



Helen Amelia Loguen Douglass, c. 1863.
Helen's father was Jermain Loguen, pastor of the AME Zion Church. She married Frederick Douglass's son Lewis in 1869.

most turbulent period since its inception: both freeing African-Americans from slavery, and preserving the Union. Lincoln's funeral train traveled through Syracuse on its way to his burial in Illinois.

Even after the Passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, "Syracuse" continued to be synonymous with the word "freedom" to fleeing slaves. The only fugitive ever captured in Syracuse was freed, by a group of anti-slavery activists. This

action became known as the "Jerry Rescue" after the freed slave, who was later known as "Jerry," although his name was actually William McHenry. Each year thereafter, abolitionist speakers including Samuel May, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass and Thomas Wentworth Higginson commemorated the the Jerry Rescue in Syracuse. A memorial stands in Clinton Square to remind us of the amazing history of Syracuse, and its integral role in the Underground Railroad.

And then there was one...

On December 14, 1847, the nearly 20,000 residents living in the Village of Syracuse and the town of Salina made a joint decision to incorporate as the City of Syracuse. The first City Charter was adopted on January 1, 1848, and the first Mayor of Syracuse was Harvey Baldwin.



Harvey Baldwin

The first City Hall was originally built as "Market Hall" in 1845, complete with market stalls, and a bell tower added in 1857 to be used as a fire alarm. Market Hall was renamed the Syracuse City Hall in 1848, until it was deemed inadequate for the growing needs of the exploding population of the newly incorporated City.

A new City Hall was built between the years of 1889 and 1892. It was designed by native Syracusan and architect Charles E. Colton to look like a medieval castle. With the use of heavy stone, large and small towers, and of stone bars dividing the windows, all of which make the building look like a fortress.

In 1976, City Hall was added to the National Register of Historic Places. If you travel to the basement of City Hall, you can still see the old jail cells where criminals were kept. In the marble façade leading up the stairway to the second floor, the names of the farmers from the old market on the first floor can still be seen etched into the stone. Assessment books from the first years of the City are still kept in the basement. Property tax records going as far back as 1848 can still be read, very carefully.

The New York State Fair begins, and ends up, in Syracuse

The very first New York State Fair took place in Syracuse in 1841. The New York State Legislature appropriated \$8,000 for the "promotion of agriculture and household manufacturers in the State" in an annual fair. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people were in attendance at this first New York State Fair, primarily farmers. While the fair moved from city to city for the next several years, it came back to Syracuse in 1849, the year after the incorporation of the City.

It was at the 1849 State Fair in Syracuse that the first "Ferris Wheel" was introduced, nearly four decades before the Ferris Wheel made its debut at the 1893 Columbian Exposition. According to *The Empire Showcase, A History of the New York State Fair*, "The structure was a great iron and oaken wheel with wooden bucket cars large enough to carry either four adults or six children aloft from the end of each of the four arms."

In 1890, after years of lobbying by James Geddes and other prominent Syracusans, the New York State Fair was moved to its present location permanently. The Fair now attracts over 1 million visitors each year, and grosses in excess of \$13 million during its annual twelve day run.

The Later Years

When the salt industry began declining after the American Civil War, Syracuse ingenuity picked up the slack. Many talented engineers and builders invented and made traffic lights, specialty electric items, foot measuring devices, typewriters, bicycles, steel, the Franklin cars, mincemeat, and began production of soda ash at the Solvay Process Company. Tobacco also became a major employer in turn-of-the-century Syracuse; in 1910 the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce listed tobacco as the City's 10th largest industry. At this time, Syracuse was known to manufacture a more diverse array of products than even New York City!

In this fashion, Syracuse rightfully earned a reputation as one of the most diverse economies within the United States and continued to grow at an amazingly frenetic pace. Before World War II, Syracuse had a population of nearly 210,000 people, and a widely diverse downtown and entertainment district. In the 1920's and 1930's, while the rest of the United States suffered under the heavy cloud of an economic Depression of staggering proportions, Syracuse actually continued growing, attracting even more businesses! Dairylea Cooperative relocated in 1930, General Super Plating in 1932, and the Carrier Corporation in 1937.

During WWII, business production in Syracuse shifted to war-goods. After the war, many businesses began to locate themselves outside the periphery of the city. To counter this movement, in later years many measures were taken to provide incentives for businesses locating to Syracuse. A revitalization and preservation effort began in the late 1970's and early 1980's that continues today. Much of Syracuse has an amazing and intricate past. Armory, Clinton,

Hanover and Franklin Squares have all become beautiful areas of Syracuse, once again, due to these revitalization efforts. And all over Syracuse revitalization efforts are taking place in many shapes and forms, through grassroots efforts and through city-wide programs and money. The Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative continues to work very hard to restore that sense of pride, that sense that we live in an amazing city with a very remarkable history, and future.



Market Hall as it appeared in 1889, before being demolished to build the present Syracuse City Hall.

Our Founders

Ephraim Webster

Ephraim Webster was fifteen years old when he became a soldier in General Washington's Continental Army. As a revolutionary war veteran, Webster became a friend and ally of the Onondaga Indians, and was often asked by the United States government to perform confidential and diplomatic missions among the local Indian tribes.

Ephraim Webster later settled in Onondaga County. What would later become the City of Syracuse was named "Webster's Landing" and "Webster's Camp." Webster opened the first trading post, and married an Onondaga Indian maiden. His grandson, Chief Tahtoho, ruled the Onondaga Indian Tribe until he was 71. Several Indian descendants are still living on the Onondaga Reservation today. In the Valley, there is "Webster's Pond" named after him.



Believed to be Tahtoho, grandson of Ephraim Webster - 1850

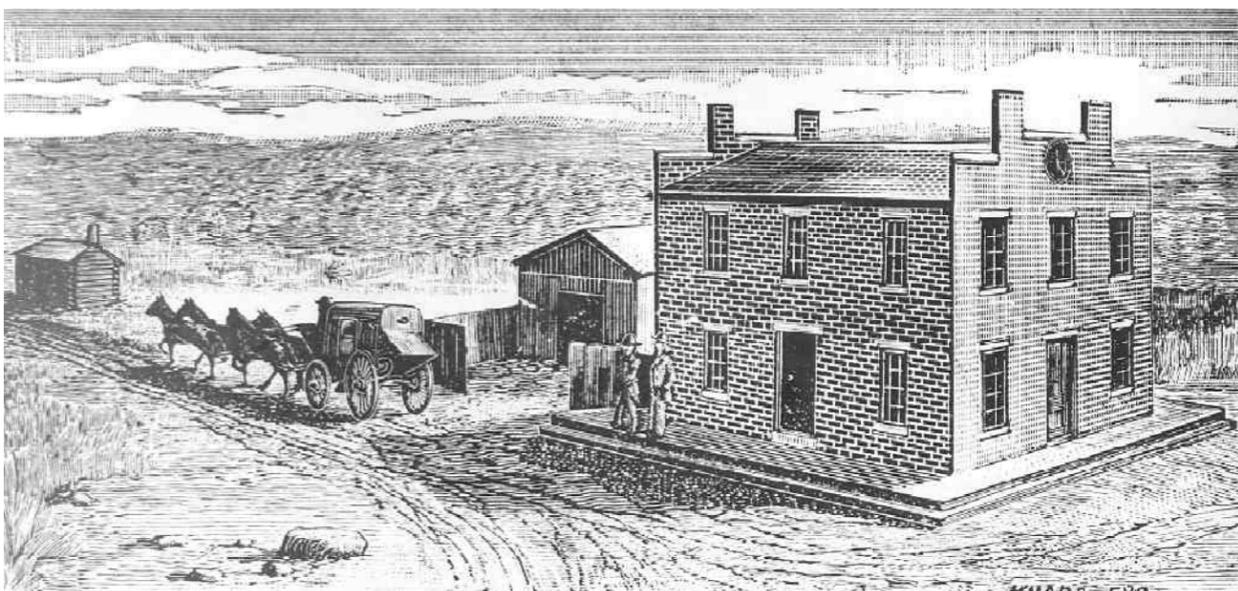


Judge Joshua Forman

Judge Joshua Forman was a man of many trades: Judge, writer, and visionary. As the founder of the Village of Syracuse, which was incorporated in the town of Salina in April 1825, he was also instrumental in choosing

the name "Syracuse" for the new Village. Forman also wrote much of the original language of the Erie Canal Resolution, strongly backing the bill at the State Level. The language of the bill was carefully worded so that President Jefferson and the federal government could participate in building the canal if it chose to, which it later did. Without Judge Forman's unwavering support, it is likely that the Erie Canal bill may have died in the New York State legislature.

In 1822 Judge Forman sponsored a bill in the New York State legislature to lower Onondaga Lake two feet, thus draining the water from what is today downtown Syracuse and eliminating most of the swamplands. It was this action, more than any other, that truly put Syracuse on the path to future development and expansion.



The Original Syracuse House, c.1820.