)

7: Government, governing structure

No significant changes occurred in this decade.

8: Crime, crime control, and law enforcement

In the very early 1930s, enforcement of Prohibition remained a focus of Batavia law enforcement. For example, in 1931, Louis Cesarano was charged with running a "speak easy" at 412 Ellicott Street. Eventually, the charges were withdrawn after Cesarano promised to close his business and keep it closed. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 February 1931)

Prohibition was soon to end, however. In May of 1933, voters in New York State went to the polls to indicate their support or lack of support for repeal of the 18th Amendment. State-wide, the majority voted for repeal and in Batavia as well as Genesee County as a whole, the "wets" also prevailed. At that point, eight states had voted for repeal, leaving another 30 in order to change the Constitution. (*The Daily News*, Batavia N.Y., 24 May 1933) Support for repeal

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eventually culminated in the 21st Amendment which went into effect on December 5th, 1933. After 13 years, Prohibition was no more. (“Repeal of Prohibition in the United States,” *Wikipedia.com*, online, accessed 17 August 2014)

Efforts to stop the production, sale, and distribution of alcohol may have ended, but a campaign against gambling continued throughout this decade. Slot machines seemed to be a prime target (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 October 1932). With simple seizure of slot machines apparently less than successful, at one point Common Council considered licensing such machines, charging a fee of \$500 each, as a measure for dealing with the problem (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 August 1932). It does not appear that this proposal was enacted.

Gambling parlors also attracted police attention in the form of raids. One well-known parlor was operated by Russell LoTempio at 303 Ellicott Street. LoTempio’s illegal horse betting operation was subjected to one such raid in late October of 1936. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 30 October 1936)

Mobster activity in Western New York and involving Batavians often seemed to have some connection to Russell LoTempio. In June of 1936, Frank LoTempio, Russell’s brother and a known bookmaker and gambler, was murdered in Buffalo as he left a wedding reception. Police later determined that LoTempio’s death was in retribution for the refusal of Russell and Frank LoTempio to pay monetary tribute to Buffalo-area mobsters. On August 26th, Batavian Samuel Yates, a friend of the LoTempios, was murdered in Buffalo as he attended a funeral. A few months later, someone planted a bomb in Russell LoTempio’s car. Russell survived, but one of his feet had to be amputated. Then in August of 1937, Frank LoTempio’s brother-in-law, Alfred Panepinto, was killed in Russell LoTempio’s billiard parlor. None of the murderers in any of the above killings was brought to justice. (Mark Graczyk, “Hidden History—Gunmen Kill Batavia Man, 1936,” *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 June 2014)

The underworld was not the only source of crime, of course. In 1933, seven local men, termed “the Buell Street Gang,” were indicted and later convicted on charges of burglarizing a dozen locations. Led by Reuben Patterson, the proprietor of Pat’s Auto Parts Service, they stole wire, metal, and other items from industrial plants in Batavia and Stafford. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 4 December 1933; 16 January 1934)

Before more modern times, a common tactic in dealing with anyone deemed undesirable was to order them out of town. Apparently, such was the case with Communists. In January of 1932, the Police Chief personally escorted a Communist organizer to the New York Central train station and put her on a train to Rochester. The person in question, identified as “Miss Welch,”

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purportedly was in town in connection with a strike then occurring at the Joseph Horowitz and Sons shirt factory. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 January 1932).

In 1935, Batavia Police made 1,286 arrests (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 January 1936). The next year, according to *The Daily News*, they launched a “crusade” against careless bicycling (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 October 1937). Whether careless bicycle riders became arrest statistics is not clear.

Several actions were taken in this decade in an effort to better equip Batavia’s police force. In 1931, the police were provided with a siren for “the police roadster,” apparently the department’s sole vehicle (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 29 October 1931). In 1938, the police were provided with a second patrol car, a Plymouth (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 July 1938). Then, in 1939, Common Council authorized purchasing two-way radios for the police cars (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 February 1939)

One other observation should be noted. In 1937, as a result of State legislation, women became eligible for jury duty (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 June 1937).

9: Retail establishments/other commercial enterprises

Home delivery of milk was a common practice in this decade as it had been earlier. It would remain so for many years following. Initially, delivery wagons were drawn by horses. However, in 1932, Fargo Dairy announced that it was retiring its “milk horses” and converting to electric trucks (*The Daily New*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 January 1932).

Also in 1932, the Knox and Dispenza Shoe Store installed x-ray machines to aid in fitting shoes (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 September 1932). Customers and clerks could view an x-ray image that revealed both the shoe and the foot (bones included). Viewing took place via a screen on the machine as the customer stood with his/her feet inside. Such devices continued in use well into the 1940s and perhaps a little later before recognition of the hazards of the x-rays ended the practice.

In the 1930s, some local entrepreneurs, using wagons or carts, sold groceries directly to homemakers throughout the City. Such operations were separate from “brick and mortar” grocery stores and, in many instances, apparently were attempts to supplement income earned otherwise. Common Council sought to control, perhaps even end, this practice by imposing licensing requirements in combination with a high fee. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 November 1934) A reading of the newspaper accounts about this situation suggests that

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Common Council was responding to complaints from the proprietors of grocery stores who didn't want competition from peddlers.

10: Factories/industries

The Great Depression took its toll on businesses in general. In Batavia, the most significant loss was the Batavia and New York Wood Working Company. In the 1920s, the company had been one of the leading industries of its type in the Country. It produced much of the fine interior wood used in banks, hotels and offices then being built. The plant consisted of a large three-story brick main building, an engine house, a warehouse, sheds, and drying kilns. In the peak years of operation, the company employed 350 skilled workers. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y., Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993], p 174)

By 1930, the Batavia and New York Wood Working Company was feeling the effects of the Great Depression which began hitting the building industry both early on and hard. Operations slowed as a back-log of orders was filled. Then, in 1939, operations ceased altogether. Before long, the City acquired the property under foreclosure proceedings and that was the end of a major source of employment for Batavia's skilled workmen. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y., Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 174)

11: Banking/financial services

There appear not to have been any significant local developments in banking or financial services.

12: Education

There was considerable activity in this decade involving vocational or trade schools. In 1937, a trade school, reportedly associated in some manner with the Doehler Company, was in operation. Open only to those working in the metal trades, it had 74 registered students. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 February 1937) In August of 1938, *The Daily News* reported that a vocational school, located in the West School on West Main Street, was opening in September. Although limited to 50 students, it was available to both school-age youth and tradesmen seeking to improve their skills. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 August 1938) The following year, the newspaper announced that the facility henceforth would enroll only high school graduates (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 May 1939). Then, in 1940, *The Daily News* reported that the school was offering a summer program to prepare workers for war industries.

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Funded by the Federal Government, the classes were expected to serve about 60 students. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 July 1940).

Batavia had Catholic schools going back many decades. Then, in 1937, a Jewish school was opened above 59 Main Street. It was established to provide religious training for Jewish children. The subject matter included Jewish history, customs, and theology. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 October 1937) It is not known how long the school remained in operation.

Because of overcrowding in the High School on Ross Street, and the existence of vacant classrooms in south-side schools, a decision was made in 1939 to convert Jackson School to a junior high with grades 7, 8, and 9 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 May 1939).

In 1932, Park Lewis Hall, a dormitory for females, was built at the State School for the Blind (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 September 1932). Seven years later, in 1939, Hamilton Hall, a dormitory for males, was erected (*The Daily News* Batavia, N.Y., 25 October 1939).

13: Religion

The Christian and Missionary Alliance congregation first met in Batavia ca. 1931 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 125). The Batavia Gospel Tabernacle congregation also organized in 1931. About 1937, it purchased the Evangelical Church building on Center Street. The congregation later became The Assembly of God. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 123-124)

During this time, Catholics were assigned to a parish and required to attend a specific church determined by their place of residence. In 1932, the boundary lines between the St. Joseph's and St. Mary's parishes were shifted. This shift was undertaken to equalize the number of members within each parish. For some families, this meant that they had to attend a different church than the one to which they were accustomed. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 December 1932)

The New Apostolic Church congregation was founded in 1934. They met in a converted house at 111 Washington Avenue. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 126)

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The Church of God in Christ congregation began ca. 1939. At some later point, it acquired the building at 31 Maple Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 124)

In 1939, a group of younger Jews organized a Conservative Society which became Temple Beth El. Several years later, the Beth El society purchased a house at 124 Bank Street and rebuilt it as a temple. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 121-122)

Jehovah's Witnesses first met in 1940. They later purchased a building on North Lyon Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc.] p. 125)

14: Libraries/archives/museums

In 1940, a library branch for the south side was opened in the Jackson Street School (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 February 1940).

15: Cemeteries

There appear to have been no significant developments among the cemeteries in this decade.

16: Firefighting

In 1919, during the administration of Mayor Ashton Caney, a horn had been installed to summon off-duty firemen. Because so many people thought it sounded like a cow mooing, it came to be called "Caney's cow." By 1940, off-duty firemen could readily be reached by telephone, so the horn was decommissioned. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 August 1940)

17: Healthcare

The Veterans Administration Hospital was built in 1932 and 1933. It was erected on a 52-acre plot that had been purchased by the City and County and then given to the Federal Government to serve as a building site. A parade celebrating the decision to build the hospital in Batavia rather than at an alternative location was held on April 2nd, 1932. In May of 1934, residents were afforded an opportunity to tour the facility prior to admission of the first patients. The Veterans Administration Hospital was dedicated on June 23rd, 1934 in a

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ceremony held at the Fairgrounds on West Main Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 80)

A sanitarium, Acorn Sanitarium, also known as “Hilltop Sanitarium,” operated at 218 State Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 October 1938).

Poliomyelitis was a scourge for many decades. In 1939, an outbreak of polio in the Batavia area resulted in the schools being closed starting on September 13th. They didn’t reopen until a cold spell in October. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y., Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 243-244)

Penicillin was used in Batavia for the first time in 1940. It was given to an infant at St. Jerome Hospital and was credited with saving the child’s life. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 April 1940)

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

The unemployment that accompanied the Great Depression created desperate conditions. Initially, there were no Federal programs and Batavia, like other communities, was forced to deal with the situation with no outside help. Furthermore, *The Daily News* reported that few places in the State, Batavia among them, had adequate plans for dealing with the unemployment (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 August 1931).

As of July in 1931, the relief funds of the City Welfare Commission were exhausted. The welfare recipients included 70 able-bodied men. So, a decision was then made to put some of these men to work on a sewer extension project with the workers paid in vouchers redeemable for rent, fuel, provisions, clothing, and other necessities. Apparently the Department of Public Works had sufficient funds to make this possible. The *Daily News* reported that a list of other projects on which the unemployed could be put to work was under development. Part of the problem Batavia faced stemmed from State action mandating old age pensions for which the City had not budgeted. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 July 1931)

To be eligible for old age pensions, need had to demonstrated, the individual had to have been a resident of New York for at least 10 years, had to have resided in the local area for at least one year, and had to be a citizen. Payments made by the City averaged \$17.88/month per person, the second lowest in New York among the State’s cities. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 July 1931)

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In 1931, beans for the needy were planted in fields on both sides of East Avenue (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 June 1931). The next year, vegetable gardens were planted, again on East Avenue (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 May 1932).

The Daily News of October 12th, 1932 reported that welfare costs for the City were “staggering” (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 October 1932). By January 15th, 1933, welfare was costing the City \$440/day (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 January 1933). However, within a year, massive Federal programs under the Roosevelt Administration began to provide aid. One was the Civil Works Administration (CWA) that operated between November 8th, 1933 and March 31st, 1934. That was followed by the Work Progress Administration (WPA), renamed the Work Projects Administration in 1939. The WPA operated between April 8th, 1935 and June 30th, 1943. (“CWA,” *Wikipedia.com*, online, accessed 14 August 2014; “WPA,” *Wikipedia.com*, online, accessed 14 August 2014)

In December of 1933, 15 Batavia projects were approved for CWA funding (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 December 1933). More followed under the WPA.

In addition to the CWA and WPA programs, the unemployed in Batavia were also helped by another, albeit smaller, Federal program, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). It operated between 1933 and 1942 and was established to help unemployed, unmarried men, 18 to 25 years of age, who came from families on relief. The participants in the CCC worked on the development of natural resources, most notably state and federal parks. (“CCC,” *Wikipedia.com*, online, accessed 17 August 2014) The first 34 Batavians left the City for a CCC camp in June of 1933 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 June 1933).

In 1934, the Twenty-five Neediest Children’s Fund came into being. It was initially administered by the Parent Teachers Council, but later was handled by private citizens. The fund provided money for such things as medical care, clothing, shoes and boots in instances where families could not afford these things and had no other resources. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 164)

Also in February of 1934, the Salvation Army opened a hostel for vagrants in a building at 32 Jackson Street. It provided 40 cots loaned by the State Armory in Medina. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 February 1934) The Federal Government paid about \$60/day for the service (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 28 February 1935). However, the facility was closed in July of 1935 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 31 July 1935).

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In August of 1940, *The Daily News* reported that the City would be turning old age relief over to the County (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 August 1940). At the end of the year, the City's old age department was abolished and the County began assuming all responsibility for aid to the elderly (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 December 1940).

19: Disasters

In this decade, Batavia experienced the beginning of an environmental and aesthetic disaster. In 1933, Dutch Elm disease was discovered in the City (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 September 1933). This disease eventually stripped Batavia of all the Dutch Elm canopy that had graced its streets.

Weather extremes also marked this decade. On February 8th, 1934, an all-time low of minus 28 degrees was recorded in Batavia (Mark Graczyk, "Hidden History: Batavia's Coldest Day," *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 December 2014). Later in the Spring of 1934, drought conditions were at a record level (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 31 May 1934). Two years later, temperatures over 100 degrees occurred for three straight days (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 11 July 1936). Then, in March of 1940, a storm occurred that was judged to have been the worst in 50 years (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26, 27 March 1940)

20: Entertainment and recreation

Two City parks opened in this decade. Austin Park opened in 1931 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 June 1931) and Kibbe Park in 1935 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 29 November 1935).

A boxing club flourished for many years starting in 1931. However, it was never a formally organized group and it never had a permanent address. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] pp. 165-166)

The Batavia Players started in the fall of 1931 under the direction of Ethel MacIntosh, a Latin teacher at Batavia High School. Performances were held at several community locations including a summer theater on Horseshoe Lake. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 149)

Batavians were sometimes entertained by The Apollo Club, a group of male singers who organized in 1932. They lasted five years. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 151)

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Another vocal group was the Choral Guild. It performed, under the direction of Mac Brusted, for four years beginning in 1938. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 151)

The Batavia Concert Band, sponsored by the City, began playing for local audiences in 1938 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 150).

There was an on-going battle over whether certain recreation could occur on Sundays. In 1931, baseball was deemed legal, but the Police Chief ordered bowling alleys to close (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 January 1931; *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 April 1931). That same year, Common Council sought to ban Sunday dancing, a move thought directed specifically at the Mancuso Ballroom since it was the only place where Sunday dancing was occurring (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 September 1931). Any question about showing movies was resolved, however, when the State acted in 1935 to make it legal to show movies on Sundays (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 April 1935).

A long-standing and revered place of entertainment was lost in 1935 when the Dellinger Opera House on Main Street burned (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 October 1935). It was a dramatic fire that failed to spread to surrounding buildings mainly as the result of fire walls and the competent efforts of fire fighters.

Dog races were held at the Fairgrounds in 1935 and 1936. This resulted in protests from both clergy and local residents.. Eventually, the District Attorney warned that he would take action if racing continued; and that permanently ended the matter. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 161)

In 1937, an ice skating rink on Vine Street was approved for WPA funding (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 January 1937).

The first soapbox derby was held in the summer of 1938. The racers coasted down Ellicott Avenue before a crowd estimated to number around 3,000. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 11 July 1938)

Also in 1938, a baseball diamond was readied for professional baseball (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 July 1938). Using WPA funds, an area on Denio Street at Bank was cleared for the purpose. Bleachers were built at the southeastern corner. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 164) Batavia's first

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professional baseball team was the Clippers (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 April 1939). The name was derived from one of the products of the Massey-Harris Company, the Massey-Harris clipper combine (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 164).

In April of 1940, *The Daily News* reported that the City would be getting a harness racing track (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 April 1940). In June, the newspaper indicated that the Genesee County Agricultural Society was leasing the Fairgrounds for a 30-day meet occurring at night. It also stated that there would be pari-mutuel betting under a license granted by the State Racing Commission. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 June 1940) Thus, in September of 1940, legalized betting came to Batavia (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 September 1940).

21: War/impact of war

Although the United States was not yet involved, World War II was raging in Europe and the Japanese were on the march in the Pacific. In response, our Country organized a military draft. In September of 1940, a local draft board was chosen (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 September 1940). And in November, draft notices were sent to 25 young men (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 4 November 1940). This was just the beginning of the most significant local involvement in warfare since the American Civil War of the previous century.

22: Families, persons of note

After the Civil War and before the “sexual revolution” of mid-20th century, over the years Batavia had many houses of prostitution. Among the madams, Edna Gruber was the most famous. Her business appears to have been at its peak in the 1930s.

Edna Miller Gruber was born in Buffalo, July 28th, 1892. She lived until October 10th, 1953 when she died in Batavia of apparent heart failure. In the course of her life, she was married twice, first to Joseph Gruber when she was 15 and then to David Reeves when she was 38. She had one daughter by the first marriage, Florence, who bore two children before dying in Ohio in an accidental fire. Edna’s grandchildren eventually came to live with her at Edna’s place of business.

In 1926, Gruber purchased the former Central Hotel at 101 Jackson Street and renamed it “the Palace Hotel.” Just south of the New York Central Railroad tracks, it had five rooms downstairs, nine bedrooms on the second floor, and six unused rooms on the third floor. As the Madam, Edna Gruber took half of the price paid by the men who used the establishment’s

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services. The other 50% went to the prostitutes who then shared some of their take with their pimps.

Although the Palace Hotel was regularly raided, Edna was typically just fined and released. To some extent, that was thought to be because of what she might reveal about prominent Batavian men if she were arrested and brought to trial. Probably, it was also because Gruber was a generous person who did a lot of good things for the community. For example, at Christmas time, she would visit Davis Wheel Goods and spend hundreds of dollars on toys for children. For years, she paid a local priest to purchase First Communion dresses and suits for needy children in her neighborhood. Owners and sales clerks at Thomas & Dwyer's Shoe Store were instructed to fit children with shoes when the latter were seen walking to school barefoot. Edna Gruber sent needy people to McAlpine & Barton's clothing store for warm clothing purchased at her expense. She even bought uniforms for the police and firemen.

Edna Gruber's luck ran out in 1941 when Police Chief John J. Casey became determined to close down the Palace Hotel. He arrested her and Edna's case was brought before a jury of six men and six women who found her guilty of keeping an establishment harmful to public morals. Judge Cone fined her \$500, sentenced her to one year in the Monroe County Penitentiary, and ordered her not to return to Batavia.

After spending a year in the penitentiary, Gruber returned to Batavia despite Judge Cone's admonishment not to do so. Apparently she resumed business as usual at the Palace, but without further legal problems. When she died in 1953, the building went to her grandchildren who converted it into a conventional home for themselves and their spouses. One of the couples moved out after one year, but the other remained at 101 Jackson for the next 30 years.

All of the above information about Edna Gruber was taken from an online article accessed 18 August 2004 at www.clarioncall.com. It had previously been published in the 1996 Winter edition of "Genesee Country" magazine.

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

The Batavia Study Club met for over 40 years, starting in 1933. The club was initially a group of teachers who met at the home of Bess Churchill. Members took turns at giving presentations which were often reviews of books or plays. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 145)

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The Batavia Junior Citizens organized in August of 1934. The group's objective was personal and community development among residents aged 21 to 40. The organization later changed its name to Batavia Jaycees. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 157)

Aerie No. 2348 of Eagles organized in November of 1939 (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 139).

24: Sex/sexual services/sexual entertainment

During this decade, as noted above, houses of prostitution continued to operate in Batavia and, periodically, the police raided them. For example, at 3 a.m. one night in 1935, Batavia police raided both Edna Gruber's business at 101 Jackson Street and Irene Ross' operation at 41-1/2 Liberty Street. Both women were fined \$100 and received suspended sentences of six months in prison. Between the two locations, the names of 27 patrons were collected. Three prostitutes were fined \$25 each and ordered to leave the City within 24 hours. Irene Ross was ordered to leave the City within one week, but Edna Gruber was permitted to remain a resident. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 May 1935)

24: Urban renewal

There was no urban renewal in this decade.