Preface

Ithaca's neighborhoods have witnessed a revival in the 1980s. Concerned by the increasing student population, heavier traffic, and problems of neighborhood deterioration, residents have come together to revitalize neighborhood civic associations, to put out newsletters and handbooks, and to socialize at block parties and picnics. Working with government agencies and nonprofit organizations, they have renovated houses, spruced up parks, and organized neighborhood crime watches. Ithacans are more aware of zoning codes and environmental issues than ever before and are taking an active part in the political processes that affect where and how they live.

Part of the revitalization has been a renewed interest in the histories and special characteristics of the different parts of the city. To meet this growing interest and provide needed documentation, the DeWitt Historical Society undertook a study of Ithaca's neighborhoods in 1985, with the plan of completing the project during the city of Ithaca's centennial celebrations in 1988. Nine historians and writers met and divided up the city more or less according to the 1970 City of Ithaca Neighborhoods Map (see Frontispiece), and each took responsibility for compiling a history of one or more of the neighborhoods. The group met several times to plan the project and to share ideas about the meaning of neighborhoods: are they defined by barriers that are natural (gorges), man-made (highways, political boundaries), economic (quality of housing), or ethnic? What supports, such as shops, playgrounds, a community center, are necessary to maintain a neighborhood? How have our neighborhoods changed over time?

Right from the start, we realized that there were no clear answers to these questions, and that the study would never be "finished." As with any study of local history, the project is ongoing, and will change as new resources come to light.

Since the beginning of the project dozens of people have become involved—interviewing residents, scouring archives and government records for information, writing memoirs, lending personal photographs for copying, and attending "history nights" sponsored by the historical society. In addition to the authors listed on the title page, all of whom volunteered their talents, several others deserve mention: Carl Koski and Clayton W. Smith for photography,

Richard Rosenbaum for design and production, and Martha Linke and Kay Scheuer for editing. We also gratefully acknowledge financial contributions from the Ithaca Centennial Commission and from Frank and Jean Proto.

This book sets down for the first time the histories of parts of Ithaca which have been overlooked in previous accounts, and brings to the public over ninety photographs, only a few of which have been published before. It is a book to be cherished for the memories it holds, and a tool to help neighborhoods chart their future course. Natives, long-time Ithacans, and newcomers alike will enjoy it.

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Ithaca, New York
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ITHACA'S NEIGHBORHOODS

Ithaca: An Overview

Gretchen Sachse

In 1888, when Ithaca officially became a city, the newspapers reviewed the people and events that had particularly contributed to her development.[1] They looked primarily at the early settlers and the self-made men who transformed the wilderness into a thriving settlement. But they also recognized that from the first the land shaped the people as much as the people did the land. The steep hills cut with gorges and streams, the lake, the fertile agricultural land and virgin forests, and the swampy flats all have furnished Ithaca with both rich resources and substantial problems that have taxed the ingenuity of her people. The land has dictated where people live, how they have traveled and transported goods, what industries have flourished, and it has even determined the health and well-being of the community. It was the land that drew the first native inhabitants to hunt and fish here thousands of years ago. It was the land that the Iroquois chose for their orchards and corn fields. It was the land that impressed the soldiers of Sullivan's campaign as they passed through the area in 1779.

The soldiers went home taking with them stories of the tall corn, the peach and apple orchards, the forests and the lake known as Tiohero.[2] When the Military Tract was established in 1782 as bounty payment for Revolutionary War veterans, some remembered the land or stories they had heard and returned to the region with their wives and children to start a new life in the wilderness.

Early Settlers

The first settlers to stay through a winter were Jacob Yaple, Isaac Dumond, and Peter Hinepaw, who left their homes in Kingston, New York, in April of 1789 and journeyed to Lot 94 at the head of Cayuga Lake where they decided to locate. They planted corn on the flats and then returned to the Hudson Valley to fetch their families and household goods. In September of the same year they journeyed back to the Ithaca valley, traveling by water to Owego and thence overland for nineteen days, clearing their way as they went. The three families built log cabins near what is now called Cascadilla Creek at the foot of

East Hill. Their first neighbors were a band of Cayugas who were accustomed to winter in the flats. These natives "received them in friendship, and afforded them substantial assistance, if they could not afford them society."[3] But this friendship was short-lived because most of the Cayugas removed to a reservation at the north end of the lake when they relinquished their land for a down payment of $500 that same winter.

In 1790 the original three families were joined by new pioneers who settled in the flats and on the surrounding hills. The community erected new cabins, built a gristmill, and cleared more land. Horace King, in a speech delivered in 1842, described their life and hopes:

> A rude life and humble fare indeed was their's. And great labor, and some danger, and many inconveniences were before them and surrounded them. But neither toil, nor danger, nor privation, fatigued or frightened them from their purpose. If their food was coarse, they were compensated for it with excellent health; if their labor was wearisome, yet undisturbed sleep visited their pillows and refreshed their bodies. And they looked forward to a better time coming, when plenty, and comfort, and ease, should crown their exertions and fulfill their desires.[4]

Adventurers heading west passed through the tiny settlement, bringing with them news of the East, so they were by no means isolated from civilization.

Cooperation and neighborliness were essential to the survival of the early settlers. They planted corn in communal plots on the flats, each family building a crib on the hillside. If there were any thefts or arguments over shares of corn, no record of them remains. According to King, the settlers "dwelt in friendship, and, it is said, felt it a pleasure to assist one another."[5]

By 1800 the settlement, known as the Flats, the City, or Sodom,[6] had its first frame house and Simeon DeWitt, the surveyor general of New York State, had acquired most of the land that later constituted the heart of the village. DeWitt had laid out the Military Tract lands and seen the potential of the place he named "Ithaca."[7] After purchasing the land, DeWitt divided it into building lots, disposing of them at "cheap rates and upon liberal terms,"[8] thus encouraging the community to grow and prosper. Until he took a hand, guiding the little settlement in its development and even laying out its streets, Ithaca still had only a handful of families. Afterward, it grew rapidly, and "in a few years," King noted, "men of all trades, professions, and occupations, were to be found here."[9]

A post office was established in 1804 and officially named "Ithica." Five years later the population numbered 250, and Ithaca was considered one of the most thriving communities of the interior. Simeon DeWitt wrote of it in 1810, "Its advantages and situation cannot fail of giving it a rapid growth, and making it one of the first inland places of trade. There is now no place of its size in the country, where there is such a stir of business."[10] DeWitt also noted that Ithaca had thirty-eight houses, a hotel, a schoolhouse, stores and shops for various trades, two lawyers, one doctor, a miller, and a watch-cleaner. The hamlet apparently had all the necessities for life—and some of the luxuries as well. By this time it also had a Moral Society to watch over the sometimes

drunken and rowdy behavior that was common in frontier towns, a library with £300 worth of books, and regular religious services. "Wealth began to cluster around the home of the hardy pioneer," said H. C. Goodwin. "An increasing population developed new enterprises. . . . New villages are springing up in every direction, and the wilderness gives way before the strong arm of a resolute, determined people."[11]

Until this time, barter was sufficient for trade, but with new businesses came the need for an expanded financial system. The Bank of Newburgh was established on April 8, 1815, by an act of the state legislature authorizing an office of discount and deposit in Ithaca. The bank bought a lot on Owego Street (now State Street), west of Cayuga and erected a frame building in the Federal style which today stands on East Court Street. In time, additional banks were incorporated to serve the needs of the burgeoning community.[12]

While Ithaca's financial system was becoming firmly established, so was its standing in the region. In 1817, through the encouragement of the Reverend William Wisner, Ithacans managed to raise $7000 for a courthouse, thereby winning the honor of becoming the county seat of the newly formed Tompkins County. Before, Ithaca had been one among several rapidly growing settlements, with little apart from its location to distinguish it from the others. Once designated the county seat, however, it had a distinct advantage and began to grow accordingly.

The Village of Ithaca

Until 1821, the hamlet of Ithaca had been a part of the town of Ulysses and governed by the Ulysses town board.[13] On March 16, 1821, the town of Ithaca was set off from Ulysses, and seventeen days later the village of Ithaca was incorporated as a separate political entity. The new village charter established a government consisting of five trustees, who were empowered to erect public buildings, raise taxes, procure fire engines and equipment, make necessary repairs and improvements, and pay officers of the corporation.[14] Although the trustees could raise taxes, it is notable that a majority of freeholders and those subject to taxation had to agree to the taxes being levied, and improved farmland could not be taxed. The first ordinance passed by the trustees prohibited blocking the public streets, driving faster than a trot, discharging firearms or setting off fireworks, letting swine run at large, and playing ball or flying kites "in either of the two main streets, commonly called Owego and Aurora Streets."[15]

The first improvement undertaken by the new trustees was the digging of a public well to provide water for fighting fires. The project was not successful, and the village contracted with the Bennett brothers to bring water from their mills at Six Mile Creek to Tioga Street via underground aqueduct. The agreement with the Bennetts was the village's first contract for water, and it set a precedent for the private ownership of the water supply which was later to prove disastrous.

A report on Ithaca which appeared in the *American Journal* on September 24, 1823, assesses the growth of the community over a five-year period:

> Few villages in the state, have experienced a more rapid and substantial growth than Ithaca. We can well recollect, and it is scarce 12 years since, when but a few ordinary buildings occupied the plain, and anticipations were none of the brightest with respect to its future prospects. The contrast presented, by its present state of improvement, is viewed by strangers with admiration, and by its original inhabitants with proud satisfaction.

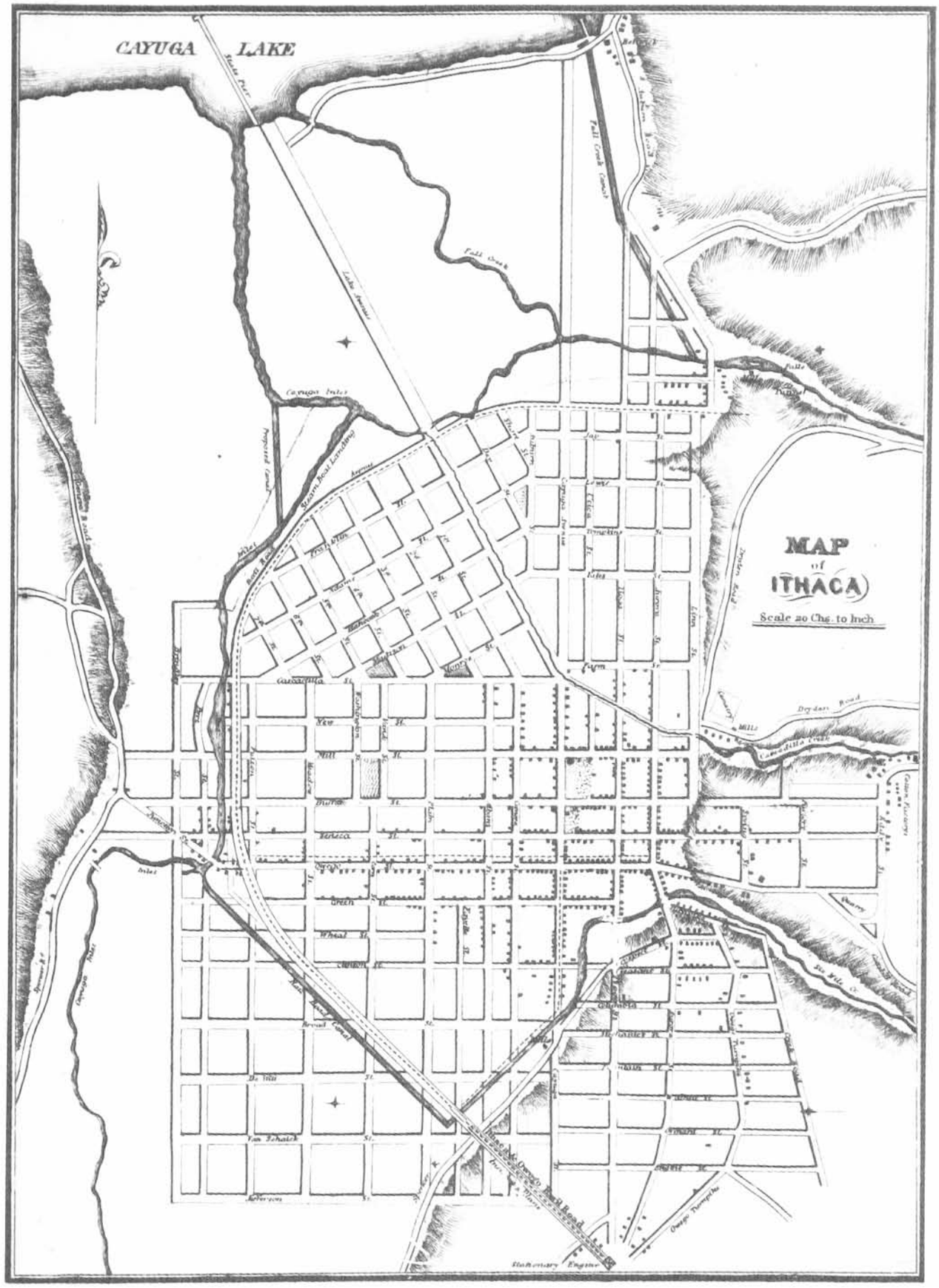
Waterway Dreams

The 1820s were years of great growth and activity. New businesses flourished in a booming economy. Transportation, already improved by several turnpikes, was further facilitated by the steamboat *Enterprise,* launched in 1821, and her companions, the *Telemachus* and the *DeWitt Clinton.* "Go on and prosper," urged Ebenezer Mack, editor of the *Ithaca Journal.* "Build railroads, canals, roads, and banks; Make money plenty."[16] The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 inspired new dreams of connecting Ithaca to the Great Lakes by the Sodus Canal. A map of Ithaca in 1829 shows the Sodus Canal, a canal linking the village to the lake, and three railroads that were never built. Other improvements were made, however, and by 1830 Ithaca had a fire department, a public market, several churches, an academy, a new district school, and two newspapers. In addition, the Clinton House, a new grand hotel, was under construction. The population had grown to 3,592 people, triple that in 1825. As the population grew, the boundaries of the original settlement were extended, and the village now reached to Fall Creek and included areas on East Hill. Distinct neighborhoods were beginning to take shape.

The 1830s were a period of continuing growth. Assemblyman Charles Humphrey, a former village president, described Ithaca in glowing terms in a speech to the New York State Assembly in 1834:

> The village of Ithaca is compactly built, mostly inhabited by respectable and thriving mechanics; and almost all the various articles required by the surrounding country, are there manufactured. It has several handsome public buildings. As an evidence of its comparative importance, I can state, that on some days of each week, fifteen mails are opened and closed, five daily stages arrive and depart, besides several three times, twice, and once each week; a steam-boat also traverses the Lake daily.[17]

Humphrey reflected the justifiable pride of his fellow citizens, who had great hopes that Ithaca would become an industrial and shipping center. Land prices soared in anticipation of development. Speculation was rampant. But with the national panic of 1837, the bubble burst, and Ithaca, along with the rest of the country, was plunged into a depression. When it was over, Ithaca was unable to



1. 1840 map of Ithaca, the first to show the location of buildings.

regain its former position. During the 1840s and into the 1850s the village experienced little growth in population. At this time many people went west in search of gold, opportunity, or better land. In the twenty years between 1830 and 1850 the population increased by less than 25 percent, and a substantial portion of that increase was attributable to the arrival of new immigrants from Ireland and Germany. Simeon DeWitt, Ithaca's godfather who led the village into prosperity, had died in 1834, leaving a void which no one man could fill. The failure and sale of the Ithaca and Owego Railroad in 1842 marks both the end of this depressed period and the beginning of a new age when the promise of efficient rail transportation became a reality. The new owners incorporated as the Cayuga and Susquehanna Railroad Company and made a number of changes that connected the railroads with stage lines and steamboats.[18]

The late 1840s and early 1850s were years of public improvement. As commerce revived, more taxes could be raised. These taxes, in turn, funded a number of public works, such as gravel sidewalks, the extension and improvement of streets, and increased fire protection. In 1846 the telegraph connected Ithaca rapidly with the wider world, and the two weekly newspapers kept the citizens up-to-date on the issues of the day. One of these issues, the cholera epidemic of 1848, tested the effectiveness of the Board of Health and the willingness of Ithacans to cooperate in staving off a threat to the entire community. In 1849 the trustees gave Henry Williams Sage permission to bring pure water into the village, but it was not until 1853 that the Ithaca Water Works, a private company, was incorporated. In 1853, too, the Ithaca Gas Works was formed. On November 9, houses and stores were lighted with gas for the first time, and street lights were in place by the end of the year. Ithaca was flourishing again.

Statistics compiled by the state census of 1855 provide a graphic indication of Ithaca's growth. The village had almost 7,000 inhabitants, a new courthouse and jail, eight churches, fifteen public and private schools, two banks, two newspapers, six fire companies, and numerous factories and mercantile establishments. A few years earlier, in 1853, H. C. Goodwin predicted a shining future:

> With less wealth than many other places of its size, Ithaca does more business. She is destined to go ahead in all her various and valuable improvements. . . . All that can awaken and inspire industry, or encourage enterprize, is here ready to aid the progressive march of improvement, create wealth, distribute blessings, dignify character, and elevate the mind.[19]

The full realization of this dream, however, was delayed by a devastating natural catastrophe, the flood of 1857, which caused almost $100,000 in damage and left parts of the village under water for several months. As Ithaca's citizens pulled together to help those who were hardest hit, the flood also reminded everyone of the value of neighbors. Rebuilding was hampered by another financial panic later that same year. But fortunately the panic of 1857

was not as severe as that of 1837, and by 1860 the village was once again looking forward, introducing changes and making improvements.

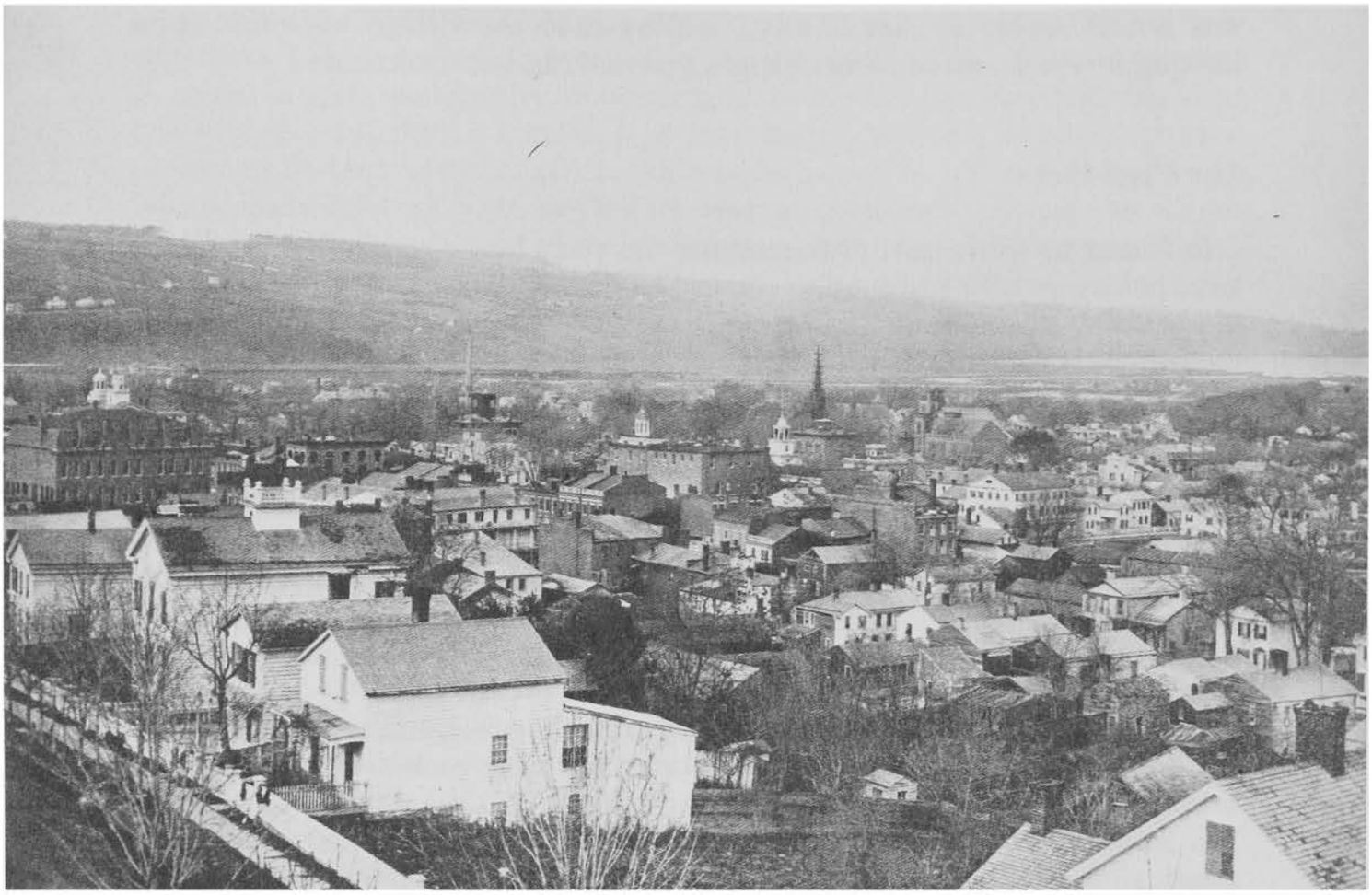
The Civil War

In Ithaca, as in the rest of the nation, the years leading up to the Civil War were not calm. Like many other communities, Ithaca was divided on the issue of abolition. While most Ithacans opposed slavery in principle, some felt that to outlaw slavery threatened individual property rights, and others argued that preservation of the Union was more important than the issue of abolition. During the 1840s and 1850s Ithaca was part of the Underground Railroad network that helped fugitive slaves on their way to Canada. But this same village also had an anti-abolitionist newspaper, *The Flag of the Union,* which condemned anything that threatened the Union. When war came, however, most Ithacans rallied behind the federal government, sent off their husbands and sons to join in the fight, and raised relief funds to help the families of volunteers. At home, the routine of daily life remained the same, but prices were higher and there were fewer people to do the work. Meanwhile, the newspapers carried letters from local boys in the army and reports from the battlefields. When the war was over, people tried to go back to the life they had known before the war, but somehow things had changed. In particular, women had gained a new sense of independence. Having assumed many additional responsibilities during the war, they discovered that they could manage households, farms, and businesses by themselves. Some women even began attending meetings on temperance or women's suffrage, two issues that would gain prominence in the next few decades.

Economic Growth

The late 1860s were a time of financial well-being during which Ithaca expanded its neighborhoods and its horizons. Titus Flats, south of the village, was opened for development by Charles M. Titus in 1868. The Cornell Public Library, completed in 1866, provided a lecture hall, meeting rooms, and offices as well as a modern public library. The Wilgus Opera House, which opened on the corner of State and Tioga in 1868, hosted traveling opera and theater companies and fostered local performing groups. At the same time, Ithaca was becoming a more coherent community: it had recently codified its laws, and the trustees had all the streets numbered and their names posted. City directories began to appear annually, revealing the increase in the number of businesses—among them several new industries, such as the Ithaca Agricultural Works and the Ithaca Calendar Clock Company—and recording the appearance of some new church congregations.

The most significant change, however, was the establishment of a new university named for its benefactor, Ezra Cornell. Built on Cornell's East Hill



2. Ithaca from South Hill in 1874.

farmland overlooking the village, the fledgling university was inaugurated on October 7, 1868. "The village was thronged with visiting strangers and everything betokened a joyous holiday," said Alonzo B. Cornell.[20] Little did anyone present anticipate the impact the new university would have on the future growth and development of Ithaca. The arrival of the first 412 students marked the beginning of a sometimes stormy relationship between town and gown. Rowdy students and cosmopolitan professors alike infused the village with new ideas, new longings, and new fears. They also brought a pool of expertise and talent that the village politicos hastened to tap. University professors began to offer advice on paving, water and sewerage, bridges, and educational issues of the day.

In the 1870s Ithaca's population grew from 10,107 at the beginning of the decade to 11,190 at the end.[21] The village had sprawled up the hills and down the valley. Some streets were macadamized. Following the New York State school act of 1874, a new public school was built on West Hill, temporary schools opened on South and East hills, and a local board of education was organized. The construction of churches, which had been curtailed by the war, resumed. The *Ithaca Journal* began publishing a daily paper in addition to its well-established weekly, a development that was a sure sign of Ithaca's prog-

ress. Even Black Friday in 1873 and its resulting panic, which wrought economic havoc throughout the country and ruined Ezra Cornell, could not retard the progress of the village. In Ithaca, the greatest impact of the panic was its effect on the railroads, which, one by one, passed out of local ownership and were reconstituted as part of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and other trunk line systems. This dissolution of local lines ended any hope that Ithaca could become the hub of a rail transportation system.

After five lean years, industrial growth began to increase: boats, glass, pianos, organs, autophones, guns, and calendar clocks manufactured in Ithaca were shipped across the United States. The village prospered. Between 1865 and 1880 the population had increased by 60 percent, and soon the people began to demand the improvements needed to sustain a comfortable standard of living and the potential for growth. Ithacans began to debate issues of public health, crime in the street, pure water and improved sanitation, housing, transportation, and government efficiency. By 1880 they could dream of having the public services and amenities befitting a growing community of almost ten thousand inhabitants.

The 1880s were years of many physical improvements. The telephone, first installed in 1878, had one hundred subscribers two years later. Iron bridges replaced metal ones, a fire alarm system and electric street lighting were installed,[22] streets paved, and sidewalks extended. The biggest change, however, was the advent of an electric street railway system that was chartered in 1884. Although the trolleys did not begin operating until 1893, they eventually furnished local transportation that was both dependable and affordable. In the early 1890s the expansion and improvement of the system, under the direction of Herman Bergholtz, linked the hills with the flats, making it easy to reach almost every part of the city and opening the way for future expansion.

D. Morris Kurtz, writing about local industries and businesses, described the Ithaca of 1883 as a substantial, thriving village (population 11,896) surrounded by a wealth of natural wonders, crowned with a university, and enriched by numerous facilities and resources:

> Ithaca possesses nearly all the advantages of a city without many of the disadvantages incident thereto, and may fairly be characterized as an equally desireable place for business or pleasure. But that it is not simply a "University town" or dependent solely upon its attractiveness of location and scenery for notice will be admitted by the visitor if the trouble is taken to inspect the piano and organ, the calendar clock, the autophone and the glass factories, the gun works, the agricultural implement manufactories and other industrial establishments that are giving it a name and a place among the manufacturing towns of Central New York, whose products are attaining a national reputation.[23]

Becoming a City

The debate over becoming a city began in the 1870s but was dropped for nearly ten years during the financial retrenchment of that decade. In 1881 two

local attorneys, Bradford Almy and Clinton Bouton, were appointed to draw up a city charter. The document met with so much opposition that the question was dropped until 1884, when a villagewide referendum on incorporation as a city passed. Another charter was drawn up, but it was unacceptable to the various political factions. Finally, the board of trustees appointed a bipartisan committee of sixteen influential businessmen, eight Republicans and eight Democrats.[24] They framed a system of city government which concentrated power and responsibility in the office of the mayor. The mayor's power, however, was tempered by his dependence on the consent of the Common Council in making appointments. This system was the first of its kind in New York State. The charter was approved by the state legislature and the governor, becoming law on May 2, 1887.

At noon on Friday June 1, 1888, Ithaca took its place as New York's twenty-ninth city. Oratory was the order of the day, accompanied by bells, steam whistles, cannons, and general carousing. But the citizens of Ithaca also used the occasion to look back at their past and forward to their future, envisioning a city graced with statues and fountains, a city with broad paved streets, free postal service, and honest politicians.[25] David B. Stewart, the last village president, became the city's first mayor.

Streets were the first order of business. Many people favored the gradual extension of pavement as a visible sign of progress. Stewart, however, steadfastly rejected any plan that was not comprehensive and did not provide for sewers. Eventually a paving commission was appointed to examine all the options. It recommended a compromise whereby the lateral pipes for a sewer would be laid before each street was paved. Since there was as yet no sewer plant, these pipes were useless; their sole purpose was to avoid tearing up the pavement when sewers would be installed sometime in the future.

In 1894 Mayor Clinton Bouton appointed a sewer commission that hired Rudolph Herring, a consulting engineer from New York City, to report on the desirability of sewering the city. Herring commented on the sanitation and drainage, recommending a sewer system separate from the storm drains. In 1895 the commission issued bonds and began construction of the new sewer system, which opened for public use in September 1896. By December of the same year most of East Hill and the flats had sewer mains installed. Unfortunately, not everyone chose to be connected, and privies, vaults, and cisterns remained a potential health hazard, a situation that would not be resolved for almost ten years.

This problem of drainage, which had perplexed Ithacans for over a century, was once again brought to a head in the winter of 1901–02 as a result of two severe floods. Annual spring flooding caused creeks to overflow, left much of the flats under water, and contributed to the malarial swamps at the head of the lake. It also left drinking water unpotable. "Ithaca Fever" was a common complaint that periodically hit incoming students unaccustomed to the local water. Thus, when fever struck in January 1903, it was initially blamed on the recent flooding. But as cases piled up, exceeding the capacity of the hospital and private infirmaries and severely taxing the doctors and nurses, it became

3. An empty lot in the West End, ca. 1903. Garbage was commonly used as a landfill to claim new areas for development.

apparent that this was not merely another manifestation of "Ithaca Fever." Ithaca was suffering from an epidemic of typhoid fever that ultimately left 178 dead, strained the finances of the city, and strengthened the determination of the people to transfer ownership of the water supply, which until this time had been in private hands, to the city. Dr. George A. Soper, a state public health official sent to help during the epidemic, not only looked into the cause of the typhoid but made recommendations about drainage and public health in general.

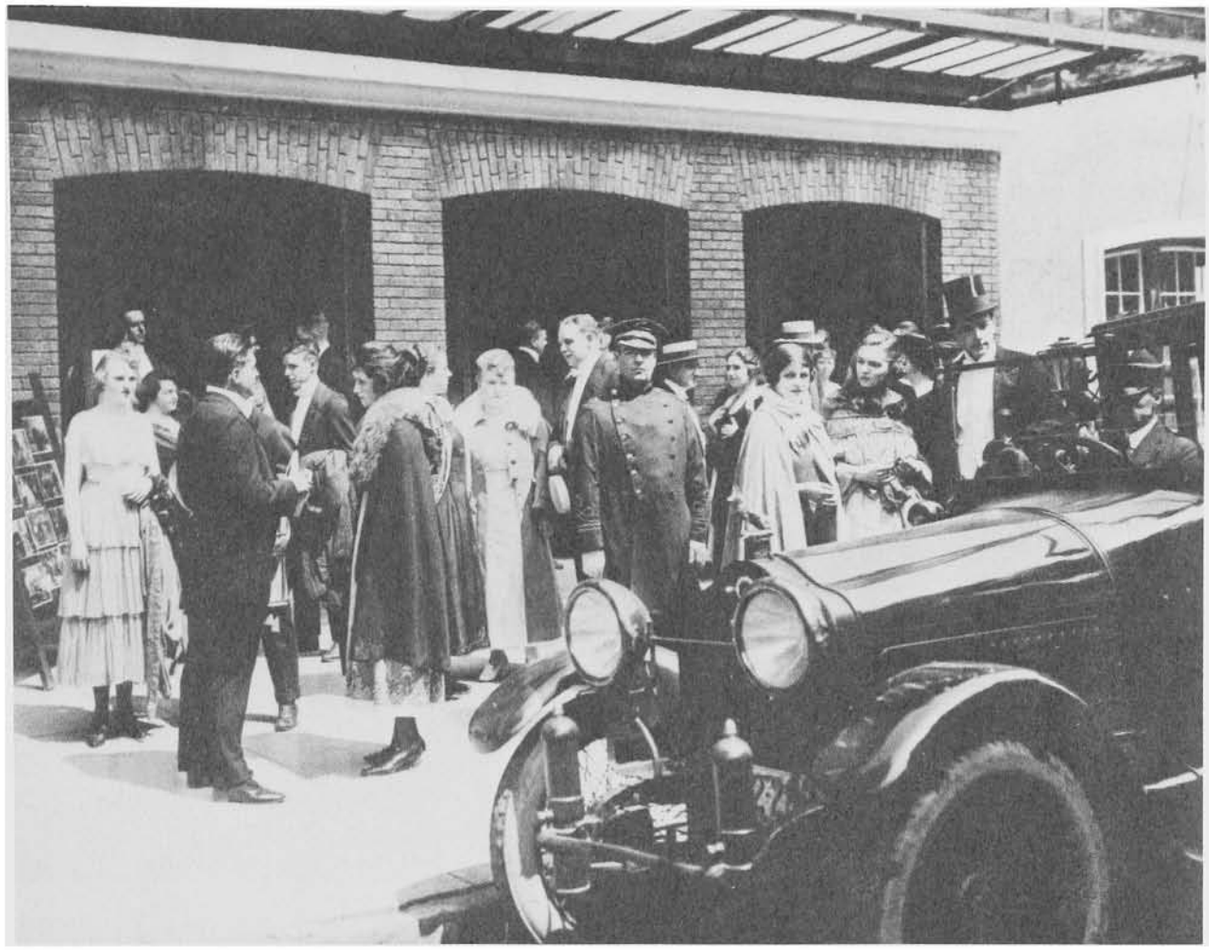
Common Council instituted a successful lawsuit against the Ithaca Water Works Company to take over the waterworks and appointed a creeks, drainage, and parks commission. With money obtained from state appropriations and by issuing bonds, the commission set to work in 1906 building embankments,

deepening creeks, replacing swing bridges across the Inlet with stationary ones, and widening and dredging the inlet itself. These innovations helped control flooding and, by filling in former swampland, not only improved the public health but extended residential areas. In 1908 the responsibility for planning and overseeing all future improvements and development was placed in the hands of the newly established Board of Public Works. At the same time there was an increased interest in providing housing for the growing population.

The Progressive Era

During the first few decades of the twentieth century the issues of public health, poverty, and community improvement were closely linked. Leading citizens and the press wanted to make Ithaca a better place to live, and throughout this period "progress" became the rallying cry. "Progress" encompassed such diverse activities as improving garbage collection, sprucing up houses with a coat of paint, conquering tuberculosis, attracting new industries and rejuvenating old, and planting trees and shrubs throughout the city.

4. A parade on East State Street in the 1920s, showing a contingent from the Thomas-Morse Aircraft Corporation.



5. A scene from *Patria,* filmed in Ithaca on August 19, 1916, at the Star Theater, showing a dozen local extras along with stars Irene Castle and Milton Sills.

To achieve these goals, government worked closely with individuals and groups. Both private and public money funded the various causes. Beginning with the West Side House in 1906, the newly organized Social Service League established settlement houses as a preventive measure against poverty. Immigrants and indigents alike found fellowship and opportunities for education at these neighborhood centers. In the eighties, Mrs. Elizabeth W. Beebe, known as "the city missionary," became Ithaca's first social worker. Funded by women's clubs of the local Congregational, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches and by private donations, she ministered to the people of the Inlet. Before then, the poor were either consigned to the county poorhouse by the commissioner of the poor, left to shift for themselves—often popping in and out of jail—or cared for by the churches. Poverty was a problem that most Ithacans preferred to ignore, but the progressive age, with its housing and sanitation surveys, forced them to take notice and do something to improve the condition of the poor. The Ladies' Union Benevolent Society (founded in 1869) maintained The Home for elderly women, usually of good families, and a Children's Home; the Women's Christian Temperance movement crusaded against liquor and drunkenness; the Society for the Prevention of Crime tried to curb the development of a criminal class, disbanding in 1901 because it was no longer needed;

6. Crowds in Six Mile Glen Park, 1917. Photograph by Seth L. Sheldon.

Associated Charities and the Charitable Organization Society tried to eliminate begging, diminish pauperism, and find employment for the poor; the Salvation Army attempted to reach all the people that no one else cared about. By the early 1900s, the work of these private clubs and charities over the past twenty years began to bear fruit. These organizations had a dramatic impact on poverty in Ithaca; instead of simply ministering to the poor, their mission was to change the conditions that caused pauperism and its attendant ills, crime and disease.

The teens were a time of great optimism. Ithaca was thriving; new industries, such as Thomas Aircraft, arose; older ones, such as Morse Chain (incorporated in 1898) and Ithaca Gun (dating from the 1880s), were adapting to change. For seven years Ithaca was the site of several movie studios, most notably that of the Wharton Brothers, who filmed cliff-hanging serials and short comedies with stars of the silent screen. In 1916 the Business Men's Association, formed to give leadership in community development and planning and to encourage boosterism, touted the beauty, convenience, health, and prosperity of "the biggest little city" in articles, speeches, and pamphlets.[26]

These years were not without their problems, however. Public health, particularly the ever-present threat of tuberculosis, was an important concern. After its foundation in 1911, the Tuberculosis Association joined the single visiting nurse of the health department in the fight against white plague. Their

7. The Security Garage on West State Street was designed by Henry Hinckley and built in 1915. The building was remodeled and opened as the State Theater on December 6, 1928.

efforts led to the opening of the Preventorium at Esty's Point and later to a county sanitarium. In 1919 the Red Cross joined the crusade as its battlefield nurses became public health nurses after the end of World War I. A new hospital opened on Quarry Street in 1911, replacing the old, inadequate facility on North Aurora Street, which had opened in 1889. The community also debated the need for a contagious ward. Other diseases created new crises. The polio epidemic of 1916 left many children and adults crippled. The supervised after-care that these victims required prompted Mary Hibbard to found the Reconstruction Home. In 1918, Spanish influenza hit Ithaca, as well as the rest of the world, in epidemic proportions. Cornell University generously opened its own infirmary to help the community care for overflow patients. On the whole, however, the city board of health coped remarkably well with each crisis, and Ithaca was known as a healthy place to live.

For transportation within the city during this period, Ithacans continued to rely primarily on trolleys, but the automobile, which first appeared on the streets of Ithaca in 1899, immediately captured the imagination of the people.

Homeowners built garages, wagon dealers became car dealers, and the Security Garage opened on West State Street in the building that is now the State Theater. Soon the papers were full of complaints about over-bright headlights, noise, danger to pedestrians, and parking. Automobile owners demanded better roads and a modern boulevard lighting system and got them. Many small service businesses catered to the auto trade as more people began driving. The number of registered motor vehicles became a significant statistic for measuring Ithaca's economic well-being. Only a few people suspected the problems that the automobile would cause: competition for parking space, congestion, pollution, the deterioration of roads, and a decline in mass transit systems, among others. Eventually the trolleys were joined by jitney buses, which initially made runs to outlying villages, as Tomtran does today.

The automobile was a liberating influence. Not only did it open up new possibilities for travel, it gave people a wider choice of locations in which to live and work. Before long, commuting became a reality for work and for recreation. When Enfield Park opened in 1916, for example, Robert H. Treman, its developer, boasted that improved roads and automobile transportation made it easily accessible. Renwick Park, too, though originally developed as a trolley amusement park in 1899, was made accessible to automobiles after the departure of its tenant movie studios in 1919.

World War I

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, local men and boys went off to fight. Those who stayed at home raised vegetables, dealt with shortages, and pulled together to support the war widows and orphans. The war effort was coordinated by the Tompkins County War Chest, which raised money for the Red Cross, war relief, the YMCA, the Salvation Army, and other agencies. The War Chest marks the initial centralization of social agencies; a few years later in 1921 it was reorganized as the Community Chest, the predecessor of the United Way. From the twenties on, centralization and streamlining of services became a recurrent theme among the city's social service agencies.

The twenties were boom years. Almost everything seemed to grow, from the population—17,004 in 1920 to 20,708 in 1930, excluding students—to the economy. The public improvements made during these years included many that were directly related to the increase in the number of automobiles: a large bond issue for street repair, work on bridges, purchase of the first public parking area, establishment of a municipal asphalt plant, and installation of the first traffic lights in the business district and of stop signs on busy corners elsewhere. The city's two telephone systems were merged, and people no longer had to maintain two lines in order to reach everyone who had a phone. During the twenties the city purchased and renovated Renwick Park, renaming it Stewart Park for its benefactor, Mayor Edwin C. Stewart. Percy Field, now the location of the high school, also became city property when Cornell

no longer needed it for its athletic field. The construction trade was at its busiest ever. In the late twenties a number of large public buildings were erected: Northside House (1925), Belle Sherman and Henry St. John schools (1926), Temple Beth-El (1928); and the municipal airport underwent a major upgrading of its facilities (1929). Beginning in 1927, home construction increased dramatically: "Hundreds of new dwellings have sprung up in every section of the city, relieving a housing situation that two years ago was acute," noted the *Ithaca Journal* on December 31, 1927. The residential area of Bryant Heights had opened the previous year, for the city's expanding population required new neighborhoods. In 1928 and 1929 the statistics for construction set new records.

Business activity was also lively during the twenties. Some local firms merged with national companies, new products were developed, and old products disappeared from the market. The Ithaca Calendar Clock Company, for example, went out of business when the nation went dry because many of its clocks were beer premiums.

Prohibition came to Ithaca in 1918, two years before the Eighteenth Amendment made it a national law.[27] On October 1, 1918, thirty-two hotels and saloons, six wholesalers and retailers, and nine drug stores gave up their licenses to sell intoxicating liquor. Bootleg gin, speakeasies, and "medicinal" alcohol available by prescription became the resort of those who defied the law. The local Women's Christian Temperance Union, rejoicing in its victory over intemperance, flourished, and by 1927 had became the second largest chapter in the nation.[28]

The Depression

Although the crash affected a number of Ithacans, the worst was yet to come. At the end of 1929 the *Ithaca Journal*, summing up the year, could still emphasize the positive: "Business mergers, involving millions of dollars in local properties, were the outstanding feature of 1929, a banner year for Ithaca now closing. There were periods of financial depression and prosperity, the latter, however, seeming the more apparent throughout the 365 days of the year."[29] Soon, however, the Depression deepened, many jobs were terminated, and even Ithaca, with its relatively stable economy, felt the effects of the national crisis.

Compared to much of the rest of the country, Ithaca weathered the thirties fairly well. During the first few years the *Ithaca Journal* noted instances of progress and growth in its year-end chronologies. Construction work peaked in 1930, when several major projects were undertaken, most notably a new junior high school named for Frank David Boynton, the popular superintendent of schools. Among the new buildings that appeared in the early thirties were major building projects at Cornell, and, in the city, the new First National Bank, Beebe Chapel in the West End, the Tompkins County Courthouse and the jail, the Southside Center, a new wing for Memorial Hospital, and the New

8. Children in the West End enjoying the aftermath of the Great Flood, July 1935. Henry Head Collection.

York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG) building at 108 East Green Street (now City Hall). Federal agencies such as the CWA, CCC, NRA, and WPA came and went, leaving behind such municipal improvements as the new golf course, a modernized airport, and alterations in many local parks. From this time on, municipal projects became increasingly dependent on federal programs. Local relief agencies joined with the CWA to provide employment, thus lightening the burden on charities and churches. By 1936 the public welfare demands were waning: only 140 cases, representing 497 people, remained on the rolls. No Ithaca bank went under during the Depression; all closed for the long Bank Holiday from March through October of 1933, but all reopened. Looking back on 1933 the *Ithaca Journal* commented, "Ithaca probably never realized its power to cope with situations which arose this year."[30] That year Prohibition ended and the Lyceum Theater was demolished.

During the thirties, too, Ithaca's transportation system underwent a major change as the trolley lines were cut back and gradually replaced by buses; the last trolley stopped running in 1935. And as the number of private cars increased, the number of automobile-related deaths increased drastically. As a result, the city undertook its first systematic traffic count (1934) and established a commission to study Ithaca's traffic problems. New street lights were installed downtown, and NYSEG worked to upgrade the city's electrical services. Other public work projects of these years included the completion of a 750,000–gallon water tank on West Hill (1936), expansion of water service, and construction of a new sewage treatment plant (1939).

Despite these advances, Ithaca had not made much progress in solving one problem that had plagued the city for years: flood control. The devastating flood of July 7, 1935, left in its wake thousands of dollars in damage and brought home the realization that, although flood control was Ithaca's most pressing problem, the city had no funds to do anything about it. But, overall, victories outweighed defeats. In 1936 Ithaca received honorable mention from the state for its health conservation practices. In the decade between 1930 and 1940, the number of churches increased from thirteen to twenty-one, the number of full-time police from twenty to thirty, and the city added five miles of street pavement. Ithacans had pulled together with neighborliness and ingenuity, survived the economic hardships, and emerged ready to meet the demands of the future. In 1938, when Ithaca celebrated its fiftieth anniversary as a city, it could take justifiable pride in its accomplishments.

World War II

World War II dominated life in Ithaca in the 1940s. Even before America formally entered the war in 1941, Ithacans were preparing for the sacrifices it would require. The habits of conservation established during the Depression helped in the massive homefront effort. Victory gardens, home canning, and recycling of scrap became a way of life. School children pitched in, collecting tons of newspapers, gathering milkweed for life jackets, flattening metal cans, and building model airplanes to help train military spotters.[31] Citizens volunteered to serve on rationing boards, on the Selective Service Board, and on the Defense Council. They joined in the work of the Red Cross and other relief agencies. Air warden districts were established immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and blackouts and air raid drills became routine. Members of the civil air patrol spent nights on top of Martha Van Rensselaer Hall at Cornell scanning the skies for enemy planes. The initial call-up affected only unmarried men and then married men without children, but by 1943 the Selective Service was calling up fathers as well. In all, 4,470 men from Tompkins County served in the war. Everyone else served at home.

As residents tightened their belts and made sacrifices, so too did the city government. Few new public projects were undertaken during the war years. In 1941 ten bridges in the city were so in need of repair that fire engines were barred from crossing them. Two were condemned and closed: the Stewart

Avenue Bridge and the bridge at DeWitt Place. Bricks were laid on State Street, but no new paving projects were undertaken.[32] Gasoline and tire rationing and the restriction of pleasure driving meant less automobile travel, but the initial installation of 350 parking meters in the business district and Collegetown in 1941 indicates that the automobile had become a permanent feature of life in Ithaca.

Although the greatest effort, public and private, was focused on the war, local agencies continued to be concerned with the problem of the poor. The city instituted a food stamp plan for welfare clients in 1942, but it soon became apparent that the needs of the poor had to be dealt with on a countywide basis. In 1944 the League of Women Voters began a successful campaign for a unified county system of public welfare. One of the legacies of the Depression was the willingness of officials at lower levels of government to transfer authority to higher levels, whether from city to county or from the county to the state or federal government. This transfer of authority soon became an accepted practice and has remained so.

The Postwar Era

As the war wound down, local industries that had turned to wartime manufacture began leveling off production and looking for new directions to pursue in the postwar period. Returning veterans wanted to pick up where they had left off but had to compete with the work force that had taken their place, just as many of these workers themselves were being laid off.[33] There was a shortage not only of jobs but of housing, since many veterans took advantage of the GI bill to enroll at Cornell and Ithaca College, bringing their families with them. Temporary dormitories were hastily erected, and "Vetsburg" was built at East Ithaca with borrowed houses moved down from Massena.[34] Tompkins County was declared a rent-control district at the vets' request, and merchants voluntarily kept prices under control. Family housing and garden apartments were built on South Hill by both Cornell and Morse Chain, and Ithaca began to anticipate a building boom. The expected boom, however, failed to materialize. The need for more housing was accommodated not by new-housing starts but by the conversion of existing one-family houses into apartments. Low-cost housing units were planned for West Hill, despite residents' protests. Citizens' demands for improved service in public transportation were met with the extension of bus service to South Hill after an angry mob stormed City Hall. As the forties closed, the Ithaca Shopping Plaza with Ithaca's first supermarket opened on the Elmira Road; residents in the Bryant tract began agitating for an arterial highway to divert truck traffic from State Street; and the hospital was judged too antiquated to qualify for federal funds for improvements. These developments introduced issues that would continue to plague the city in the next two decades.

During the 1950s Ithacans focused much of their attention on how and where the city was developing. The building boom that had failed to material-

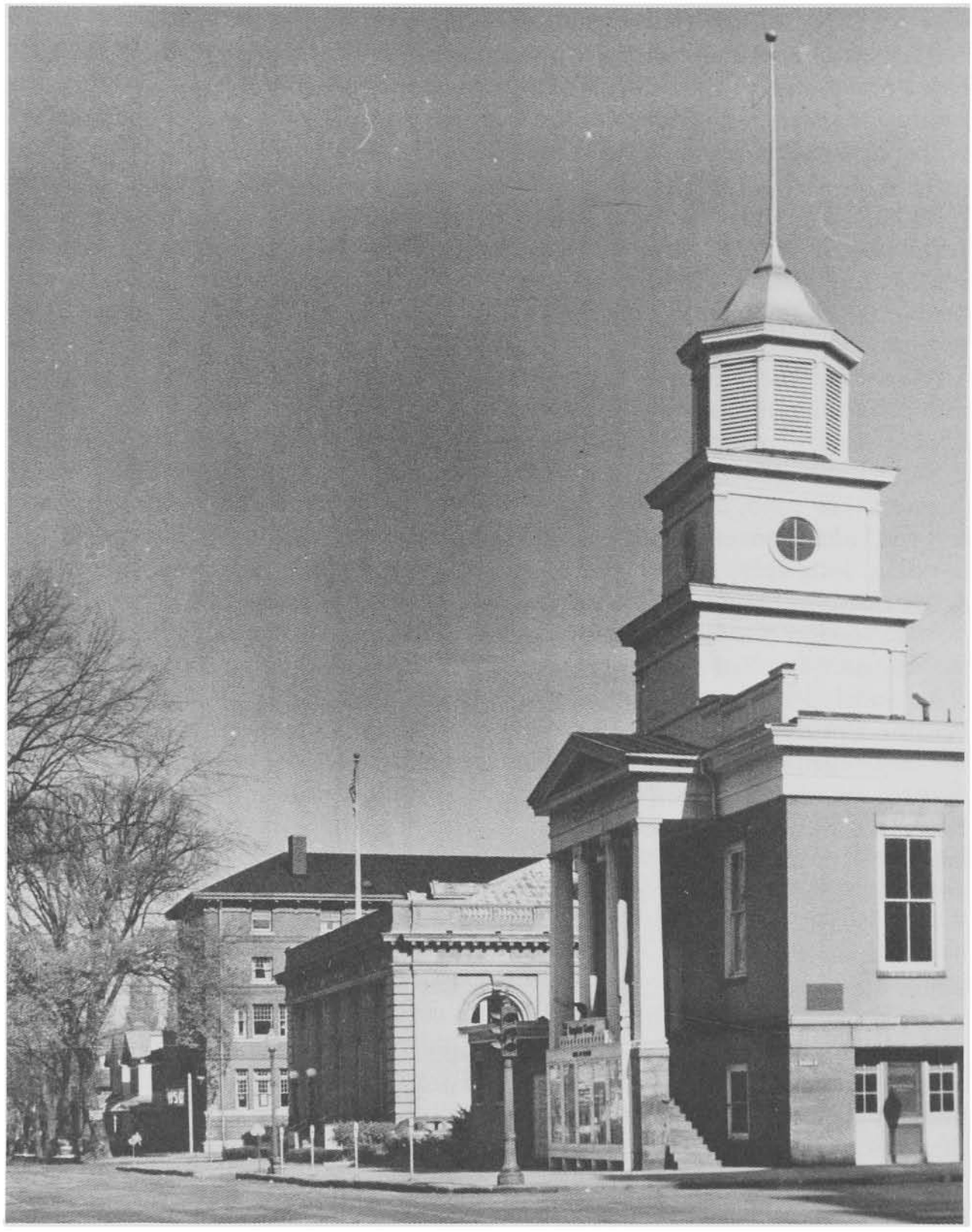
ize in the forties occurred instead in the opening years of the new decade and provoked heated debate on zoning and development. In the new zoning ordinance of 1950, the city tried to address its long-term needs both for housing and for industrial and commercial growth. Local realtors criticized multiple residence provisions of the new ordinance as oppressive. But even as new zoning restrictions were being debated, the city was continuing to grow. The opening of two new elementary schools—one on West Hill (1950), the other on South Hill (1956)—indicated two areas that were expanding. Indeed, at this time the West Hill Civic Association became very active, petitioning the city for aid for development. At this time, too, annexation emerged as a major issue; bills to extend the city limits in several directions were introduced in Common Council. Although in 1954 Cayuga Heights rejected annexation by a vote of 403 to 327, the Spencer Road district was annexed in 1956.

Foreseeing the dangers of uncontrolled growth, the city superintendent called for a comprehensive master plan for the Greater Ithaca Area, so that Ithaca could plan its own future instead of developing haphazardly into an urban sprawl. Meanwhile, the state had approved a new arterial highway (Route 13) in 1950, the city was at work on Green Street and the Tuning Fork, and the federal government was looking at flood control. Annual ice jams and flooding, long accepted by Ithacans as facts of life, were unacceptable to the Army Corps of Engineers. Common Council voted unanimously to participate in the creation of a federal flood control channel, even though it would cause the destruction of an entire neighborhood. During the fifties, offers of massive state and federal funding became irresistible, and the availability of money became a prime criterion for planning new projects. At the end of the decade, the city began working on recreation areas and parking areas, it recommended closing the municipal airport and shifting all air traffic to the new airport on East Hill, it undertook construction of a new high school on Percy Field, and it began planning for a new public library. An attempt to pass a new, more comprehensive city charter failed in 1959, but change was inevitable.

Urban Renewal

During the 1950s and 1960s Ithaca experienced a distinct demographic change that ultimately affected the city's politics, economics, and appearance. Ithaca's population, which had grown rapidly between 1940 and 1950, declined throughout the fifties and sixties. New housing developments were opening up outside the city, and more and more people moved to the suburbs. In the early sixties the first of several shopping centers outside of the city was built, and this mall, along with the others that followed it, drew business away from downtown merchants, thus contributing to the deterioration of the city's commercial district.

Urban renewal became the dominant issue in the sixties as Ithaca, like other aging American cities, sought to rebuild its business district. The federal government would pay three-quarters of the net project cost for urban renewal,



9. Old City Hall (1843) and the United States Post Office (1913) in the 1960s. The demolition of City Hall in 1965 spurred the formation of Historic Ithaca and aroused public support for the preservation of historic downtown buildings. Photograph by Curt Foerster.

and the remaining quarter would be split between the city and the state. A massive plan to redevelop one hundred acres of the central district was unveiled; despite taxpayers' protests at the cost, the Common Council voted to go ahead with the project. Plans to renew the Inlet, the West End, and Collegetown were also on the drawing board.

As the plans for urban renewal became reality, major changes appeared in the face of the downtown. Entire blocks were cleared for new construction. In the process, dozens of buildings of architectural value and historic importance were demolished to make way for modern buildings and more parking areas. City Hall was one of the victims. The preservation of the building, which had been erected in 1844, had long been the subject of debate. It was antiquated and no longer served the needs of all the groups that used it. In 1966 it was torn down to provide additional downtown parking, and a "new" City Hall on Green Street was purchased. The demolition of City Hall became a symbol of the excesses of urban renewal and led to the discussion of architectural preservation and rehabilitation as other means of revitalizing the city.

In 1961 Ithaca College opened its new South Hill campus after sixty-nine years downtown (see Chapters 1 and 4), leaving behind a number of vacant buildings, including the Boardman House, which would become a rallying point for preservationists in the seventies. The city school district undertook a five-year plan of construction which resulted in an addition to Fall Creek School and the construction of Northeast and Glenwood elementary schools and DeWitt and Boynton middle schools. Except for Boynton, all these schools were located outside the city limits but within the Ithaca City School District, which had expanded over the years to absorb schools in Danby, Caroline, and Enfield. And not only the facilities were new: the concept of a middle school, consisting of grades six through eight, replaced that of a junior high school, although not without some public debate.

School taxes became a volatile issue as the city struggled to support the increased needs of the school system on a declining tax base. Unlike taxpayers in surrounding school districts, Ithaca's taxpayers do not vote on their annual school budget. By the late 1970s and early 1980s declining school enrollment led to the sale or mothballing of seven older school buildings,[35] and the resulting redistricting uprooted many children from their neighborhood schools.

Ithaca: The Past Twenty Years

In the late sixties, protests over the Vietnam War, demonstrations of black power, and the growing use of narcotic and hallucinogenic drugs among the young were eclipsed by battles over zoning, a new city charter, fluoridation,[36] and public housing. The Ithaca Housing Authority, originally established in 1947, was reactivated in 1965 to construct housing for the elderly in Titus Flats. Attempts to make this project available to low-income families were stymied, but the acute need for public housing could not be ignored, and to fill that need, the city undertook the construction of the Hancock Street project.

In 1968 the flood control channel was successfully completed, but despite its benefits it remains an object of lasting resentment. Its construction destroyed the heart of the West End, thereby displacing many long-time residents. It also resulted in the multi-branched intersection known as the Octopus, which the *Journal* called "confusing at times," a characterization that anyone who has ever negotiated the intersection must consider an understatement.[37]

In the 1970s the State Urban Development Corporation entered into urban renewal in Ithaca, providing financing for projects begun under federal funding as well as making new money available for a low-cost housing project on West Hill, parking facilities downtown, redevelopment of Collegetown, and six hundred housing units. Other responsibilities were shifted from the city as the county took over the dump (1970) and established a county sewer agency, thus satisfying demands for extension of services outside city limits. In the seventies and eighties, questions about water supply and sewage treatment have been dealt with by the city, the town of Ithaca, and the county. But no comprehensive solution has been reached.

Downtown revitalization produced the Ithaca Commons in 1974 and continues to the present day with the rehabilitation of older structures for housing and commercial use. Notable examples of such restorations include the Clinton House, Clinton Hall, the DeWitt Mall, and the old Henry St. John School. Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services has rehabilitated houses in several downtown areas. The appearance of entire blocks has thus been improved, for renovation of one house encourages neighboring homeowners to rehabilitate their properties as well. As the physical decline in downtown neighborhoods is reversed, many people are returning there to live. The city and the county have made a concerted effort to attract new businesses and maintain older ones. New high-tech industries are joining the older established companies such as Morse Chain, NCR, and THERM. Ithacans have welcomed and supported small, often innovative businesses and nontraditional enterprises. The Farmers' Market, though lacking a permanent home, has become a social institution as well as a marketplace for locally grown and produced goods.

The 1980s have seen issues of housing, parking, redevelopment, and the relationship between planning and zoning come to the fore once again. The need for solutions to transportation problems—for better roads and bridges and improved traffic patterns—will continue to grow with the population. Questions of water supply, sewerage, waste disposal, and public health will need to be solved, but Ithaca has an articulate, concerned citizenry that will push its public officials into addressing these questions and finding solutions. This has been a mixed blessing, sometimes leading to endless debate and delay.

The story of Ithaca is the story of her people: how they lived and worked, what problems they faced, the solutions they found. It is the story of a community of individuals who learned to live and work together for common needs and common goals. Above all, it is a story of achievement. Ithaca never fulfilled its dreams of glory as a major economic center, but by preserving its natural and architectural beauty and by providing for the needs of young and old, the city has maintained an enviable quality of life.

1 Downtown

Dan Snodderly

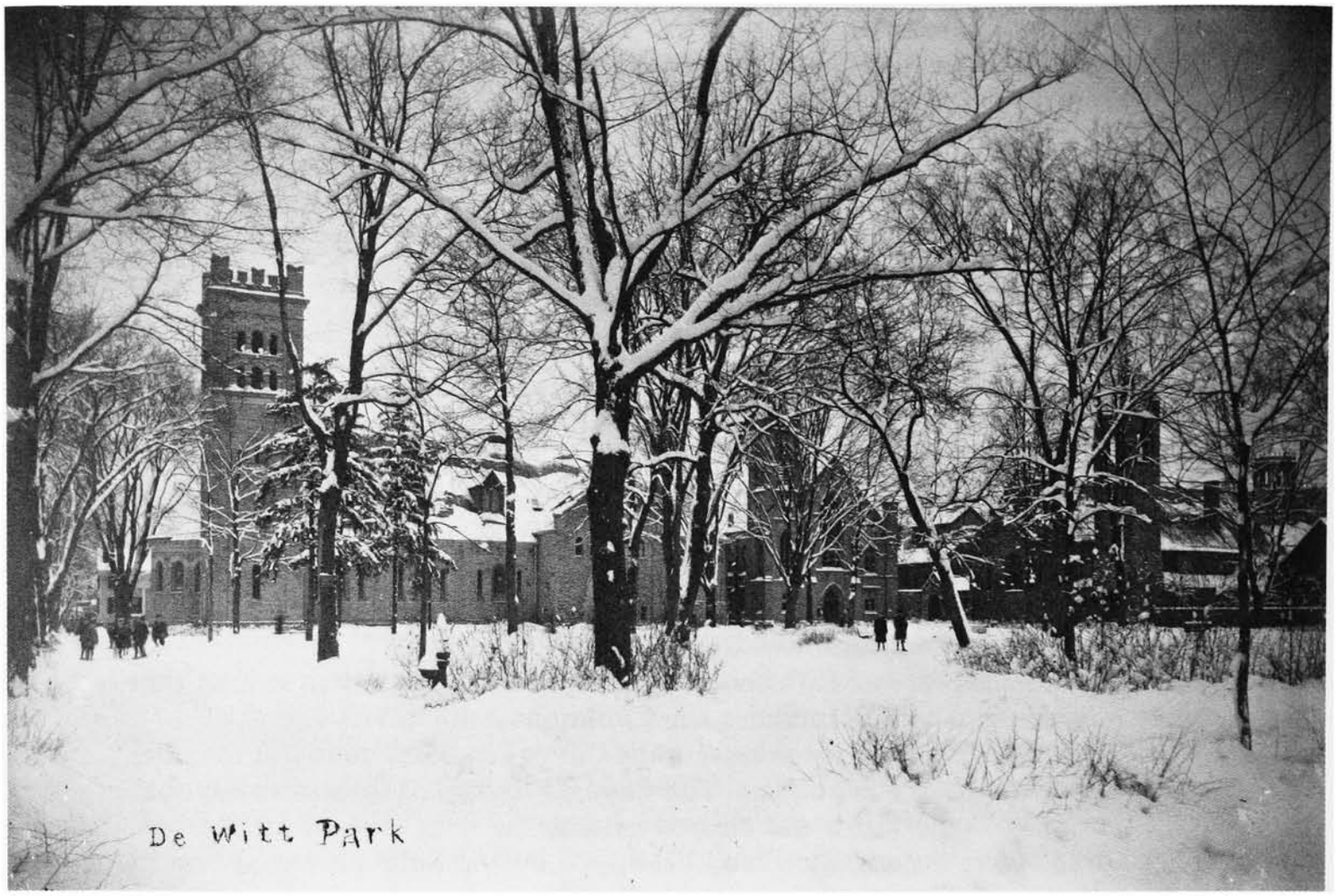
Although Ithaca has been a city for only a hundred years, it has been a neighborhood for twice that long. Located between the hills and the swamps at the head of the lake, the downtown area naturally attracted Ithaca's first settlers. Indeed, downtown has always been the center of Ithaca's commercial, civic, religious, and cultural life. In addition, it has always been a residential area. (For the purposes of this book, we have defined the downtown as that portion of the flats which includes the Commons and DeWitt Park.)

The first residents in the region were the Cayuga Indians, youngest member of the Five Nations of the Iroquois. The Cayugas harvested the marsh hay that grew naturally in the valley and cleared land on the flats to plant other crops. Those crops were among the many destroyed by the Sullivan expedition in 1779, when the Continental Congress sent troops to suppress the Iroquois. As a result, most of the Indians left the area, long before they officially ceded the land to the state.

When the first white settlers arrived in the late 1780s, they also harvested the marsh hay and planted corn in the Indian clearings on the flats. These early settlers, who numbered about thirty, built their homes in three clusters. The Hinepaw family built a cabin on Cascadilla Creek east of present-day University Avenue (near the site of the Christian Science church). The Yaple and Dumond families built cabins at the foot of East Hill near the site of the Cowdry house, 408 East State Street. The McDowell family built their cabin near the present junction of Seneca and Cayuga streets, and the Woodworth family built theirs near the present junction of Buffalo and Cayuga streets.

In 1791 John Yaple built a gristmill on Cascadilla Creek just east of Hinepaw's cabin, thereby founding Ithaca's first industry and establishing the Cascadilla Creek settlement as the center of commercial and industrial activity.

Unfortunately, many of these early settlers did not have legal title to their land. After the Revolutionary War, part of present-day Ithaca was Lot 94 of the Military Tract, land designated for soldiers in return for their service. The illegal residents were therefore forced to relocate. Few of the veterans actually settled on the land they drew, however. Many sold their property to speculators; others were cheated by agents or lost title because they did not or could not pay the taxes.

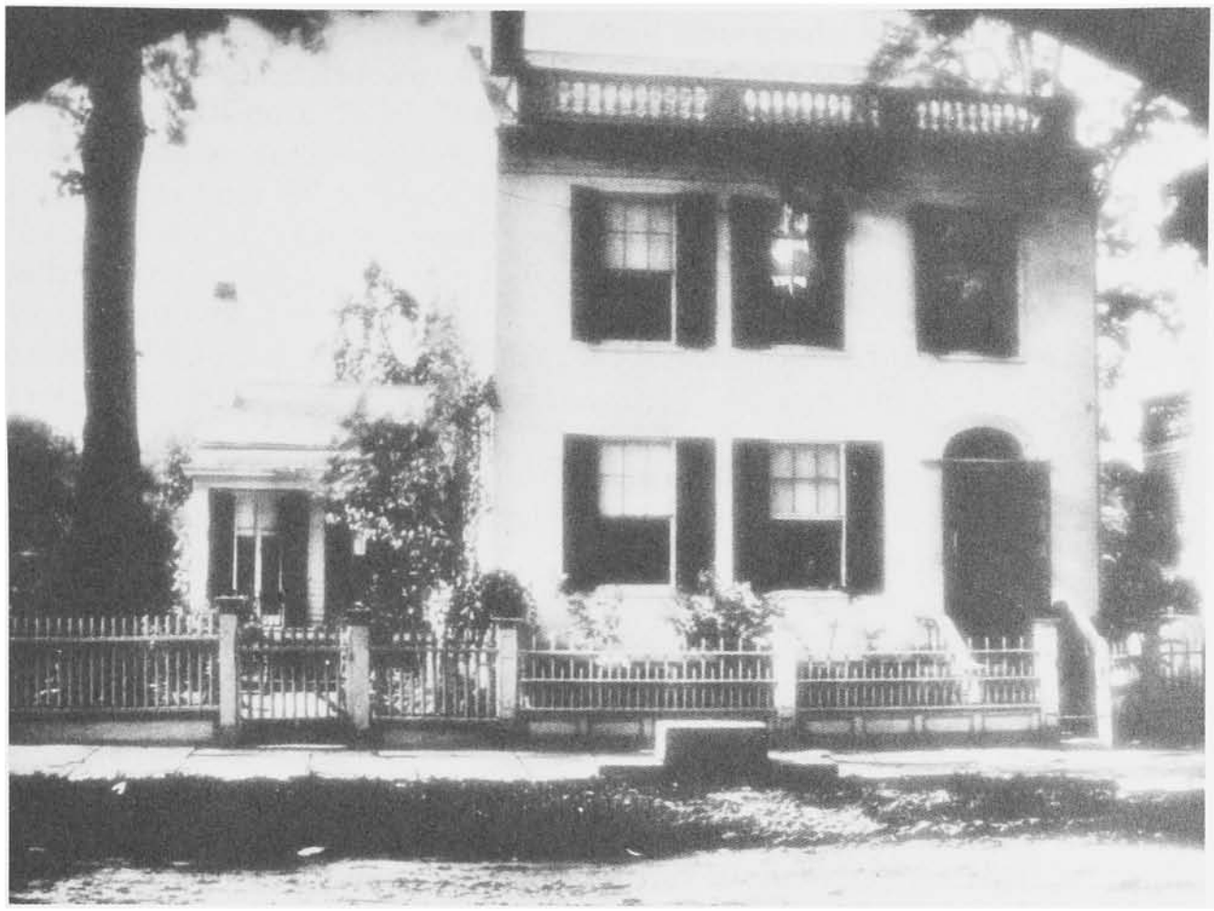


10. DeWitt Park in winter, early 1900s. The park was laid out by Simeon DeWitt as the town green during the first decade of the nineteenth century. It is now owned by the First Presbyterian Church and maintained by the city.

Much of the rest of downtown soon came into the possession of Albany resident Abraham Bloodgood, who obtained from the state a patent to 1,400 acres here, including all the present downtown area west of Tioga Street. Around 1795, Bloodgood transferred 1,000 acres of that land to Simeon DeWitt, his son-in-law, in exchange for services rendered. DeWitt continued to acquire more until he owned about 2,000 acres, including most of the land between the hills.

As surveyor general of New York State, DeWitt spent most of his time in Albany but kept in close touch with Ithaca through his local agent and by making frequent visits. He surveyed the present downtown area into lots and sold them at modest prices. Some years after he died, in 1834, the town honored him by changing the name of the Public Square to DeWitt Park.

In 1804, David Quigg acquired the Hinepaw cabin on the Cascadilla Creek close to the present site of the Christian Science church. From this cabin he operated Ithaca's first store, selling and bartering a wide variety of goods. A short time later, he moved his business to the southwest corner of Seneca and Aurora (site of the Bates Block), where he established Ithaca's first full-time



11. The Beebe-Halsey House at 308 North Cayuga Street, one of the oldest buildings in Ithaca (ca. 1816).

business. By the early 1800s, that intersection, where the Tompkins House, a hotel, was located, had become the center of commercial activity. The commercial hub soon shifted to Aurora and Owego (later State), site of the Ithaca Hotel, and still later to State and Tioga.

Another downtown industrial center developed in the 1810s on the north branch of Six Mile Creek (the branch ran along the foot of East Hill on its way to join Cascadilla Creek, and was later filled in). Here, for example, were located tanneries run by Daniel Bates and Comfort Butler. Other enterprises, including a tannery run by Joseph Esty, were located on the main part of the creek.

Other industrial centers gradually developed on Fall Creek and the Cayuga Inlet, and by 1850 most of the industrial activity in the downtown area proper had petered out. Several cigar factories remained in business, however, until late in the century. The best known was A. H. Platts and Company on East State, which produced such famous brands as "Ultimatum" and "Our Club Rooms."

By the mid-1820s, the future State Street had become not only the commercial center of Ithaca but one of the two civic centers as well. Grant's Coffee House, built in 1811 on the site of the current Grant Block, 108–114 East State, served as the village hall, voting place, and council chamber combined when

the village and town of Ithaca were incorporated in 1821. The coffeehouse also served as the office for the Grant and Company stagecoach lines. (The Catskill Turnpike ran down State Street on its way from the Hudson River to Bath.)

The other civic center developed around the Public Square, which DeWitt had laid out as a town green. DeWitt also gave some of his land to religious denominations and donated a lot for the courthouse in 1817. In 1818 a small wooden Greek Revival structure was hastily built on the lot to ensure that Ithaca would become the county seat. That building was replaced in 1854 by what is now called the Old Courthouse, 121 East Court, the oldest Gothic Revival courthouse in the state. The current courthouse, 320 North Tioga, was built in 1932.

Around the town green, DeWitt also laid out a few very desirable residential lots, and some of Ithaca's finest houses were built here—many of them, unfortunately, no longer standing.

The State Street area did not lack for housing either, even though single-family houses were not much in evidence. From the beginning, the upper floors of downtown office and commercial structures housed apartments and rented rooms.

For most people, though, State Street (which got its name in 1867) meant business. The oldest existing business in the city, the *Ithaca Journal,* still resides on the street. It was founded in 1815 by Jonathan Ingersoll as a weekly called the *Seneca Republican.* A year or so later Ebenezer Mack and a partner purchased the paper. The name was changed to the *Ithaca Journal* in 1823. Soon after it acquired the paper, Mack's firm branched out into book publishing, established a print shop and bindery, purchased a paper mill, and opened a bookstore. A later version of the firm, Andrus and Church, built the handsome structure at 143 East State in 1871, and the business continued (under a different name) for several decades. Meanwhile, Mack's firm had sold the *Ithaca Journal* in 1833. The paper successfully converted to daily publication in 1872 and moved to its present site in 1905. Frank Gannett bought the paper in 1912, his first acquisition outside Elmira. Another of Ithaca's oldest businesses, the Corner Book Store, which dates back to the 1830s, has likewise had several names and several locations.

Ever since David Quigg started his business, dry-goods stores, which later evolved into department stores, have been a staple of downtown. The Wilgus brothers built the now-demolished Wilgus Block at the corner of State and Tioga in 1868 primarily to house their successful dry-goods business. The Rothschild brothers, who started their variety store in 1882, a business that prospered for a hundred years, located in the Wilgus Block in 1889. After moving to a new store on the site of the old Ithaca Hotel at State and Aurora streets, Rothschild's closed in 1982, and two years later, Iszard's, an Elmira firm founded in 1904, opened an Ithaca branch in the same building. On a smaller scale, several clothing stores continue to serve the downtown community. Of particular interest are two third-generation firms, Irv Lewis Menswear and Morris' Men's & Ladies' Wear, both founded in 1905, the first by tailor Jacob Lewis and the second by his brother Morris.

Major fires in 1840 and 1842 destroyed many of the buildings on the then

12. The Wilgus, Sprague, Andrus, and Sage blocks, ca. 1909. Rothschild Brothers Department Store moved into the Wilgus Block in 1889 and remained there until the building, which had been remodeled extensively in 1913, was demolished in 1975.

Owego Street between Aurora and Tioga. Then in 1871 Ithaca's largest fire ravaged the area bounded by Aurora Street on the east, Six Mile Creek on the south, State Street on the north, and the middle of the 100 block of East State Street on the west. Eleven buildings were destroyed; the loss was over $200,000. The downtown began to rebuild almost immediately, however, and several of the city's most handsome brick buildings, including the Griffin Block, 224 East State, date from this period of reconstruction.

By the 1840s the village government decided it needed a home other than Grant's Coffee House. Village Hall was constructed in 1843 on the northeast corner of Seneca and Tioga. It became known as City Hall in 1888 when Ithaca incorporated as a city.

Another important downtown structure, the Cornell Public Library, was located across Seneca Street from Village Hall. The library was begun in 1863 with funds provided by Ezra Cornell, who, having made his fortune in the telegraph business, had returned to Ithaca in the 1850s to establish a model farm and pursue "scientific agriculture." Besides books and meeting rooms, the Cornell Library included an auditorium that hosted various large gatherings, including Cornell University's inaugural ceremony, many Cornell commencements, and lectures by such luminaries as Mark Twain, Louis B. Agassiz, and Susan B. Anthony.

As early as 1881, village officials had begun discussing the question of incor-