

The Seventeenth Decade

Overview

This decade marks the beginning of Urban Renewal in Batavia, arguably the single most important event shaping the appearance of the community. Before the Urban Renewal changes ran their course, the areas north and south of Main Street and the area south of Ellicott Street and West Main Street between Oak and Evans streets were all radically altered.

This decade also marks the beginning of an on-going loss of population. In 1970, the number of residents had fallen to 17,338 (“Genesee County Information,” *Richmond Memorial Library*, online, accessed 3 January 2014), a decrease of 872 since 1960.

1: Infrastructure

Parking along Main Street has undergone a number of changes over the years. Sometimes the configuration of the parking spaces (diagonal versus parallel) and other times the availability of spaces have both been altered. In 1968, parking was banned altogether on both sides of the street from Summit Street to Jefferson Avenue, Monday through Saturday, from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 August 1968).

In the early 1960s, four new streets were approved by the Planning Board for the area north of East Avenue and east of North Spruce Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 December 1962).

Sidewalks continued to be an issue in this decade. City Council again decreed that it could install sidewalks if homeowners would not. However, the City leaders also indicated that this policy did not necessarily mean that all streets were to have sidewalks. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 February 1964) In this regard, they may have been responding to changing public attitudes toward the necessity of sidewalks as residents came to rely with increasing frequency on automobiles for getting about. Some might say that a shift from walking to driving was being reflected at that time in the newly popular design of houses wherein garages were attached to the front of the structures rather than being free-standing at the rear.

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Several developments took place this decade in regard to Batavia's water supply. As in other communities, the question of whether to provide fluoridation of the water was a controversial issue. The proponents argued that there would be a clear benefit in terms of preventing dental decay among children in particular. Opponents raised objections relating to perceived health risks. The proponents in Batavia won out when Common Council gave its approval to fluoridation in March of 1963 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26 March 1963). Nine months later, fluoride treatment of Batavia's water went into effect (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 31 December 1963).

The adequacy of Batavia's water supply was periodically called into question when drought conditions led to a reduced flow of water in the Tonawanda Creek. This issue was finally addressed in this decade by drilling wells and building a pumping station on Cedar Street in order to tap into an underground supply (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 November 1964). Batavians subsequently consumed water that was derived from both the creek and the aquifer.

In 1967, the city was given Federal land near the Veterans Administration Hospital to erect a second water storage tank. (This land was a portion of the area originally donated by the City to the Federal Government for the construction of the hospital.) The planned tank had a capacity of 1-1/2 million gallons, thereby doubling the City's storage supply. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 June 1967) In May of 1968, the completed tank was filled and began supplying water to Batavians (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 May 1968).

This decade also saw a new sewage treatment plant go on line. The original treatment plant, 40-plus years old, located where Lambert Park is now situated on Hillcrest Avenue, had become obsolete. The City chose, for a new site, land east of River Street and north of South Main Street along the south bank of the creek. Bonds in the amount of \$1,129,000 were issued by the City to pay for the plant and to rebuild most of the sewer lines in the City. This was supplemented by a grant of \$450,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency. In November of 1965, sewage began to flow to the new facility. However, barely more than a year later in January of 1967, engineers discovered that industrial wastes were overloading the new plant and that the new shopping plaza on West Main Street was providing a further burden on the facility. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 9) Consequently, Batavia would soon be in the business of planning for yet another new sewage treatment plant.

In September of 1961, the City purchased 17 acres on the west side of Cedar Street for a landfill. The existing dump on the east side of the street was almost full and had only two to three months capacity left. The new location was Batavia's first sanitary landfill (*The Daily*

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News, Batavia, N.Y., 26 September 1961). As such, it ended open dumping (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 31 July 1961). Then, six years later in 1967, the City announced plans to close the Cedar Street site and transfer dumping to a Kelsey Road landfill facility (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 September 1967). Meanwhile, also in 1967, a four-year contract was awarded to the Z-B Processing Corporation for garbage and trash pickup. Homeowners were able to combine garbage and trash in the same receptacle, a relatively new practice, using containers that had to be within 15 ft. of the rear of their homes. The refuse was then trucked to the landfill. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 August 1967)

2: Transportation

The 1960s saw railroad passenger service fade away. In 1962, the New York Central Railroad closed its ticket office in Batavia and passengers had to purchase their tickets after boarding the train (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26 July 1962). From this point on, no train stopped unless signaled to do so (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 21). In 1965, the railroad closed the waiting room at the Batavia depot (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 March 1965). By 1968, it appears that the only passenger train that Batavians could board was a single west-bound train scheduled to arrive in Batavia around 3:25 p.m. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 April 1968). It's not clear how one was supposed to return to the city.

3: Housing

Housing was still being built despite a loss of population. For example, 32 house permits were issued in 1962 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 4 March 1963) and there were 31 new homes built in 1965 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 January 1966). Presumably all of *these* structures were of high quality. However, according to census takers, many of the older homes were inferior in one respect or another. According to a report in a 1963 issue of *The Daily News*, 17% of the city's dwellings were "substandard" and failed to meet normal building code requirements (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 August 1963).

The first real apartment houses in Batavia were built in this decade. In 1961 and 1962, James Pero erected Park View Apartments on Pearl Street. In 1962, John Martino constructed five buildings with a total of 144 units on East Main Street. Originally named "Heritage Gardens," they were later renamed "Batavia Gardens." In 1966, the Veiden Corporation built apartments at 269 State Street which totaled 24 units among six buildings. In 1968, the Tech-Chem Company erected seven buildings with a total on 77 apartments on the east side of North Spruce Street. In 1968 and 1969, Mark Twain Builders constructed apartment buildings at 541

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East Main Street and on North Spruce Street at Margaret Place. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] pp. 129-130)

Low-income housing also first appeared in Batavia during this decade. In 1970, two-story town houses were built on South Main Street near River, on Edward Street, and on MacArthur Drive off State Street. Each apartment had both a first and second floor. Each location housed between 12 and 20 families. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 130 and *The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 August 1970 and 1 September 1970)

Batavia's largest low-income housing venture began in 1969 when the Council of Churches, with support from the City, proposed to apply for Federal building funds. As the venture moved ahead, the Council reorganized as a development company and hired a Buffalo firm to design a 200 unit complex south of Pearl Street and east of River Street. Construction by a Williamsville firm began in 1970. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 130) Subsequent problems that developed over the next two years and slowed construction will be discussed in the next chapter.

Housing for transients remained an issue in this decade. Although back in 1951, the Salvation Army had announced that it was no longer providing free housing to transients (see the previous chapter), in the early 1960s it was apparently involved again and had been for several years. For example, In March of 1962, representatives stated that the Salvation Army had paid, in the previous month alone, the cost of 21 overnight "guests" at a rooming house on Ellicott Street where transients were generally assigned. At this time, the Salvation Army started to again question its responsibility for transients and suggested that Genesee County should assume at least some of the costs. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 March 1962)

The rooming house mentioned above was evidently called "Duffy's" and was located at 50 Ellicott Street. In 1964, Duffy's closed and the City appears to have offered the police station building on School Street to the Salvation Army. The notion was that the building could serve as a center for transients under the auspices of the Salvation Army. The offer was rejected. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 April 1964)

For preservationists, especially, this decade was a particularly sad one. Early in 1964, St. Jerome Hospital razed the Cary mansion and replaced it with a new nursing school building (Larry Barnes, *The Cary Family of Batavia*- [Batavia, N.Y.: self-published, 2012] p. 20). In June of 1970, the former Richmond mansion on East Main Street, a building that had housed the Children's Home for many years, was razed by the Board of Education, its current owner (*The*

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Daily News, Batavia, N.Y., 11 June 1970). In addition to these structures, buildings in the Urban Renewal area, some of architectural significance, began to go down.

4: Energy sources

In 1963, City Council complained that there were too many gasoline stations on West Main Street. Council members termed the street, “gasoline alley.” (*The Daily News*, 15 January 1963) It seems unlikely that they would be complaining, today, since there are only two stations at the time this book is being written.

Three years later, in 1966, *The Daily News* reported that Niagara Mohawk was removing 1,300 incandescent lamps in street lights and replacing them with mercury vapor lamps. The latter used less electricity. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 October 1966)

5: Communication

In 1963, across the United States, users of the U.S. Mail needed to add another item to the addresses used for both sending and receiving mail: a zip code. Batavia’s zip code was (and is) 14020. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 June 1963)

Two years later, in 1965, touchtone phones began to appear in Batavia (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 July 1965). Despite the fact that phones no longer had rotary dials, users continued to say that they were “dialing a number” when making a call. That idiomatic expression still continues in 2015 and shows no sign of disappearing any time soon.

6: County, village, city boundaries

When, in this decade, the City purchased land for creation of an industrial park off Pearl Street, it appears that some of the land had previously been in the Town of Batavia. Maps of the City from this point forward show a different boundary in the southwest quadrant of the community. (See the section titled, “Factories/industries.”)

7: Government, governing structure

This decade saw the beginning of sales taxes. In November of 1962, the City Council approved a 1% sales tax on all sales except groceries (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 13 November 1962). In 1964, the City sales tax was raised to 2% (*The Daily News*, Batavia, 16

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December 1964). In June of the next year, the County Board of Supervisors approved enactment of a County sales tax (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 June 1965) and, in December, established a rate of 4% on all items except groceries. Thus, for City residents, the sales taxes on purchases became 6%. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 December 1965) The revenue from the County tax was dispersed among the County, City, and townships according to a formula that was periodically modified (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 6).

8: Crime, crime control, law enforcement

Part way through this decade, the curfew restrictions that had been adopted in 1944, but enforced only periodically, were again removed from the shelf and dusted off. In June of 1963, another “crackdown” was announced following incidences of park vandalism and the beating of a junior high student after a school dance. According to police, officers saw no one under 16 on the street after 10 p.m. the first night of this latest enforcement. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 June 1963)

The year 1962 saw the first major revision of the State court system in over 100 years. Each Childrens Court was replaced by a Family Court. The latter was given jurisdiction over individuals up to the age of 16 in addition to jurisdiction over all aspects of family life including crimes by one family member against another. Exceptions were limited to divorce, separation, and annulments which continued to be under the jurisdiction of State Supreme Courts. (*The Daily News*, 25 April 1962)

This decade saw the Police Department move to new quarters. An addition was built onto the rear of City Hall in 1963 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 28 September 1963) and in January of 1964, the Police Department moved to 10 West Main Street from its previous location on School Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 January 1964). The School Street structure was demolished in 1965 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 June 1965).

The new police headquarters had a new “lockup” with four cells (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 February 1964). It wasn’t very long, however, before State inspectors found fault with the jail, a situation that has occurred repeatedly in Batavia over the years. The State Commission of Corrections recommended changing the location of the cells, noting that there was inadequate ventilation, a problem with odor, and complaints that obscene language by the inmates was audible to nearby staff and the public. Furthermore, it was discovered that the construction had not been reviewed and approved by the State before the jail was built six years earlier. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 May 1969 and 10 June 1970)

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In the previous decade, police had used a motorcycle squad and a special camera in an effort to apprehend speeders. Beginning in 1964, police began using radar (*The Daily News*, 29 April 1964).

Under New York State law, public employees were first able to unionize and negotiate terms of employment beginning in the late 1960s. In November of 1967, the officers of the Batavia Police Department voted to join the AFL/CIO (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 November 1967).

By 1970, the police force in Batavia had grown to 37 officers (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 13 April 1970).

During this decade, citizens across the nation began to be able to summon emergency help, both police and fire, by dialing the same simple number: 911. This emergency service became available to Batavians in 1970 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 November 1969)

9: Retail establishments/other commercial enterprises

By the 1960s, horse-drawn vehicles were a rarity. However, home delivery of milk via wagons pulled by horses was an exception. Then, that too ceased. In 1964, Branton's Dairy retired its last milk horse and an era ended (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 201). After that, all deliveries were made by motorized vehicles.

Batavia's second shopping plaza was proposed in 1965. To be located on the south side of West Main Street, it would in effect complement Easttown Plaza built on East Main Street. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 30 April 1965)

In 1969, Charles and William Doerflinger of Rochester, owners of a large parcel on West Main Street, proposed a new grocery store. The result was a 20,000 sq. ft. operation that became Tops Market. It was the first grocery store in the area to be open all night. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 46) Over a 20-year period, residents in Batavia seeking to purchase groceries went from being unable to do so after 6 p.m. and never on Sundays to being able to make purchases 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

According to *The Daily News*, in 1965 City Council was finding restroom facilities for downtown shoppers an on-going headache. It hoped that Urban Renewal would lead to a

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solution. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 June 1965) It's not clear whether the restroom planned by Dwight Toal in 1953 (see the previous chapter) was no longer in existence or it was insufficient in some respect.

10: Factories/industries

In April of 1967, preliminary plans were revealed for an industrial park off Pearl Street in Batavia. The City Council approved the purchase of 62.5 acres to be reserved for light industry. It was anticipated that firms displaced by Urban Renewal in downtown Batavia might move to such a park. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 April 1967) The anticipated cost of the project was \$463,000 with half paid for by a Federal grant and the remainder by the sale of bonds (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 January 1968).

Through most of the decade, the Sylvania plant appeared to be doing well. The factory was enlarged in September 1956, January 1962, and April 1969. Then ominous signs appeared. In October 1970, Sylvania announced that color television production was to be moved to Smithfield, North Carolina. By the end of the year, 350 employees had been laid off. Management complained that the company was suffering losses from trade competition. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 192)

11: Banking/ financial services

There do not appear to have been any significant changes in this area.

12: Education

In 1961, Knight Hall opened at the State School for the Blind. It was built to serve young children. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 28 September 1961)

Batavia's new High School, located on State Street and a replacement for the facility on Ross Street, began operation in 1961 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 October 1961). The former High School became a middle school.

The Batavia School District started classes for what were termed "trainables" in 1962 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 October 1962). This appears to mark the beginning of instruction for mentally handicapped children.

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At the other end of the continuum, in 1962 Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) began college-level evening classes at the Batavia High School. In the fall of 1964, 150 students were expected to enroll. Ten different courses were offered that semester. The instructors and texts employed in Batavia were the same as used on the RIT campus. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 September 1964)

In 1964, the West School building on West Main Street, located just east of South Lyon Street, was demolished (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 May 1964).

Also in 1964, New York State passed legislation allowing public school systems to organize county-wide vocational programs. Schools in Genesee County, including the Batavia School District, took advantage of this new opportunity. In 1965, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) resulted and the same year classrooms were set up in an empty school building in South Byron and at the former Harvester plant on Harvester Avenue in Batavia. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 90) In 1967, *The Daily News* reported that a permanent site was being sought for construction of a new building to serve students enrolled in BOCES classes (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 29 January 1967)

Although the area's community college is not located in the City, it deserves to be cited in any history of our community because of its importance in the education of community residents and the general impact the institution and its faculty have had on Batavia.

Whether or not to establish a local community college was the subject of debate for several years. Finally, in 1964 the question was put before the public and in a County-wide referendum, voters approved the establishment of a 2-yr. school. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 November 1965)

In 1967, Genesee Community College admitted its first class of students. The two-year college was located on West Main Street Road in a building formerly used by a Valu department store. Hence, some nicknamed the new college, "Valu Tech." The College was an accredited public institution belonging to the State University of New York. Funding was provided through a combination of County support, State support, and tuition with, theoretically, one-third of the operating cost being provided by each source. The author of this book joined the teaching faculty in 1968 and served until his retirement in 2005.

In 1970, the Buffalo Diocese announced that the Sacred Heart and St. Anthony elementary schools would be consolidated. It was reported that for the time being, students would wear

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their current uniforms, but a new one shared by all would be used the next school year. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 June 1970)

13: Religion

The Mt. Zion Baptist Church was organized in 1962. In 1967, it purchased a building at 516 Ellicott Street. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* {Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993} p. 125)

In 1963, a new convent for the Sisters of Mercy was ready to be occupied. A two-story structure, it was situated on East Main Street behind St. Joseph's Church and to the rear of the earlier convent built in 1882. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 May 1963)

14: Libraries/archives/museums

In 1968, *The Daily News* reported that the site of the Richmond mansion was being considered for a new library building (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 July 1968). However, when the proposal was put to voters the next year, it was voted down (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 June 1969)

In 1970, a west wing was added to the Holland Land Office Museum (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 May 1970). A frame structure, it would be followed by an east wing seven years later.

15: Cemeteries

According to a newspaper account, in 1966 a private cemetery was established on the residential property at 4 Mix Place. Reportedly, the motivation for doing so may have been to gain protection from a money judgment filed against the property owners. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 October 1966) It does not appear that any burials ever took place at the site.

16: Firefighting

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

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Healthcare

The Genesee County Mental Health Association was formed in 1963. It was affiliated with the State Association for Mental Health, Inc. and the National Association for Mental Health, Inc. It served as a voluntary, non-profit organization. According to its mission statement, the purposes of the Association were to develop a citizens voluntary movement in a program of mental health education, secure information through research and study to determine the resources and need of community mental health services in the county, to develop a program of improved methods and services in research, prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, and to assist in the formation of a county health board, serve as clearing center regarding mental health, seek financial support and carry out activities to promote mental health.

In 1965, one of the goals of the Genesee County Mental Health Association was met when the County Board of Supervisors, by a 17-0 vote, approved the creation of a Mental Health Board made up of nine members. This opened the way for the establishment of a mental health clinic. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 May 1965)

As the decade was drawing to a close, Frederick Degenhardt, President of the Mental Health Association of Genesee County and a school psychologist, advocated the establishment of a "hot line." He suggested that it operate during hours when the Mental Health Clinic was closed. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 April 1970)

In 1966, two northern wings were added to Genesee Memorial Hospital (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 78).

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

A youth center was organized in 1961 under the sponsorship of three organizations: the YWCA, the YMCA, and the B'nai B'rith Jewish Men's Service Club. The center was in the YMCA and was open from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and 8:00 p.m. to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 January 1961) The first night it was open, February 4, 1961, 150 young people of both sexes, aged 14 to 18, showed up for games, music, and dancing (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 February 1961).

A day care center for the children of migrant families was started at the YWCA in 1965 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 July 1965). It operated there under the auspices of the State Department of Labor. In 1969, the day care operation moved to the Batavia Industrial Center

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on Harvester Avenue where it became one of the programs sponsored by BOCES. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 142)

In 1966, a charter was granted to the Genesee Chapter of the State and National Association to Aid Retarded Children (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 June 1966). This appears to have been the forerunner of the local Association for Retarded Children that established a sheltered workshop several years later. (See the next chapter.)

In 1967, the Children's Home closed after operating for nearly 50 years (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 28 June 1967). It had been established to provide temporary refuge for children living in troubled homes and to give children without parents a safe and permanent place to live. Responsibility for such children from the time of the closing was assumed by the Department of Social Services. Throughout most of its existence, the Home had been housed in the former Richmond Mansion on East Main Street.

19: Disasters

In the mid-20th century, the great elm trees that graced many American cities were struck down by Dutch Elm disease. Batavia was one of the communities that fell victim to this biological disaster. In 1964, *The Daily News* reported that most of Batavia's elm trees were infected (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 23 January 1964). Just three years later, 614 trees had been killed by the disease (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 February 1967)

In 1966, Batavia was struck by what many described as the worst blizzard in memory. (It seems that every few decades, there were such storms). Reportedly, over 500 travelers sought local refuge from the storm. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 31 January 1966) Of course, the *really big blizzard* (at least in the author's memory), was still 11 years into the future.

20: Entertainment and recreation

In 1961, the Genesee Civic Ballet was formed (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 October 1961).

In the early 1960s, the City opened a swimming pool and bathhouse in MacArthur Park north of the ball park. It was informally named in honor of Batavian Greta Patterson following her record 1955 swim across Lake Erie from Angola, N.Y. to Crystal Beach, Ontario. The pool, measuring 60 x 100 ft., was paid for through fund-raising drives and by the gifts of individuals. The bathhouse was paid for by the City. The pool opened, reportedly without ceremony, on

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July 9, 1962. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] pp. 104-105)

Over the years, the reader may recall that there were numerous ice skating areas temporarily set up in various locations. In 1965, one such skating area was created in MacArthur Park (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 January 1965).

In 1967, lottery tickets went on sale in a State-wide plan to raise funds for public education. Tickets, costing \$1 a piece, were sold by banks. There were plans to also sell them through motels. The locations selling the lottery tickets received up to 5% of the sales to cover handling costs. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 27 May 1967)

21: War, impact of war

This decade was defined by an increasing American military involvement in Vietnam. This Country's involvement in Viet Nam is rather complicated and not always well understood, so some detail is in order.

Prior to World War II, Vietnam had been under French colonial rule. During the war, the French lost control when Japanese forces occupied the country. After the Japanese were eventually defeated, the French attempted to regain their colonial role, but met resistance from Vietnamese forces led by Ho Chi Minh. This led to a French military defeat in 1954 and a Communist regime under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh came to occupy the northern half of Vietnam. Meanwhile, the government in South Vietnam, led by pro-Western Anti-Communist leaders, became engaged in a struggle with the Communist government of the north for control of the country. In the mid-1960s, the United States began sending troops to South Vietnam, acting on the notion that if the whole of Vietnam became Communist, like a row of dominoes, all the other nations of Southeast Asia would fall to Communism as well. Eventually, American involvement escalated to the point that several hundred thousand U.S. troops became directly involved in the fighting along with lesser numbers of soldiers from allied nations.

The U.S. involvement in Vietnam was prolonged and costly. Before the war would end, over 58,000 American lives would be lost. As the years passed and military success eluded American and South Vietnamese forces, public opposition to the war began to appear. As this opposition grew, it reached the point where continued American involvement became politically untenable. One of the turning points occurred when four students at Kent State University in Ohio were shot and killed by National Guard forces during an anti-war demonstration. In 1975, the U.S. withdrew all its personnel from Vietnam.

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Within a year after the American withdrawal, South Vietnamese forces were soon overwhelmed and the whole of the country became a Communist nation. Ho Chi Minh was at the helm. Thus ended one of the most tragic chapters in American history.

In the course of the war in Vietnam, large numbers of area men served in the conflict. Often their service appears to have been wholly involuntary as they were forced into service by a military draft. However, deferments were available to those who could afford college, became married, and had children. As a consequence, it has been argued that service in Vietnam fell on the sons of lower income Americans to an excessive degree. By the war's end, the number of Genesee County residents who died in the Vietnamese War would total 18 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, NY., 24 January 1973).

In the previous chapter, the author noted that an Army Reserves facility was planned for a four-acre area at the southwest corner of the intersection between Oak Street and Park Road. This facility was dedicated in May of 1961 as a memorial to area residents who had given their lives in service to the Country. It included headquarters and a classroom building suitable for training up to 100 reservists. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 May 1961)

An armory on State Street was built in 1963. It housed tank battalions A and B of the Genesee National Guard. The National Guard had been using another building on the site as a headquarters for several years. In 1963, the latter structure became a garage, the use for which it was originally designed. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 May 1963)

In 1967, a Civil Defense Center was opened in a new earth-bermed building located behind the armory on State Street. It was planned to serve as a temporary seat of government should any manmade or natural disaster destroy government offices located above ground. It was designed to shelter up to 100 people for a period of two weeks. It served in that capacity for just four years. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 136)

As described in the previous chapter, during the early years of the Cold War, Americans were urged to build personal shelters to aid in their survival during and after an enemy air raid. Not many families followed this advice. However, a local exception was the Merrit household at 652 East Main Street. According to a November 1961 issue of *The Daily News*, they built a "bomb shelter" in the back yard. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 November 1961)

22: Families, persons of note

The first President of Genesee Community College was Dr. Alfred C. O'Connell. During his tenure, construction of a new campus was begun in 1969. However, before it was completed, O'Connell resigned and Dr. Cornelius V. Robbins became the second President when he was appointed to the position in July of 1970.

Robbins, among other things, had the distinction of being the first Genesee Community College President to reside in the City. He lived at 16 Summit Street. The Summit Street house is unique in its own right. It was erected sometime in the 1850s by Major Henry J. Glowacki. The house at 16 Summit is the front half of a larger home that included the house now located at 14 Summit Street. During a remodeling project, Dr. Robbins reported finding an inscription in the walls written by a workman who wrote that he had participated in separating the two halves of the original building.

Dr. Robbins served for eight years before being succeeded by Dr. Stuart Steiner.

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

The Landmark Society of Genesee County, Inc. was formed in 1965. Sally Osborn and Catherine Roth were the chief organizers. The organization was established in an effort to preserve landmarks throughout the County. A major event motivating the group's formation was the impact Urban Renewal was having on Batavia. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Hodgins Printing Co., Inc., 1993] p. 154)

In 1968, the YWCA dedicated a new building on North Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 April 1968).

In 1970, Harry L. Majors organized a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He was elected as the chapter's President. The organization was short-lived and in only four years, the group relinquished its charter. (Ruth M. McEvoy, *History of the City of Batavia* [Batavia, N.Y.: Hodgins Printing Co., 1993] p. 255)

24: Sex/sexual services/sexual entertainment

One feature of this decade, at the national level, was the occurrence of the so-called “Sexual Revolution.” Many observers have attributed this cultural change, in part, to the invention of the oral contraceptive which greatly diminished the risk of unwanted pregnancy. The greatest shift in behavior appears to have been a dramatic increase in premarital intercourse among unmarried females. Although the author does not have data to support the supposition, there is no reason to believe that changes that were occurring nationally were not also taking place in Batavia. One consequence of the “Revolution” appears to have been the virtual disappearance of houses of prostitution in Batavia. Males who might once have had to seek sexual experience via a prostitute now had access to willing female peers. (These observations are based on the author’s 30-year experience as an instructor in human sexuality classes at Genesee Community College.)

25: Urban Renewal

In the middle of the 20th century, there was a growing concern about the health and future of America’s major cities. Buildings, particularly in the inner cities, were falling into disrepair and were often abandoned outright. Urban blight was becoming more and more evident. In an effort to deal with the situation, Federal funds became available to renew these areas. The program under which they were administered came to be known as “Urban Renewal.” (Larry Barnes, *Batavia Revisited* [Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2011] p. 57)

Although not part of a big city, by this decade the downtown area of Batavia was also showing signs of urban blight. Many buildings were in poor shape. Development over the years had produced a jumble of structures along narrow streets and alleys running both north and south from Main Street. To a large extent, the area was physically unattractive. The new Federal program looked like a way out of this situation. (Larry Barnes, *Batavia Revisited* [Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2011] p. 57)

Discussion of Urban Renewal in Batavia began early in the 1960s. In 1961, the City’s Planning Board was urged to start considering an Urban Renewal program as part of a new master plan. It was pointed out that under the then current formula, two-thirds of the costs would be borne by the Federal government, one-sixth by the State, and one-sixth by the City. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 26 April 1961)

1961-1970

Contrary to popular perception, when the famed Richmond Hotel on the corner of Main and State streets was razed in 1962 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 January 1962), the demolition was not part of the Urban Renewal program. The latter was not yet in place.

In 1962 Batavia's City Council successfully applied for Urban Renewal funding. A year later, funding began. The first phase involved the area south of Main Street. A group of 20 local citizens was formed to act as an Advisory Committee working together with the Director of Urban Renewal. One of the issues it faced was whether to save any of the existing buildings in the affected areas. There were arguments for doing so. Some buildings, such as the former Bank of Batavia, were architecturally significant. Others, such as the Salvation Army Building, were nearly new. Ultimately it was decided to level virtually everything to make it easier to rebuild. (Larry Barnes, *Batavia Revisited* [Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2011] p. 57)

By 1968, the first phase of urban renewal was nearly done. That area was referred to as the Court Street Plaza. Among the former structures now absent were the Pan American Building and Trailways Diner on Court Street; the Trailways terminal at the corner of Court and Ellicott streets; the Franklin Mills, R. A. Haitz Co., Ebling Laundry, and Red's Taxi buildings on Ellicott Street; Panzone's Hotel (formerly the Ellicott House) on the corner of Jackson and Ellicott streets; Dipson's Family Theater on Jackson Street; Dean's Drugs, Scott and Beans, and the former Bank of Batavia building on Main Street; and Salway's Hardware on Exchange Place. In their place stood a variety of modern buildings, mainly one-story and of a modest size, a large Montgomery-Ward Department Store, and acres of parking.

In 1968, the only unfinished portion of the Court Street Plaza was a building at the southwest corner of Main and Jackson streets which didn't get a replacement structure until 1973. Meanwhile, plans went ahead for the next phase which was the area north of Main Street. (Larry Barnes, *Batavia Revisited* [Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, S.C., 2011] p. 71) Information about this phase will be found in the next chapter.