

# A County Is Born



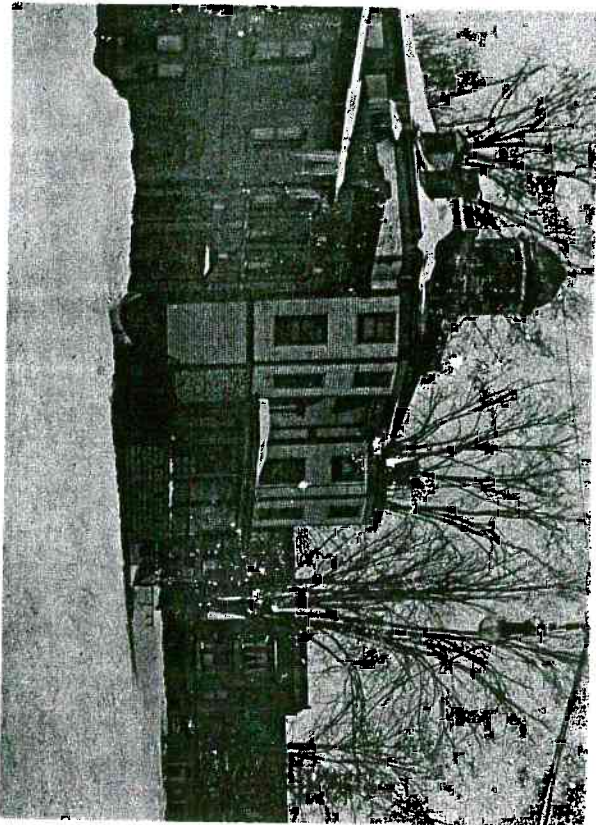
To the east, the Phelps and Gorham tract, opened for settlement more than a decade earlier, was rapidly filling up. By 1799 settlers had pushed west of the Genesee to the very gates of Ganson's. Two years later Joseph Ellicott opened his land office in Batavia. He could not fail to note the eagerness with which the inhabitants of both Northampton township and Ontario County levied taxes on his company's huge holdings for use in their own areas, with no advantage to his own.

He therefore resolved to press for establishment of a new county to avoid paying tribute to Ontario, and for a new township, Batavia, embracing the whole of the Holland Company's land, to eliminate the same difficulty with Northampton whose settled areas nestled close to the Genesee River.

To assure the plan he agreed to build at company expense a Court House at Batavia combining facilities for a jail as well as hotel accommodations for transients. However, it was soon discovered that respectable travelers had a pronounced aversion to being housed in the same building with prisoners and this feature was discontinued.

The new County of Genesee embraced the whole of New York State west of that river and a considerable area east of it, as well, beginning at a point on the river between Genesee and Mt. Morris and running due south to the Pennsylvania line. Along this eastern border was a strip 12 or more miles wide known as the Morris Reserve which was divided into sizable parcels and sold to speculators.

Like the Holland Company these groups had their land offices and agents for retailing to settlers, but Ellicott from



Ellicott Hall, first Court House of the County. Court Street view, 1802-1918.

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the vastness of his empire, set the pattern for all.

His Quaker upbringing of probity and honor, industry and thoroughness eminently fitted him for the task. From start to finish his zeal was phenomenal, his interest unflagging.

To him fell the burden of making important decisions, of coordinating operations throughout the immense area, of striving to keep all sectors active, and of promoting improvements such as roads and mills to render settlement of the more remote areas attractive.

His promotion from head surveyor to land agent was based on merit alone. He had endured the privations of a surveyor's gang. He had experienced the rigors of helping with his own hands to erect the sawmill at Batavia to promote the comfort of the new settlers. Largely from necessity he had discarded the Quaker manner of dress for the buck-

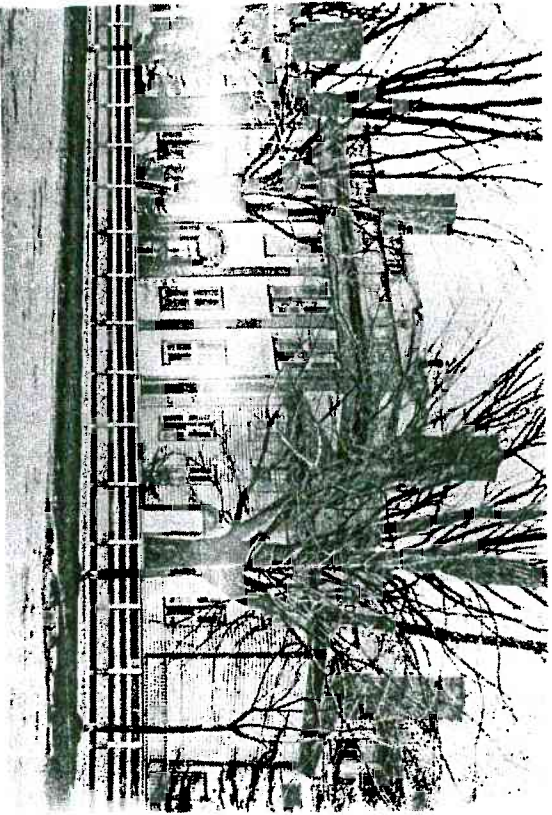
skin of the frontiersman, and yet when occasion demanded, he was equally at home in the urbanity of polished society garbed in the height of fashion, complete with ruffled sleeves and stock. He was a friendly, affable man who inspired confidence and trust. His qualities of leadership would have assured his success in almost any field of endeavor.

Ironically, the speed with which Ellicott induced settlement in remote places, worked in the same ratio toward the disintegration of Old Genesee County. The settlers demanded relief from the necessity of traveling such great distances to attend to legal matters. New counties were established and ere she was forty, Genesee found herself a somewhat forlorn, yet proud, little, old lady—shriveling and shrunken with children all about her.

Establishing new town and county organizations is an exciting study. All was new, all was yet to be done and there was not too much with which to do. Yet from this seeming paradox of pygmy pitted against giant, law and order and



The Holland Land Office. This was the third structure and was erected in 1815.



Joseph Ellicott's dwelling, 1818-1838. It stood where Dellinger Ave. enters Main St., Batavia.

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rapidly sustained progress smoothly evolved.

Due to the Puritan concept of religion, government and industry, it was not difficult to recruit suitable personnel for the civil functions. Even in humble station on the frontier, were to be found men of substance, men determined to live out their lives here, and willing to contribute to the fullest of their talents for the common good. What nobler heritage could our forebears have left us than this peerless example of selfless conduct?

During Ellicott's stay at Ransom's Tavern, Clarence, he resolved to establish his permanent office on the site of Batavia. By December, 1801, a two story log land office was completed directly in front of the west wing of the commodious dwelling he later built for his home.

The next year he built the second land office which was to become the east wing of his future dwelling. In 1815 the

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sary to fell the trees to a width of four rods from the Pennsylvania border to Lake Ontario so that an unobstructed view of the sky could be obtained through rugged terrain. From this and other base lines, surveys were carried westward.

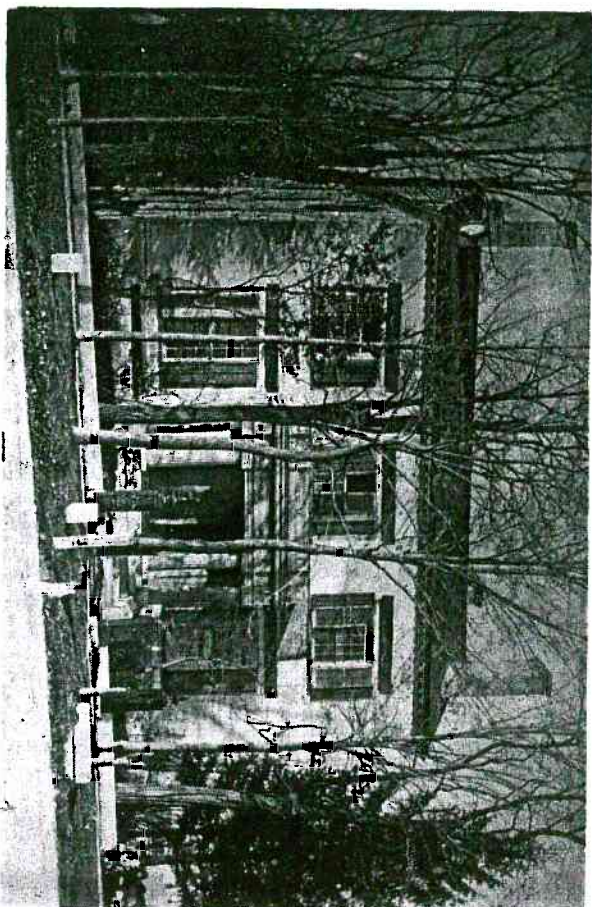
In its dealings with the settlers the Holland Company was enlightened, sympathetic and generous, often remitting payments or interest when real hardship would have resulted. But markets were scarce and times were hard until the completion of the Erie Canal. Hence there was considerable discontent and many a settler, unable to make ends meet, was

forced to start anew in states further west.

Location has always been to the advantage of the county, lying as it does astride the great arteries of commerce,—highway, rail and air.

In a strictly local sense the county is ideally planned with roads radiating in every direction from the county seat.

The ominous feature is the growing complexity of government. This may prove to be our undoing and destroy the long and enviable record of honest, economical self-government we have always enjoyed. Heretofore our officials have been able to comprehend the problems and to solve them wisely. In the years ahead the citizenry will do well to maintain a vigilant scrutiny themselves.



Le Roy House — Land Office of Triangle Tract

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## Present Genesee County Towns

By dates of formation, original Seneca Indian names, and English interpretations thereof, town former names, meaning and derivation of modern town names, and euphonious names of hamlets in the several towns, are as follows:

Town Name, Meaning; Derivation, and Date of Formation	Former Name; Derivation	Seneca Name and Meaning	Hamlets
ALABAMA (Here We Rest) Named for the State April 17, 1826	Gerrysville, in honor of the Fifth Vice-Pres. of the United States, Elbridge Gerry.	Ga-swa-dak (By the Cedar Swamp)	Basom, Center, Indiantown, Oak Orchard, Sour Spring, Smithville, Tonawanda Falls, Village.
ALEXANDER (Alexander Rea) June 8, 1812		Da-o-se-ho-go (The Place without a Name)	Brookville, East Alexander, Monterey, Ray.
BATAVIA (Better Land) In honor of the Republic of Batavia (now Holland) March 30, 1902	Big Bend Bend of the Ton-e-wan-ta	Dj-o-a-gah (Raccoon) Ga-ne-un-dah-sa-is-ka (Mosquito) De-o-on-go-wa (Great Hearing Place)	Bushville, Crofts, Daws, Dunhams, East Pembroke, West Batavia, Upton.
BERGEN (Bergen, Norway) June 6, 1812		Check-a-nan-go (Black Creek)	Bergen Corners, East Bergen, North Bergen, South Bergen, Stone Church, Wardville (Cork).
BETHANY (Bethany, Judea) June 8, 1812		Te-car-ese-ta-ne-ont (Place of a Sign Post)	Center, Bennetts (Canada), East Bethany, Linden, West Bethany, West Bethany Mills.
BYRON (Lord George Noel Gordon Byron) April 4, 1820		Jo-go-o-geh (Place of Hearing)	Brusselville, Pumpkin Hill.
<hr/>			
DARIEN (Strait of Darien, Columbia, Central America) February 10, 1832		O-so-ont-geh (The Place of Turkeys)	Kings Corners, City.
ELBA (Island of exile of Napoleon) March 14, 1820	Pine Hill Pinery	Te-ca-so-a-a (Pine Lying Up)	East Elba (Mills Corners), Daws Corners, Langtons Corners, Pine Hill, Transit.
LE ROY (In honor of Jacob and Herman Le Roy) June 8, 1812	Gansons	Te-car-no-wun-na-da-net-o (Many Rapids)	Bellona, Fort Hill.
OAKFIELD (Oak Timber Openings) (In honor of Colonel Alfred Cary) April 11, 1842	Cary Caryville	Te-car-da-dak (Place of Many Trenches)	Mechanicville.
PAVILION (Pavilion Hotel, Saratoga Springs)		Chi-nose-heh-geh (On the Side of the Valley)	So. Le Roy (Pavilion Center), Union Corners.
PEMBROKE (Pembroke in Wales) June 8, 1812		O-a-geh (On the Road)	Mogadore (North Pembroke), Longs Corners, Prospect Hill, Richville, Tonawanda Falls, Village.
STAFFORD (Stafford, England) March 24, 1820	Walthers	Yo-go-o-geh	Morganville, Roanoke (Orangeburg)), Transit Store

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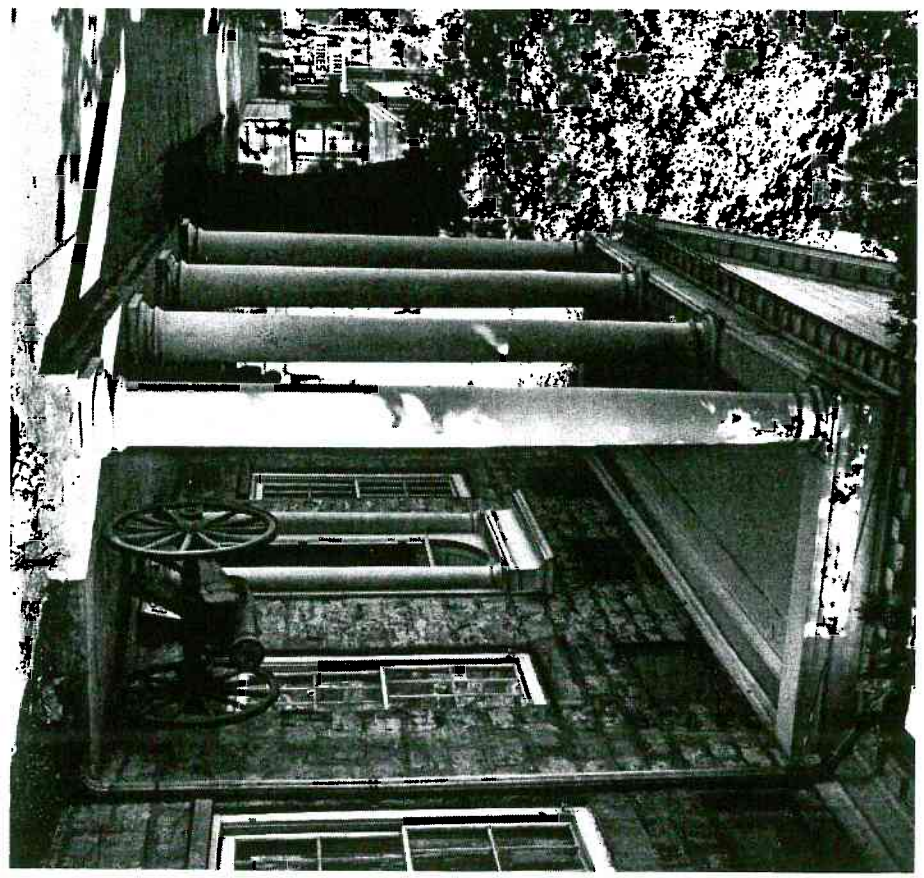
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## They did a land office business

in the old Holland Land Company office building that still stands on West Main Street in Batavia . . . and maybe that's where the expression came from. Pioneers set out from what is now Genesee County to settle a 3,300,000 acre area to the West! Today Genesee County boasts of its pleasant homes and busy farms and industries. Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation is proud to have had a part in the development of this prosperous area.

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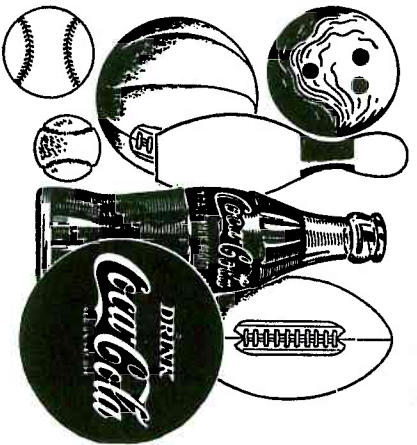


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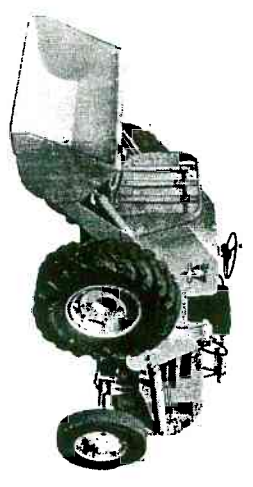
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## THE DAILY NEWS

having served the people of Genesee County for nearly half of our County's 150 years, takes special pleasure in saluting its sesquicentennial celebration.

It is our sincere hope that the occasion of reaching this notable milestone in our County's history will be an inspiration for us to go forward into the future with the patriotic and courageous spirit of those first pioneers who carved from the wilderness these pleasant lands that are now our rich heritage.

**THE DAILY NEWS**  
*Established 1878*  
**GRISWOLD & McWAIN, INC., Publishers**

### CONGRATULATIONS and BEST WISHES TO GENESEE COUNTY on its 150th ANNIVERSARY

● For almost 25 years we have been servicing Genesee County with quality building materials. We are proud of the fact that we have the largest and most diversified stocks between Buffalo and Rochester. It has been a pleasure to have had a part in the county's physical growth during this time.

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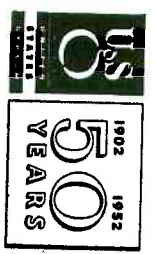
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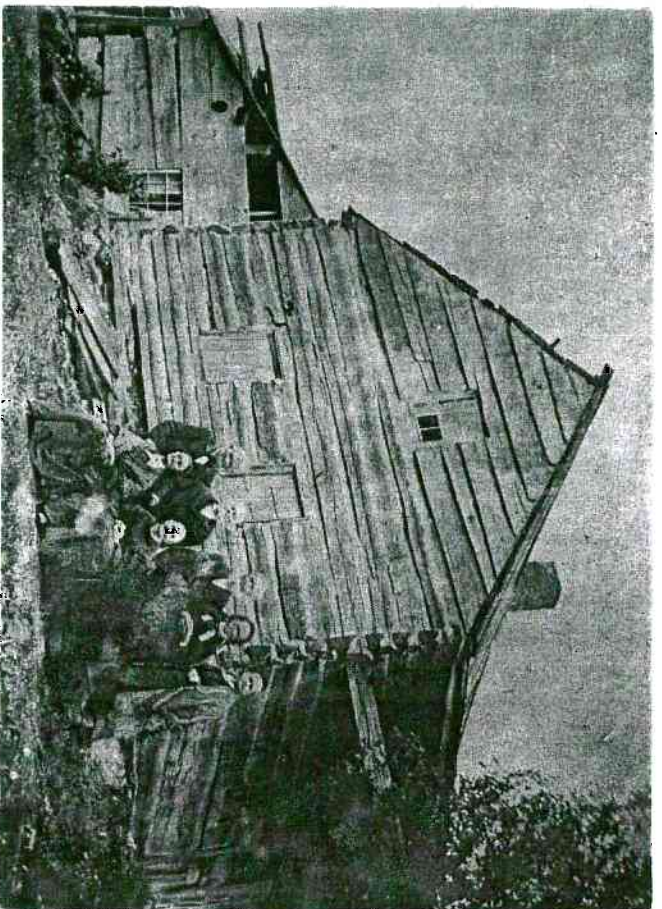
**GENESEE COUNTY**

**150 YEARS**

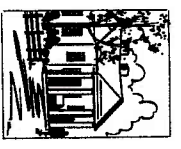


**UNITED STATES GYPSUM COMPANY**  
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## The White Tide Flows Over the Red



Original Pavilion settlers and original settlers' cabin, located half way up Burleigh Hill on south side of road. Standing, left to right, David Snow, John Noble, Alvin Whitney, Mrs. Neah Starr, Mrs. Alvin Whitney. Seated, Mrs. David Snow and Mrs. Peter Crossman.



For several years following the Revolutionary War, this western wilderness was practically uninhabited except by the Seneca Indians. About 1790 large tracts of land were purchased by great land speculators whose agents offered these lands for sale. Handbills were circulated throughout the east, setting forth the advantages of the region: namely rich deep soil, moderate climate and forests to supply building material. This plan, coupled with the stories told by the soldiers who had seen for themselves the productivity of the land, started a westward movement which grew rapidly. A desire on the part of many an Easterner to possess some of

this land led large numbers of them to try the venture.

And so they came! From the hillsides of Vermont, the thin soils of Massachusetts and Connecticut and even from Boston, disposing of their belongings often at a sacrifice, they started on the long, hard, dangerous trek to their land of promise, led by a vision of future wealth and prominence. They came,—men, women and children,—some on foot, others on horse back and many with oxcars, bearing their meager possessions, braving the dangers and privations that they had to face with steadfast determination. The years before the War of 1812 were the most difficult because these pioneer adventurers had to meet more hardships through lack of

(Continued on page 31)

*Batavia Typographical Union, No. 511, on its FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY, salutes the Genesee County Sesquicentennial on its one hundred and fifty years of progress . . . and to the following Charter Members, who back in 1902 organized BTU, we of No. 511, doff our hats:*

- 1902 • CHARTER MEMBERS • 1952**
- \*Charles E. New
  - \*Daniel F. Pfeifer
  - \*Albert L. Cooke, Jr.
  - \*Edward F. Fix
  - \*William H. Rial
  - \*Henry A. Clark
  - \*Frank R. Mullen
  - \*Elmer E. Evans
  - \*Alvin J. Fox
  - \*Charles J. Delbridge
  - \*Herbert J. Donovan
  - \*James D. Ager
  - \*Wilson C. Parker

\* Deceased

Established 1877



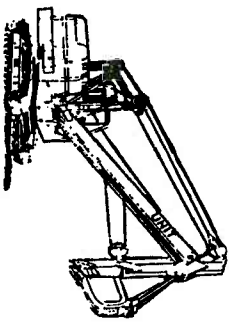
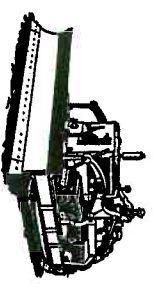
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**The White Tide Flows Over the Red**

(Continued from page 29)

passable roads, lack of food and many discouragements.

Most historians ignore the part played by the women in the building of this County, yet it was the women who bore and raised the children and established the homes that are the foundation of our way of life. Working shoulder to shoulder with the men, these pioneer women helped to raise the crude shelters, toiled in the small clearings to grow a scanty garden and often cooked for the family at a rude outdoor fireplace against a stump. Let us give honor to these brave women.

The widow of John Young who settled at Pine Hill in 1804, thus securing the first deed issued by the Holland Purchase Company, told in her later years of her experience in coming to Genesee from the old home in Virginia. She and Mr. Young came on horse back passing one harrowing night surrounded by panthers. They brought only the barest necessities. On reaching Batavia they purchased at the Brisbane store a large cotton bag which they filled with cat-tail fluff for a bed.

The axe was the most important instrument used to subdue the wilderness. It is the real symbol of the pioneer. Nearly every man came with an axe over his shoulder even if he had nothing else. One unfortunate man who had no axe traded his shoes for that important tool. Another man reached here with an axe and one shilling. He left his watch as security on a down payment for the land he wished to buy.

And thus they came! Lawyers, doctors, ministers and teachers to work side by side with farmers and artisans. Each had an important part in laying the foundations for the future prosperity and greatness of Genesee County. Some attained greater material gain and renown but all were needed to bring to fruition this vast undertaking.



Genesee County's first Post Office sign painted in 1804 by Mary Lucy Stevens, who married the first Postmaster, James Brisbane. The Post Office was established at Batavia in 1822.

An interesting person who attained not only State-wide but also National recognition—although he came here as a stone mason—was Ebenezer Mix. He worked at his trade in the summer and taught school in the winter, studying law in the meantime. He was appointed Deputy County Clerk in 1811 and became contracting clerk in the Land Office, a position which he held for 27 years. It is said that he carried in his mind the details pertaining to the measurements of the entire Purchase, thus coming into contact and acquaintance with all of the settlers. He had a knowledge of boundaries and locations unsurpassed by any one of his day. He was considered the best mathematician in the State and one of the best in the Nation. He codified the laws of New York as to descent and distribution of estates upon the request of the Attorney General.

Alexander Rea, a surveyor for the Holland Land Company, contracted in 1802 for 17 acres of land in the present village of Alexander, named for him, on the bend of the creek where he erected a saw mill in 1804. His first tax bill was for 12 cents. He was one of the first trustees of the Alexander Library. Mr. Rea was a Brigadier General of the Militia.

Richard Stoddard, the first local agent for the Triangle Tract, opened a land office (Le Roy) in 1802. He built the first building—a saw mill—on the Oatka Creek and lived in a log cabin nearby. There are many traditions of his adventure.

(Continued on page 33)



Compliments to Genesee County Sesquicentennial for 150 Years of Progress and extends their Best Wishes for the next 150 Years!

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## DOEHLER-JARVIS CORPORATION

## The White Tide Flows Over the Red

(Continued from page 31)

tures with the Indians. He was well versed in back woods life and was particularly adapted to the settlement of a new country. Having served as the first County Sheriff, he was always called, affectionately, "Sheriff Stoddard."

Among the very early farmers who helped materially in the building up of our rural settlements was John Long who in 1807 with his father, Dr. David Long, bought land in the present town of Pembroke. A year later they moved to a site that is now the village of Corfu, called for many years, "Long's Corners." John Long always held some town office. His home was the town meeting place as well as a place for religious services.

The first crops in the Purchase were not planted by a farmer but by James Dewey, a surveyor employed by Joseph Elliott. While waiting for orders at the Transit Storehouse (Stafford), Mr. Dewey at the request of James Brisbane, cleared and planted 10 acres on either side of the present road about 20 rods west of the storehouse. A good crop of oats, potatoes and garden vegetables was harvested from this venture proving that this area had unexcelled agricultural advantages.

Capt. John Ganson, a Revolutionary soldier from Vermont who had been with the Sullivan forces, came into Genesee region on a prospecting trip in 1789.

He was accompanied by two young sons whom he left with a friendly Indian while he returned to Vermont for the rest of the family. Upon returning the following spring, he found his boys dressed as Indians, with Indian habits and speech and well stocked with vermin. Capt. Ganson first settled on the Genesee River not far from Avon but the title to this land not proving satisfactory, he moved in 1798 into the wilderness farther west locating a short distance east of the present village of Le Roy.

Two young men who took an active part in the development of the social

and economic life of this community became residents in the early years of the settlement. James Brisbane, who had come with Joseph Elliott, had charge of the Transit Storehouse (Stafford) for several months. He came from there in 1802 to the little new Batavia where he opened a store for the sale of general merchandise at the northeast corner of Church (Jefferson) and Genesee (Main) Streets. Later in that same year he was appointed Post Master by Gideon Granter, Post Master General. Previous to the opening of the new office, all mail for the region had been directed to Genesee Court House, arriving usually once in two weeks. The young merchant attracted considerable Indian trade because he had as a clerk a man who understood the Indian dialects.

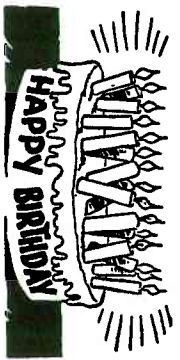
Trumbull Cary became a clerk in the Brisbane store and several years later he was chosen as Post Master. These young men from different parts of the country soon formed a close relationship which lasted throughout their lives, cemented as it was by family ties.

In 1804 the social life of Batavia and its surroundings was brightened by the arrival of two young ladies. This event was very pleasing to all the young men of the settlement.

Margaret Eleanor Brisbane and Mary Lucy Stevens had come to visit their brothers and to see for themselves the life of the frontier. This visit was highlighted by the development of two love affairs.

Mary Lucy had captivated the heart of James Brisbane who courted her for three years via long distance and at last brought her as a bride to his new house. In later years he built the mansion which is now the Batavia City Hall. The wading pool in Austin Park was given to the City by the late columnist, Arthur Brisbane, in memory of his grandfather, James. The old Post Office sign which now hangs in the Post Master's office was painted in 1804 by Miss Stevens. Did she leave it with James as a reminder of her presence?

(Continued on page 35)



### 150 Years! CONGRATULATIONS

For the past thirty-eight years we are proud to have been part of the tremendous growth and progress of GENESEE COUNTY

May future years bring even greater achievements for this splendid community that exemplifies the freedoms on which our great country was founded.

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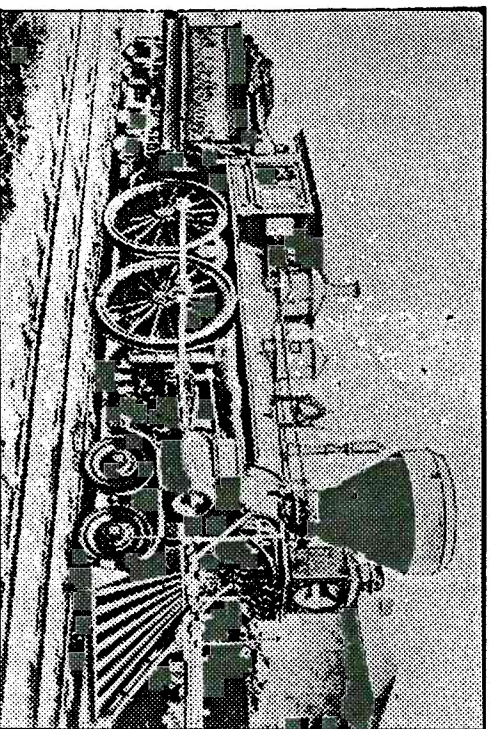
The Cary romance was of longer duration. Although it is said that Trumbull was an ardent and persistent suitor, the object of his affections, Margaret Eleanor, refused to marry him until he could provide a mansion on East Genesee Street and a fine carriage with a well matched span of spirited horses. In 1817 Mr. Cary was able to build the mansion and provide the required equipage. He later founded the Bank

of Genesee and also held State positions. The Cary mansion, still standing, is a beautiful example of early American architecture. These two men who started from such humble beginnings in the early days of the settlement amassed fortunes probably larger than any of their contemporaries but they are not remembered for their wealth. They are remembered for their integrity, their faith in God and their broad outlook for future generations. They, with the hundreds of other men and women who helped to subdue the wilderness have left to us a precious heritage which it is our duty to perpetuate.

#### OAKFIELD

"In the town of Oakfield are Indian mounds and earthworks that have gone into history as the most remarkable and best preserved of any in the State. The best is known as the Old Fort, consisting of a ditch and breastworks, includ-

ing about ten acres of land. In a part of the works are traced ancient lodges and a supply of broken pottery. Trees apparently three hundred years old have grown up on the works, and on the west side are passages with sides made of stone."



The "Dean Richmond," New York Central, No. 147.