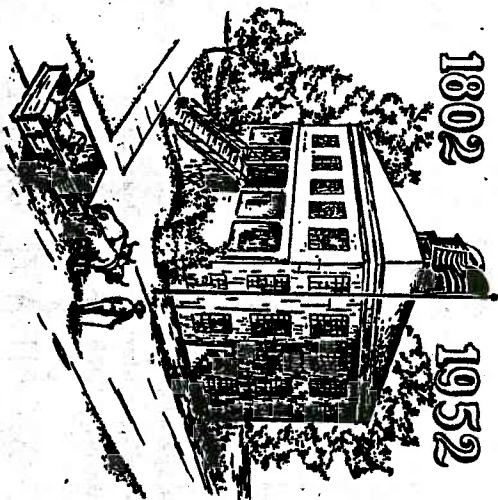


# The Sesquicentennial *of* Genesee County



**CHARLOTTE M. READ**  
Genesee County Historian  
The Holland Land Office  
Batavia, New York

This booklet has been written and compiled under authorization of the Sesquicentennial Committee to commemorate this event.

# PROGRAM

## SUNDAY, MAY 18

11:30 A.M. Pontifical Mass: Most Reverend Jos. E. Burke, D.D., Bishop of Buffalo, at Batavia Downs.  
Review of Catholic Church, Genesee County—Rev. Wm. C. Kirby.

1:00 P.M. The Sesquicentennial Special Excursion Train Leaves the Batavia New York Central Railroad Depot. Train will include air-conditioned passenger cars, baggage car, observation platform, etc.

A twelve-piece Band, Newsmen, Photographers and Radio Broadcasters will accompany train.  
Stops planned for Le Roy, Churchville, Oakfield and Akron.

6:30 P.M. Train arrives home at Batavia.

8:00 P.M. Civic Meeting — Religious Observance — Grandstand at Batavia Downs.

Invocation: The Rt. Rev. Lauriston L. Scifie, D.D., S.T.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Western New York.

The Lord's Prayer by Malotte: Richard H. Knickerbocker

Review of Church in Genesee County:

The Protestant — Rev. W. Wylie Young

The Jewish — Rabbi Harry Brevis

Guest Speaker: Rev. Bernard Clausen, D.D., of Willoughby, Ohio

Special Organ Music: Mrs. Dean Finch

Benediction: Rabbi Chaim H. Kramer

## MONDAY, MAY 19

### GOVERNMENT NIGHT

7:30 P.M. Lighting of Birthday Cake — Batavia Downs

7:45 P.M. Grandstand Parade of Government Officials

8:15 P.M. Coronation of Sesquicentennial Queen

8:30 P.M. Pageant by Batavia Players

## TUESDAY, MAY 20

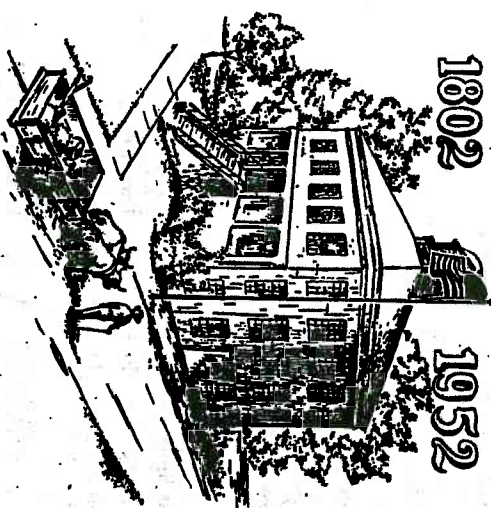
### SCHOOL NIGHT

7:30 P.M. Parade of School Bands — West Main Street — ending at Batavia Downs Grandstand

8:30 P.M. Pageant by Batavia Players

[2]

# The Sesquicentennial of Genesee County



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# PROGRAM

## MAY 18-24

### SUNDAY, MAY 18

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

11:30 A.M. Pontifical Mass: Most Reverend Jos. E. Burke, D.D., Bishop of Buffalo, at Batavia Downs.

Review of Catholic Church, Genesee County—Rev. Wm. C. Kirby.

1:00 P.M.

The Sequicentennial Special Excursion Train Leaves the Batavia New York Central Railroad Depot. Train will include air-conditioned passenger cars, baggage car, observation platform, etc.

A twelve-piece Band, Newsmen, Photographers and Radio Broadcasters will accompany train.

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8:30 P.M.

Pageant by Batavia Players

[2]

8:00 P.M. Special Singing of Official Sequicentennial Song at Batavia Downs

8:30 P.M. Pageant—by Batavia Players

### THURSDAY, MAY 22

#### FIREMAN'S NIGHT

7:00 P.M. Mammoth Firemen's Parade at Batavia Downs

Prizes by Lions Club

8:30 P.M. Judging of Beards

Prizes by Optimist Club

9:00 P.M. Presentation of 1802 Queen

### FRIDAY, MAY 23

(OPEN — to be announced.)

### SATURDAY, MAY 24

2:00 P.M. Grand Parade of All Organizations

Drum Corps, Bands, Drill Teams, Historical Floats, Prizes Awarded.

Line of March: East Main Street to Batavia Downs and Around the Track.

7:30 P.M. Drum Corps Competition — Woodward Field in Batavia

☆ ☆

All Week: Homecoming . . . Registration at Holland Land Office

☆ ☆ . . .

Program Subject to Change

[3]

# Sesquicentennial Directors



Seated, left to right: Dr. Guy W. Patterson, Charles A. Sohns, Lucile Carr, Georgia Foote, Mrs. Thomas Foley, William H. Coon, Pearl Lewis, Everett R. Tomlinson.  
 Standing, left to right: Milford E. Olmsted, Everett J. Mullen, Albert McVean, Joseph G. Gahlin, Glenn W. Grinnell, John Secord, Harris Day Gardner.  
 Missing from picture: Dr. Alfred George and Buell J. Fuller.

## GENESEE COUNTY SESQUICENTENNIAL, INC.

Celebration: May 18 thru May 24, 1952

### Officers

CHARLES A. SOHNS, President  
 DR. GUY W. PATTERSON, Vice-President  
 EVERETT R. TOMLINSON, Treasurer  
 MRS. THOMAS FOLEY, Secretary  
 HARRIS DAY GARDNER, Attorney

[4]

# MAY 18-24

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 8:30 P.M. Pageant—by Batavia Players

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MRS. THOMAS FOLEY Secretary	

[4]



**Charles A. Sohns**  
*Chairman of the Sesquicentennial*

This picture is presented by the Sesquicentennial Committee in appreciation of the inspiring leadership given by Mr. Sohns during this one hundred and fifty year celebration.

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# Sesquicentennial Celebration Committees

## SOUVENIR BOOK:

Albert McVean, Chairman  
 Mrs. Jeanne Rindge, Editor  
 Mrs. Georgia Foote, Associate Editor  
 Mrs. Pearl Lewis, Associate Editor  
 William H. Coon, Associate Editor  
 Harry L. Tritelley, Layout Editor

## BOOK ADVERTISING:

Everett J. Mullen, Chairman  
 Genesee County Volunteer Firemen  
 Miss Charlotte Reed  
 Mrs. James Beach

## PAGEANT:

Dr. Alfred George, Chairman  
 Mrs. Lucile Carr  
 Mrs. Jeanne Rindge

## STORE WINDOWS & PROPERTIES:

Mrs. Pearl Lewis, Chairman  
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## EXCURSION TRAIN:

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 Harold Craig  
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## PARADE:

Elmer Adelman, Chairman  
 Joseph Galvin  
 Neil Burns

## COSTUMES

Mrs. Thomas Foley, Chairman  
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 Miss Alice Burxon  
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## SOUVENIR PROMOTION:

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## GROUPS:

Glenn W. Grinnell, Chairman  
 Dr. Guy W. Patterson  
 Irving Wheaton  
 William Malin  
 Boy Scouts of America

## TICKET PROMOTION:

Blaine Thomas, Reserve Seats  
 Dr. Guy W. Patterson,  
 General Admission  
 Glenn W. Grinnell

## DECORATIONS:

Everett Tomlinson, Chairman  
 R. F. Sterling  
 Joseph Galvin

**PUBLICITY:**  
 Mrs. Georgia Foote, Chairman  
 Paul Bostwick  
 James Gerrety

# Sesquicentennial Celebration Committees

## CONCESSIONS:

Rotary Clubs  
 Kiwanis Club  
 Lions Clubs  
 Optimist Club

## BEARDS:

Optimist Club  
 Joseph Davies

## GOVERNMENT NIGHT:

Buell Fuller, Chairman  
 Milford Olmsted  
 Robert E. Noonan

## SCHOOL NIGHT:

Edward Osborn, Chairman  
 Warren Dayton  
 J. L. M. Uphill  
 Rev. David Herlihy  
 Rotary Clubs

## SESQUICENTENNIAL BALL & QUEEN CONTEST:

Elmer Jarocke  
 Charles F. Miller  
 Kiwanis Club

## POLICE:

N. Y. State Troopers  
 Genesee County Sheriff's Dept.  
 Batavia City Police

## MUSIC:

Mrs. Gertrude Mann and  
 Frank Owen, Chairmen  
 Lyle Mark  
 Miss Ethel Ericson  
 Miss Jean Rudolph  
 Miss Mary Ann Donovan

## FIREMAN'S NIGHT:

Donald McKay, Chairman  
 Harold Craig  
 F. A. Wells  
 Lions Clubs

## CHURCH NIGHT:

Mrs. Thomas Foley, Chairman  
 Dr. Guy W. Patterson  
 Rev. Albert McClements  
 Rev. William Kirby  
 Rabbi Chaim Kramer

## HOMECOMING & REGISTRATION:

Daughters of the American  
 Revolution  
 Mrs. Pearl Lewis  
 Mrs. Thomas Foley

## BIRTHDAY CAKE:

Mrs. Mildred Bradbury, Chairman  
 Reed Finley  
 Theodore Bunko



# Acknowledgments

The Sesquicentennial Committee hopes you have as much pleasure reading this souvenir book as they have had in bringing it to you. If anything has been omitted that should have been in it, they beg your forgiveness.

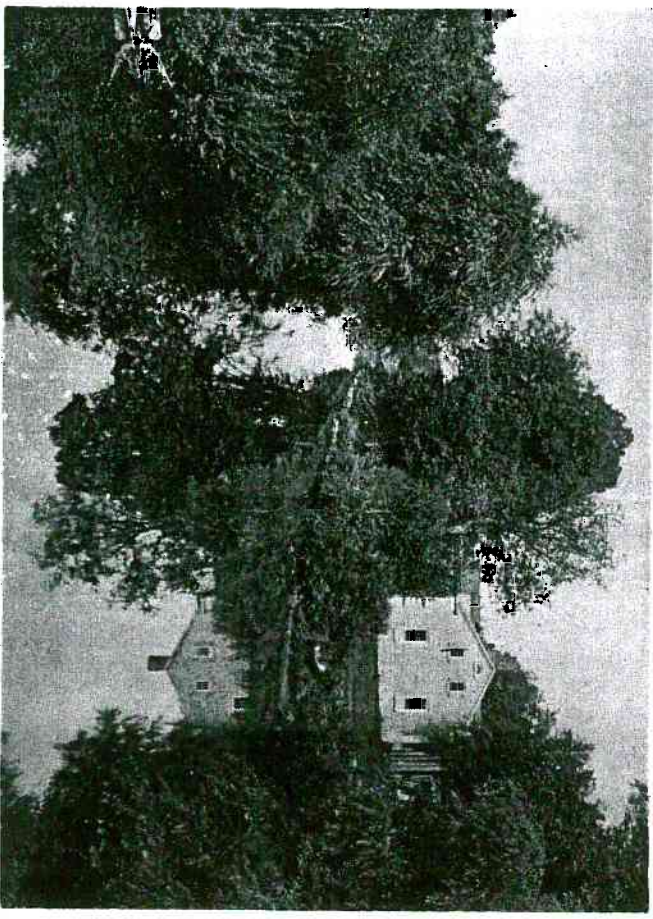
We wish to express our thanks to the advertisers. Without their financial support, this book would not have been possible. Thanks also go to those who worked on securing ads and subscriptions to the book.

Many individuals and groups contributed material for the book, others loaned pictures and the Committee wishes to thank them all. We hope you enjoyed it and will keep it for historical reference as the size was planned for easy handling.



# We Keep the Western Door

## The Genesee Story



TU-SHU-WAY—Place of the Basswood (Neuter Nation)  
DE-O-ON-GO-WA—Great Hearing Place (Seneca Nation)  
BEND OF THE TONAWANTA—BATAVIA (Holland)

WE ARE THE PAST FROM WHENCE WE  
CAME, THE FUTURE WHICH OUR  
STEPS SHALL TROD

# We Keep the Western Door

## Prologue

**W**HIS is the story of men and women who would not give up nor turn back. Of people willing to work and suffer for a dreamed-of future. Of people's faith in God, themselves, and the land beneath their feet. This is the story of Genesee pioneers.

In the years following the founding of this country in 1802, the pioneers hewed a way of life from wilderness. This was to become our way, the American way, the way of "Gen'-ish-a-at" which is Genesee.

Its attainment became a story of hardship, of self denial, of poverty, illness and loneliness unbearable. It is a story, also, of cheerful optimism. In those early years, the sounds of laughter beside the ringing axe were more persuasive than the cry of grief beside the new-made grave.

As always where people are concerned, it is a mixed story — of courage and cowardice, justice and injustice, Puritan stoicism and flagrant intemperance. But — winnowed by the winds of a century and a half — the grain of this story is good grain. Man's littleness is dwarfed beside his bignesses. The white man's greatest injustice — that to the red man — yet may be ameliorated.

Man is more than his own small unit in time and space. He is, also, the past from whence he came, the future which his steps shall trod. The early settler, pushing westward over the Genesee, was more than the total of his crude ox-cart, his meager possessions, and his strong, right arm. The Genesee settler was caught in the current of many forces which determined what he was, what he would become, and what, also, we are today.

Among these were three major influences which, fortunately for this lovely land, had much in common. They were the Puritan tradition, the Indian heritage, and the influence of the Dutch landowners of Western New York. At their confluence stood — and still stands — the settler of Genesee.

Several races and many nationalities came here; simple men and men of means; a few of aristocratic blood. "Land barons" were scarce, however, where the Dutch held sway. It is significant that among the earliest settlers was a Negro family on the Genesee, another at Buffalo Creek. Slave holders were unpopular here, and the "underground" up Lake Road in Le Roy was heavy trafficked.

The bond between the early settlers, as with the Iroquois before them, was shared — beliefs far more than shared blood. In this county, principles were more important than pedigrees. Here developed a classless society in which a man's mark was his own worth. It commanded respect, regardless of a man's station.

The Puritan tradition was in part responsible. Those fearless forefathers were driven by the desire to be themselves and to express themselves as they believed fit. Faith in themselves, their God and their future drove them westward in small boats.

On this continent, at the same time, the heritage of Hiawatha was reaching toward fulfillment. Here, again, the worth of the individual was uppermost. The Iroquois Confederacy became a marvelously simple, and efficient system for the protection and expression of human dignity. The influence of this democratic government upon our founding fathers was historically great.

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# We Keep the Western Door

According to tradition, Hiawatha came from Onondaga to preach peaceful union to the nations. Accompanied by Dekanawida, an older prophet, and Jikonsseh, the "Mother of Nations," he went from tribe to tribe, teaching and pleading.

His pleas bore fruit. Around a symbolic tree of peace assembled the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and the two divisions of the Senecas. The Confederacy was born. Its "Long House" stretched from the mouth of the Schoharie on the Mohawk, through the Finger Lakes to the Genesee, the eastern boundary of the Kah-Kwah, or Neuter Nation. The mighty Mohawks became Keepers of the Eastern Door; the Onondagas, Keepers of the Council Fire; the war-like Senecas, Keepers of the Western Door.

The structure of the Confederacy was based on ideals. The greatest of these were democracy and peace. Here lay the moral strength of the Iroquois. Although obedience to law was a sacred obligation, there was a minimum of restraints in the law itself. Public opinion was the great arbiter. Social pressures, through ostracism or persecution, enforced the edicts. There were no castes or social exclusiveness. Chiefs were elected and, if they did not lead wisely, they were deposed.

Among the nations, all acts were ratified by unanimous consent. The Confederacy was governed by an elected council of fifty wise men, with a non-ruling moderator for each session. The common good was their motivating power.

Our early settlers were fired with these same democratic principles for which they so recently had fought, and which, so recently had been incorporated in their own constitutional form. The early Geneseeans also settled among the

remnants of the once-powerful Confederacy.

Here they found, also, the influence of the Dutch landowners. It was dispensed through the majestic figure of Joseph Elllicott. The hardy Hollanders who purchased this land had picked their agent well. Elllicott, though not Dutch, was the personification of Dutch character. He, in turn, encouraged settlement by men and women with the same qualities. Among these were thrift, frugality, willingness to work, and love of soil. Elllicott saw this land, not as it was, but as it would become. He and his settlers had boundless faith in the dreamed-of future. It is that future which has become, for us, the present.

To this county, therefore, came men and women dedicated to toil, to freedom, and to the dignity of human worth. Government, they believed, should be based upon positive ideals far more than upon coercive laws. Freedom was not license, they believed, but rather a God-given responsibility. To insure it demanded education and the acceptance of civic duty. With quiet dignity, they met the challenge.

These were the early settlers of Genesee. This is their story. It is the story of men and women who lived in harmony, through the years, with the last of the Iroquois whose home is among us. Because of them, Seneca and early settler — their wisdom, their work, their worth — **WE KEEP THE WESTERN DOOR.**



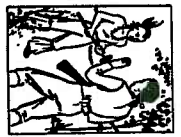
The Genesee

[11]



# NEH KO, GAH-GIS-DAH-YEN-DUK

## "Other Council Fires Were Here Before Ours"

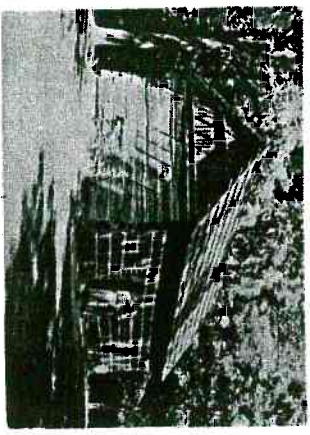


When General Sullivan's hard-bitten soldiers reached the River Genesee in pursuit of the Iroquois, they paused in awe, stretching westward to the unseen inland sea was GEN-NISH-A-AU, "a clear and shining land." Land of the mighty Seneca, Keeper of the Western Door! It was late summer, 1779.

The soldiers saw vast sunlit clearings, waving with lush grasses ten feet tall. These spread upward from the river bottom. Beside neat Indian villages up and down the Genesee, they found geometric-patterned plots of corn, interplanted with squash and beans. Orchards hung heavy with apples, pears and plums. Corn cobs bulged with thousands of bushels of last year's grain. Beyond the clearings rose verdant forests of sugar maple, oak, beech and elm. Farmers from the stark and rock-bound Eastern farms were unbelieving. "An earthly paradise," "A veritable Eden," they whispered—and set about their errand of destruction.

From these peaceful-seeming villages, under orders of their British allies, had Iroquois into the unprotected American settlements. Washington had sent Sullivan to put an end to it. The order was severe: "The Expedition you are appointed to command is to be directed against the hostile tribes of the Six Nations of Indians, with their associates and adherents. The immediate object is their total destruction and devastation and the capture of as many persons of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and prevent their planting more."

Sullivan's men were thorough. The Westernmost skirmishes of the Revolu-



Seneca Council House, last stronghold of the once-mighty Seneca. Last Iroquois Council Fire held here, October 1, 1872. (Now at Letchworth Park.)

tion were fought upon the banks of the Genesee. Its vast granary was put to the torch. The winter of 1779 was bitter with hunger for the homeless and scattered Senecas. The once-mighty Confederacy wilted from lack of sustenance.

The Sullivan men carried home tales of this fabulous land and fertile soil. They dreamed dreams of returning, not to destroy, but to settle here and prosper.

This expedition was the last of a long series of invasions of this Western Door. The mightiest was not made by man. Bona fide, the great glaciers pushed southward, rolling before them mineral-laden rocks and soil from the far Northlands. Stopping astride this uninhabited land, the glacier melted. As it receded, it dropped its fertile burden in long ridges and what have become, now, marshmallow hills. Its waters, filling the gouged-out depressions, became the slim Fingers and the grandiose Great Lakes. A few waterways, such as the Genesee, survived their pre-glacial birth.

When the rocks had crumbled into rich top-soil, mighty forests walked across the land. Birds, beasts and reptiles followed in their wake. Then came

[12]

# Neh Ko, Gah-Gis-Dah-Yen-Duk

## "Other Council Fires Were Here Before Ours"

the time-dimmed Indian invasions — the Eskimos, the Mound Builders and Algonkians. The forts of some of these, such as those at Fort Hill, still are recognizable.

The Kah-kwahs, or Neuter Nation immediately preceded the Senecas in this area. Their village Tu-Shu-Way, "Place of the Linden," was at the Bend of the Tonawanda on the site of the present Land Office and of the Indian Spring, now preserved on the premises of the Emmanuel Baptist Church, across the street. According to one tradition, a great sporting contest between the Neuters and the Senecas at this spot led to a misunderstanding which resulted in defeat and absorption of the Neuters by the Seneca Nation.

The Neuters had refused to join the Iroquois Confederacy which had come into being, it is thought, around 1450. The Iroquoian tribes had drifted eastward many centuries earlier from the valley of the Columbia. About 1712, the Tuscaroras became the Sixth Nation of the Confederacy, after their expulsion from North Carolina. The Senecas gave them land near Lewiston which had belonged to the Neuters.

The formidable power of the mighty Confederacy had kept the Western Door free from white settlement until that power was crushed by the Revolution. It was British policy, also, to steer clear of this land. Hunters and trappers traversed it rarely, or more frequently, skirted it by water—Lake Ontario, the Niagara River and Lake Erie. Ports along these waterways had changed hands earlier, many times, between French and English who made no attempt to penetrate the interior.

Except for the occasional hardy traveler, hunter or missionary, therefore, the Sullivan men were the first white

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people to gaze upon this "earthly paradise." The entering of this Eden by the new Keepers of the Western Door, and the unlocking of its fertile wealth, was not easy. It was made possible by three major events: The first, they had accomplished themselves; they had broken the back of the Iroquois Confederacy. The second was the purchase by Robert Morris, financial wizard of the Revolution, of this area and the extinguishing of Indian title. The third was the purchase of these lands by the Dutch financiers and their systematic opening for sale and settlement.

Both Massachusetts and New York claimed this territory through conflicting royal grants. After the Revolution, Massachusetts ceded to New York the jurisdiction of the territory, keeping the pre-emption right, or fee of the land, subject to the right of occupancy of the Indians. In 1791, Robert Morris purchased an almost four million acre "farm" west of the Genesee from Massachusetts for \$333,333.33.

Actually, however, this land still belonged to the Indians. By devious means, Thomas Morris, son of Robert, persuaded the Seneca chiefs to relinquish the land for a sum of \$100,000. Fifteen hundred Senecas, led by Red Jacket, Cornplanter, Little Billy and other famous chiefs, met with Morris at Big Tree (Genesee) to consummate this treaty. It took place in September, 1797. As in other great land deals, bribery and trickery were resorted to in order to obtain this land. A few small reservations were set aside for the Senecas.

Of these, the most important, at Buffalo Creek, later was wrested from the Senecas in one of the ugliest episodes of trickery in our history. The white settlers, themselves, protested these attempts to force the Indian entirely from our land. The Senecas fought loyally on the American side in the War of 1812, and had lived amicably side by side with the white settler. Our own Tonawanda Reservation, also taken from the Indians, was restored to them largely through the efforts of local citizens.

# Neh Ko, Gah-Gis-Dah-Yen-Duk

*"Other Council Fires Were Here Before Ours"*

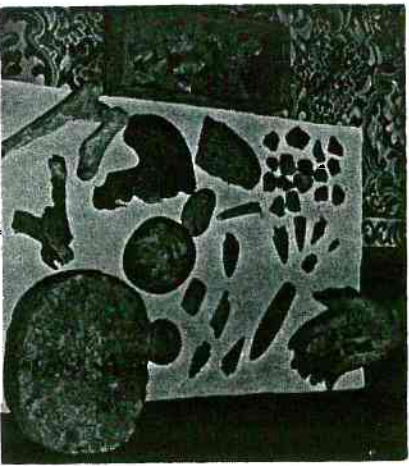
Robert Morris was a great and loyal American without whose financial genius the Revolution would have collapsed through want of money and materials. His dealing with the Indians, however, was standard procedure at that time and, apparently, considered fair because the Indians were paid (however small the sum) for the land they did not wish to relinquish.

The Morris tracts were purchased in 1793 by agents of Dutch financiers. The largest group was called the Holland

Land Company, and its holdings comprised most of the land west of the Genesee. Smaller areas, such as the Triangular Tract, were sold to other purchasers.

Joseph Ellicott was at first surveyor and then agent for the Holland Company. When he started his survey, there wasn't a white settlement between the trading post at Buffalo Creek and John Ganson's tavern at what is now Le Roy. Captain Ganson, a Sullivan man, was one of the first to return. He settled on the Genesee (Avon), in 1790, removing to Le Roy in 1798. He bought the small log dwelling which Charles Wilbur had built there in 1797.

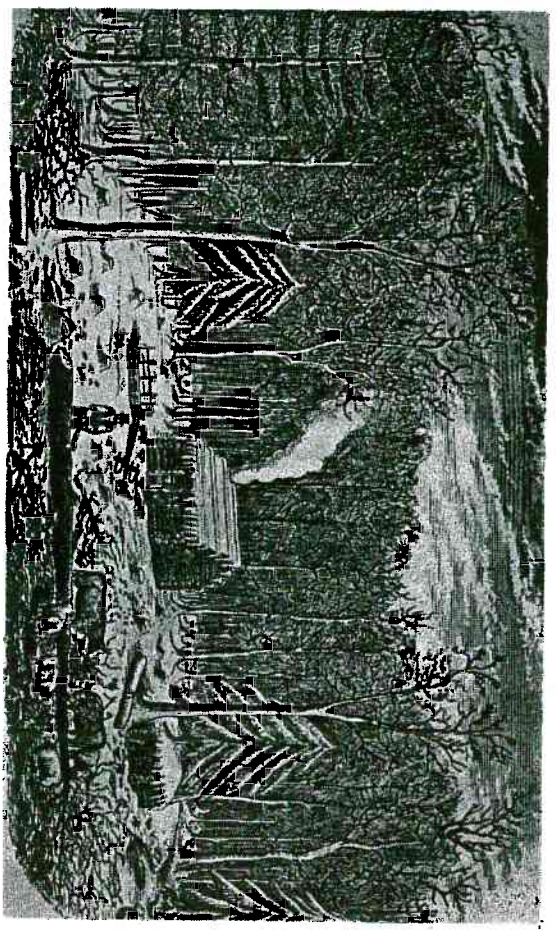
A new council fire now burned in Genesee. From then on came the new Keepers of the Western Door.



Indian Relics found in Genesee County

"So, History's dream is told; and, fading, fleet  
To tell us, when the winter-fires are lit,  
That other fires were here, ere ours had shone,  
That where we stand, and, watching, see the West,  
That here have throbbed, with all the bliss of ours,  
Hearts that have mounded upward into flowers."

—From "Last of the Kah-Kwahs," by David Gray  
[14]



"Through the deep wilderness, where scarce the sun  
Can cast his darts, along the winding path  
The Pioneer is treading. In his grasp  
Is his keen axe, that wondrous instrument,  
That like the talisman, transforms  
Deserts to fields and cities. He has left  
The home in which his early years were past,  
And, led by hope, and full of restless strength,  
Has plunged within the forest, there to plant  
His destiny. Beside some rapid stream  
He rears his log-built cabin. When the chains  
Of winter fetter Nature, and no sound  
Disturbs the echoes of the dreary woods,  
Save when some stem cracks sharply with the frost;  
Then merrily rings his axe, and tree on tree  
Crashes to earth; and when the long keen night  
Mantles the wilderness in solemn gloom,  
He sits beside his ruddy hearth, and hears  
The fierce wolf snarling at the cabin door,  
Or through the low casement sees his eye  
Gleam like a burning coal."

—Alfred B. Street (before 1849)