

The Twenty-second Decade

First Five Years

Overview

Since this book was being completed early in 2015, this final chapter covers only part of a decade. Furthermore, since census data is collected only once every 10 years, there was no current information on Batavia's population.

1: Infrastructure

There were no particularly significant infrastructure developments during this period.

2: Transportation

In February of 2014, *The Daily News* reported that the County would receive a \$1 million State grant to help cover the cost of a new airport terminal. A new terminal was estimated to cost \$5.5 million. The grant came with the stipulation that construction had to be undertaken within five years or the County would be required to return the \$1 million to the State. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 February 2014)

3: Housing

A study reported by *The Daily News* in December of 2014 gave an overall picture of the affordability of housing in the County including in Batavia. County-wide, for households living in rental housing, 43.4% paid more than 30% of their income for the housing. For households living in owned homes, only 22.1% paid more than 30%. County-wide, for households living in rental housing, 22.0% paid more than 50% of their income for the housing. For households living in owned homes, only 6.6% paid more than 50%. The study also noted vacancy rates. County-wide, the vacancy rate for homeowner property was 0.8%. For rental property, the vacancy rate was 4.5%. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 30 December 2014) Since the City and County were not analyzed separately, it was not possible to tell whether the above figures were also representative of the City alone. Perhaps they were.

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In 2014, the former Carr's warehouse fronting on Jackson Square was renovated and converted into four apartments and one office "flex space." The contractor for the work was Thompson Builds, Inc. of Byron. The work was funded in part by a New York Main Street grant. This project was part of an effort to both preserve and repurpose historic structures and bring residents back into the downtown area of the City. (Julie Pacatte of the Batavia Development Corporation, personal conversation with the author, 27 January 2015)

Late in 2014, the Genesee Community Warming Center Coalition was established by several County organizations. There were two warming sites: one for men at the Salvation Army facility on East Main Street and the other for women and children at the First Methodist Church on Lewiston Road. The sites were opened from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. whenever the wind-chill temperature dropped to 10 degrees or lower. The sites were meant for people with no permanent or safe home. They provided a light dinner, breakfast, and a cot with blankets. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 17 January 2015)

4: Energy sources

There were no new energy sources available to Batavians during this period.

5: Communication

By this period, the use of personal computers and mobile devices (such as iPhones and e-readers), all with access to the Internet, had become widespread. This led to development of Internet sites such as "Facebook" by which individuals communicated with one another in a public venue. In 2014, *The Daily News* reported on a Facebook group identified as "Batavia Neighborhood Watch (BNW)," a group monitored by Bea McManis. BNW had begun in August 2013 as a protest group opposing the installation of on-street cameras intended to observe public activities. It later evolved to a site whose scope included all of the County and not just Batavia. Its focus also evolved, shifting to "positive talk" and "social engagement." As of late November in 2014, its membership numbered a little over 1,000. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 29 November 2014)

6: County and city boundaries

There were no changes during this period.

7: Government, governing structure

As described in the last chapter, consolidation of the City and the Town of Batavia was again being considered. A State grant had been received to pursue consolidation. Both the City and the Town appointed representatives to a task force to draw up a charter for a proposed consolidation. In April of 2012, the task force presented the first “official” glimpse of its work to date regarding the formation of “One Batavia.” The presentation was given in the City Council Board Room before members of the Town Board, City Council, and general public. Under the proposed charter, the existing Town and City governments were to be replaced by a city government consisting of a city manager, five at-large representatives, and four representatives of wards. A tiered property tax structure was to accommodate the differences in services provided to different sections of the new city. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 24 April 2012)

A month later, in May of 2012, *The Daily News* reported that the consolidation process had stalled. While the City Council voted to move ahead, the Town Board did not, stating that it needed more time to give “due diligence.” Further meetings of the consolidation task force, led by Chad Zambito of the Town, were suspended. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 May 2012). Had the Town given its support for moving ahead, the proposed charter would soon have gone to public vote. Approval would have been required by both Town and City residents. However, nothing further happened and, as of the writing of this book in early 2015, the proposed consolidation appeared to have been abandoned. Thus, history repeated itself.

8: Crime, crime control, law enforcement

During the author’s life time, there was a dramatic change in the roles played by women within our society. Work previously judged suitable only for men became open to women as well. For example, in January of 2013, Jamie Givens became Batavia’s first female patrol officer (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 January 2013).

The use of police officers on bicycles again began to be employed in 2013. In the Spring of 2013, City Council approved a bike patrol officer and equipment in the 2013-2014 City budget. Beginning in July, Kevin DeFelice became the bicycle patrol officer. He worked a 3-day, 2-night shift. DeFelice rode fully equipped with a bullet-proof vest, firearm and extra ammunition, baton, portable radio, taser, and bag for extra items. The advantage of a bike patrol officer was said to be greater interaction with the public and a superior ability to spot illegal activity. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 August 2013)

In August of 2014, the Police Department announced that a policy of “neighborhood policing” was beginning. City residents were told that they should expect to see police officers walking the streets and sidewalks as well as riding bicycles. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 7 August 2014)

The Police Department moved from School Street to 10 West Main in 1964. Over the years, there was increasing dissatisfaction with the West Main facility and eventually a consulting firm, Geddis Architects, was employed by City Council to develop proposals both for renovations to the existing location and for possible relocation. In late 2014, City Council appointed a Police Facility Task Force to review the resulting proposals, develop a critical appraisal of the alternatives, review the cost estimates and possible funding sources, and make a recommendation to City Council by July 1, 2015. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 25 November 2014)

9: Retail establishments/other commercial enterprises

In 2012, the former school, later school administration building, on Washington Avenue was sold by the Batavia School District in an effort to reduce costs. The building was purchased by Reed Eye Associates, a business providing many types of eye care. When the building was renovated for its new use, an effort was made to return the interior to an appearance similar to how it appeared in the 1900s. Walls were moved and ceilings raised. To meet accessibility requirements, an elevator was added at the rear of the structure. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 July 2014)

10: Factories/industries

In 2009, City Council had applied for a Restore New York grant to rebuild former Harvester Company property at the end of Masse Place. The project was identified as the “Masse Gateway Batavia Development Project.” In 2010, a \$1.5 million grant was approved and work begun. The rebuilding was completed in late Summer of 2011 at a total cost of about \$1.9 million. One of the earliest tenants was the Merrill-Lynch financial services company. (Julie Pacatte of the Batavia Development Corporation, personal conversation with the author, 20 January 2015)

In June of 2014, the P. W. Minor shoe company revealed plans to close after nearly 150 years of operation. However, in August, Andrew Young and Peter Zelif announced that they would form a corporation to buy P. W. Minor’s assets and keep it open. (*The Daily News*, Batavia,

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N.Y., 27 December 2014) By February of 2015, production had doubled and the number of employees increased from 55 to 71 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 February 2015).

11: Banking/financial services

For many years, the HSBC bank on Main Street served great numbers of Batavians often including those who had banked at its predecessor, the Marine Midland Bank. In 2011, 195 New York State branches of HSBC were sold to First Niagara Bank. The Batavia Branch was one of them. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 2 August 2011) The First Niagara office at the corner of River and West Main Streets was then sold to Five Star Bank.

In 2014, Tompkins Insurance Agencies and the Bank of Castile purchased the building at 113-119 Main Street. The purchase was made to accommodate a growing banking and insurance staff. Retail stores and WBTA Radio remained in place on the first floor. ("Tompkins Insurance, Bank of Castile expanding in Batavia," posted 1 March 2014, *TheDailyNewsonline.com*, accessed 13 February 2015)

12: Education

In the previous chapter, it was noted that by 2006 the BOCES School on State Street was being called, "Batavia Career and Technical Education Center. By 2011, Genesee Valley BOCES itself was being called, "Genesee Valley Educational Partnership" (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 March 2011). Nonetheless, at the time this book was being written, often the term "BOCES" continued to be used in reference to both the school and the parent organization.

In September of 2012, voters approved sale of the Batavia School District Administration Building on Washington Avenue by a vote of 272 to 13. Previously, the School Board had approved sale of the building to Reed Batavia Properties LLC for \$500,000. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 September 2012) In November of the same year, administrative offices began operating out of the Batavia High School building on State Street. The offices were accessible through the State Street parking lot.

Also in 2012, Robert Morris Elementary School was closed. Grades were shifted around at Jackson and John Kennedy schools. Fifth grade classes were moved to the Middle School on Ross Street. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 September 2012)

Other Batavia School District changes occurred in 2013. City school officials decided to sell 12 acres owned by the District and located off the end of North Street Extension, but formally

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listed as 279 East Avenue. A sales agreement was made with Reinhart Enterprises in the amount of \$150,000. Reinhart Enterprises planned to use the property for the construction of housing. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 October 2013) Also in 2013, the School District began renting space in the former Robert Morris School. In October of that year, *The Daily News* reported two rooms had been rented out and three more tenants were seeking space. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 9 October 2013) A daycare operation was one of the tenants.

In 2014, voters approved the sale of the 12 acres off the end of North Street Extension by a vote of 466 to 102 (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 May 2014).

The area's parochial schools also were undergoing changes during this time. In November of 2011, plans were underway to merge Holy Family School in LeRoy with St. Joseph's in Batavia (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 16 November 2011). However, the next month, St. Joseph's opted out of any possible merger (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 21 December 2011). In August of 2013, *The Daily News* reported the closure of Holy Family School and swelling of enrollment at St. Joseph's School as a result (St. Joseph's School file, newspaper clipping, Genesee County History Department archives).

The Genesee Community College art gallery referred to in the previous chapter had its grand opening on April 15th of 2011. Totaling 1,700 sq. ft., the gallery was named in memory of Rosaline "Roz" Steiner, the late wife of Stuart Steiner, G.C.C. President. Roz Steiner had died unexpectedly in 2008. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 19 March 2011)

Further expansion on the main campus of Genesee Community College was approved by the County Legislature in January of 2015. Two new buildings were planned: a Student Success Center and a Community Wellness and Event Center. Construction was planned to start in the Spring of 2015. The Success Center was to be located in front of the main building entrance and was intended to provide one-stop services to students needing assistance with academic advisement and financial aid. The Wellness and Event Center was to be located near the athletic fields. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 15 January 2015)

13: Religion

In the previous chapter, St. Anthony's and Sacred Heart churches were reported to have consolidated as "Ascension Parish East and West." Mass continued to be held at both churches. However, a decision was later made to permanently close the doors of St. Anthony's after a final mass on June 13, 2013. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 12 January 2013)

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Early 2013 saw the founding of a new church in Batavia, Eagles Fountain Fellowship. Co-pastors Michelle and Jason Norton served the congregation. After meeting for about 18 months in the Y.M.C.A., the congregation moved to City Centre where it spent eight weeks converting space for church purposes. A main worship room, separate children's church room, and a crying room for infants and toddlers were created. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 December 2014)

14: Libraries/archives/museums

Readers of a certain age may remember when food and drink in a library were both totally unacceptable. However, policies in this regard had changed by this decade. Having noted that patrons probably ate and drank when using library materials at home, librarians began to ask why it would be any different to eat and drink while using the same materials in the library itself. Furthermore, offering refreshments in a library would enhance its attractiveness. (Richmond Memorial Library staff, conversations with the author, multiple occasions) With these thoughts in mind, the Bookworm Café was opened at the Richmond Memorial Library in October of 2011 (Leslie DeLooze, telephone call to the author, 12 February 2015).

In 2013, the Genesee County History Department moved from its City location at 3 West Main Street to County Building 2 on West Main Street Road (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 November 2013).

15: Cemeteries

There were no developments in this area.

16: Firefighting

There were no particularly significant developments in this area.

17: Healthcare

This period saw more changes at United Memorial Medical Center (UMMC). In early 2012, the hospital announced plans to open an Urgent Care Facility in the Spring. Planned for a location in the Jerome Center on Bank Street, the Facility was to provide access to medical assistance for patients who had non-life-threatening health problems and who wanted to avoid a long wait in an emergency room. Plans called for the Urgent Care Facility to be open from 11

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a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 6 January 2012) The next year, 2013, a \$2 million project involved major renovations to the post-partum maternity unit was completed (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 29 May 2013).

Genesee Memorial Hospital Group (GMHG) was an entity made up of local citizens who, at annual meetings, chose the membership of the UMMC Board of Directors. The Group had been in existence for many decades and, in effect, provided public control, first over Genesee Memorial Hospital, and, later over UMMC. In May of 2013, GMHG voted itself out of existence, thereby leaving a hospital Board of Directors that was self-perpetuating. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 18 May 2013) In the author's view, this step may have been encouraged by hospital leadership in order to insure that the following development, listed below, would occur without local resistance.

Early in 2014, United Memorial Medical Center announced that it intended to become a part of the Rochester General Health System (RGHS), a five-hospital regional and integrated health care network. The hospital already had long-standing partnership ties with Rochester General hospitals involving pathology, urology, general surgery, and gastrointestinal treatment. The hospital's outpatient Cancer and Infusion Center had been opened in association with Rochester General's Lipson Cancer Center. Under the merger with RGHS, UMMC was to retain its local board and name. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 February 28 2014)

On January 1, 2015, UMMC officially joined Rochester Regional Health System, a newly formed health system that had combined Rochester General and Unity Health systems in July of 2014. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 8 January 2015)

On February 10, 2015, the hospital announced plans to enhance its cancer treatment center with a \$6.5 million expansion. The center was planned to provide a continuum of care at one location, including diagnosis, treatment and surgery. Plans called for the center to also offer both chemotherapy and radiation services. Construction was planned to begin in the Spring of 2015 and to be completed in 2016. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 10 February 2015)

Late in 2013, Homecare and Hospice was reported to be moving its offices from 550 East Main Street to 29 Liberty Street (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 3 October 2013). The organization provided services to clients in their own homes.

Two months later, Crossroads House, a hospice facility at 11 Liberty Street, announced plans to add a room, a handicapped bathroom, and other improvements to its building where terminally-ill clients were provided housing on site. A donation of \$15,000 had been received

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from the Rotary Club toward the cost of these additions. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 5 December 2013) Note that Homecare and Hospice was a separate organization from Crossroads House.

In mid-May of 2013, an urgent care facility was opened in City Centre. Operated by Insource Healthcare Solutions, it promised to see patients within 15 minutes of arrival. The facility was to be open seven days a week, 365 days a year. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 1 April 2013)

Also in 2013, the Center for HOPE was dedicated at the Veterans Administration Medical Center. A \$15 million, 10,000 sq. ft. facility, it was built to serve about 100 women annually. It was designed to be a place for military women to recover from traumas associated with experiences ranging from combat to sexual assault. One of eight such facilities nationwide, Batavia's center provided 12 single-bedroom units, each with private bathrooms. HOPE stood for "Healing Opportunities for Peace and Empowerment." (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 14 December 2013)

For close to 40 years, Regional Action Phone (RAP) had provided services to area residents needing crisis care. In 2014, a new crisis hotline became operational: "The Care and Crisis Helpline of the Y.W.C.A." Funding was provided by the County Legislature. The Genesee County Mental Health Department awarded the contract. The services provided by the Helpline replaced crisis services previously provided by RAP. The latter, after being taken over by a Buffalo-based operation, had become very diversified in its scope and was no longer serving just its original function. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 December 2014)

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

After experiencing years of financial losses, in August of 2014 the County Legislature began soliciting buyers for the Genesee County Nursing Home. The Home, consisting of a 160-bed skilled nursing facility and an 80-bed domiciliary, was earlier designated as "surplus property," a move required by State law in order for the property to be put up for sale. The Home, located on 7.2 acres, was assessed at \$10,940,000. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 22 August 2014)

19: Disasters

Fortunately, the area was free of disasters during this time.

20: Entertainment and recreation

The most significant entertainment event within this time period involved the start of activities to celebrate the City's Centennial. New Year's Eve, December 31, 2014, entertainment planned by a centennial committee took place outdoors on a temporary stage north of the Fire Department, indoors at the skating rink, in the basement of St. Mary's Church, and within City Hall. The outdoor entertainment featured vocal and instrumental performers. Activities in the skating rink and basement of St. Mary's were directed primarily at children and families. Fireworks were launched at 10 p.m. Within City Hall, the \$50/person evening included musical entertainment, dancing, and food. At midnight, City Hall celebrants toasted the New Year with champagne.

21: War, impact of war

While, during this time period, the United States withdrew most of its forces from Iraq and began to do so in Afghanistan, fighting broke out in Syria between rebels and government forces. Then a new extremist movement, calling itself "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) began attacks in both Iraq and Syria, threatening to draw U.S. forces back into fighting in the Middle East. So far, no Batavians had lost their lives in the Middle East conflicts at the time this book was being written.

The war memorial in the front of the former Genesee Memorial Hospital building was removed in the last decade when additions were made to the United Memorial Medical Center on North Street. A new war memorial in memory of the military men and women who had died in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam was dedicated on May 17, 2014. Located in a grassy area on the southeast corner of Bank Street and Washington Avenue, it listed the names of the 283 Americans who perished in those conflicts. (*The Daily News*, 19 May 2014)

22: Families, persons of note

William F. Brown, Jr., who died November 29, 2014 at the age of 91, was a leading figure in the community for many decades. A graduate of Batavia High School and Canisius College, he completed graduate studies at Fordham University. Later, Brown served with the Army during World War II. He also served as the head of many community organizations including the Rotary Club, Batavia Club, Notre Dame Sports Boosters, Genesee County Chapter of the

American Red Cross, Batavia Chamber of Commerce, Genesee Economic Development Corporation, and St. Jerome Hospital Board of Directors.

Brown worked as a news reporter for WBTA Radio from 1948 to 1954 and became owner of the station from 1968 to 1986. He began a long-term association with Batavia Downs in 1947, serving eventually as the head publicist. Over the years he wrote many books on local history ranging from a book on Redfield Parkway to one on the Downs to one on St. Jerome Hospital to several on the Mancuso family, just to name a few.

William F. Brown, Jr. was married to Elizabeth Farrell. They had four children.

(The above information was gathered from the Brown file in the family archives of the Genesee County History Department.)

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

In 2011, the City Council contracted with czb LLC, a neighborhood consulting firm that helped community leaders create vibrant neighborhoods and downtowns. Czb, after studying Batavia, concluded that the City's competitiveness was being undermined in part by negativism on the part of many residents. This observation led to the 2012 establishment of a group known as "Vibrant Batavia" and, later, a quarterly publication, "Vibrant Times." The group's main goal was to stimulate both greater pride in Batavia and an enhanced level of civic participation by the City's residents. City Council provided \$45,000 for the first year's operation and in 2013 Leanna DiRisio was hired as a community organizer. (Vibrant Batavia website, accessed on line, 11 February 2015; and Leanna DiRisio, e-mail to the author, 12 February 2015) Many events and activities, especially neighborhood gatherings, were subsequently held. As this book was being written, a request for additional funding for another year's operation was being made to City Council.

24: Sex/sexual services/sexual entertainment

There were no particularly significant developments during this time period. However, as had been the case for many years, there was on-going concern about the presence of registered sex offenders in the community, especially those who moved without notifying authorities about their new location. In early 2015, the Batavia Police Department announced a new initiative to ensure that residents listed on the New York State Sex Offender Registry

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were not violating laws. It was designed to do a better job of keeping tabs on Level 1 and 2 offenders, especially. As of February, there were a total of 78 registered sex offenders living in the City. (*The Daily News*, Batavia, N.Y., 20 February 2015)

25: Urban renewal

There were no urban renewal projects.