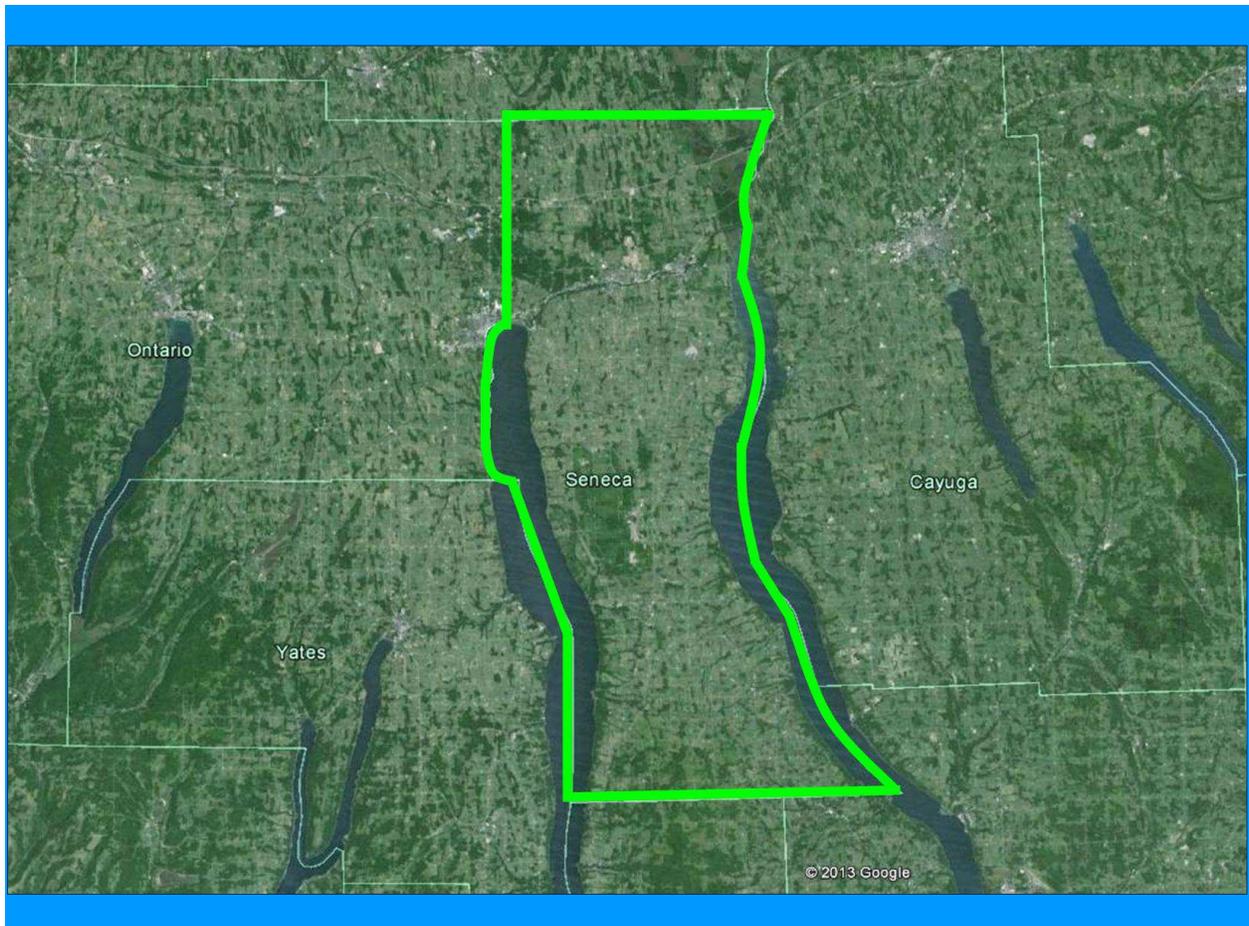


Seneca County Comprehensive Plan Overview



**Seneca County Planning and Community Development Department
June 2014**



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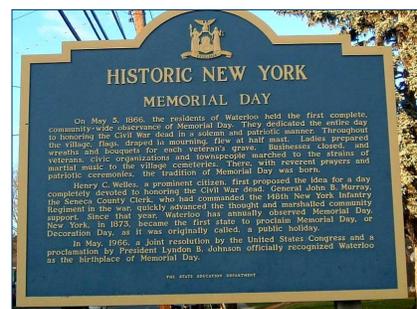
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History of Settlement

The area that would become Seneca County was home to the Seneca and Cayuga tribes of the Iroquois Nation. When the first permanent settlers arrived in the late-1700s, most of the Native American villages and crop lands had been destroyed by the Sullivan Expedition of 1779, intended to prevent the Indians from aiding the British during the American Revolution. Most of the settlers came from Pennsylvania, New England, eastern New York, and New Jersey. Many were former soldiers, awarded plots of land in compensation for their service during the Revolutionary War. Others were immigrants from Europe. When they came, they found vast tracts of fertile land and timber interspersed with swamps and ponds. Some moved on, but those who remained drained the swamps, broke the sod, tilled the soil, built the roads, established the businesses, churches, and schools, and began to create a life for generations of Seneca County residents.

Water was important to Seneca County since the beginning. The 45-foot drop in the Seneca River became the site of flour and textile mills. By 1800, there were about 5,000 people in present-day Seneca County. In 1818, a canal on the Seneca River was completed. The connection of this canal with the Erie Canal in 1828 stimulated population and industrial growth in the Villages of Seneca Falls and Waterloo. Farmers throughout the County could bring their agricultural products, especially wheat, to these canal communities for processing and shipping to markets in New York City and, from there, throughout the world.

Starting in the early 1840s, the new railroad line became central to the life of the residents of Seneca Falls and Waterloo and to local farmers, replacing the canal as the primary means of transporting goods and people. The industrial mix began to change, too, with heavier manufacturing businesses opening in the two largest villages, such as the manufacture of pumps and fire engines, and, later, pianos and organs. The villages of Seneca Falls and Waterloo developed around the canal and train depots in tight self-contained networks, with doctors, cafes, groceries, blacksmiths, churches, schools, drugstores, and banks within convenient walking distance.



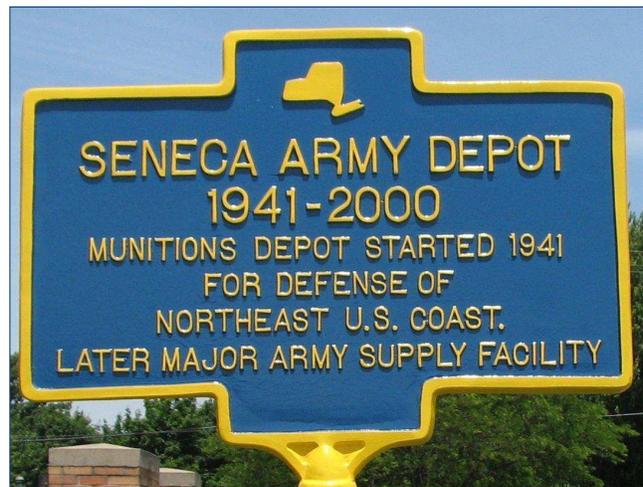
The innovations in the economy and growth in population were accompanied by calls for social change. Seneca County was an important hub of the religious revival, abolitionist, temperance, and, most notably, women's rights movements. The first women's rights convention in the United States was held in Seneca Falls in 1848. The Declaration of Sentiments adopted at the convention continues to express the goals of equal rights movements throughout the world.

Other important historical events occurring in Seneca County include the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at the Peter Whitmer farmhouse in the Town of Fayette in 1830, and the first community celebration of Memorial Day in the Village of Waterloo in 1866, just after the Civil War.

The Civil War was a boon for the county's farmers, who benefitted from the wartime demand for food and rising commodity prices. Smaller settlements, such as the villages of Interlaken, Lodi, and Ovid, and the hamlets of Romulus and Willard, developed as centers of the agricultural community.

The pattern of the northern portion of the County devoted primarily to commerce and industry and the much larger central and southern parts of County centered on productive agriculture continues to the present day. Perhaps the most interesting reflection of this development pattern is the unique situation that Seneca County has two county seats, Waterloo in the north and Ovid in the south.

War conditions had a major impact on the County in the mid-twentieth century. Expansive farmlands were transformed into the Seneca Ordnance Depot, a munitions storage facility for the US Army, in 1941. Other farmlands became the Sampson Naval Station in 1942. Over 400,000 naval recruits were trained at Sampson during World War II. With the outbreak of the Korean Conflict, the Sampson facility became the Sampson Air Force Base, where over 300,000 airmen received training, until it was closed in 1971. The Seneca Ordnance Depot, renamed the Seneca Army Depot, became the focus of the first anti-nuclear weapons demonstrations in the United States in 1983. The Depot was fully decommissioned in 1996.



Most of the former Samson Naval Station became Samson State Park. There are now four state parks in the County, several state special conservation areas, a national forest, a herd of rare white-tailed deer, and a national wildlife refuge—testaments to the County's unparalleled natural resources.

Much of the County's identity is formed by a close relationship with its conservation assets, natural resources, and stunning landscapes: two Finger Lakes, wetlands, rolling hills, steep slopes, grasslands, woodlands, and working farmlands. Outdoor recreation, boating, hunting, and fishing are enjoyed by residents and draw thousands of tourists to Seneca County. A favorable microclimate formed by the slopes and lakes, as well as the right kind of soil for grapes, have prompted the opening of about 30 commercial wineries along Seneca and Cayuga Lakes since 1977.

Thus, the history of Seneca County is the story of residents responding to the natural environment in the development of settlements, industry, and agriculture. Each part of the County generates its own underlying economic process that holds it together—respectful of nature and totally connected with the rest of the County and the rest of the world.

County residents have a strong sense of pride in their rich history. This synopsis is the briefest summary of the past and how it influences the present. The reader is encouraged to visit the website of the Seneca County historian, where photographs, historical documents, stories, and studies trace the detailed history of the County.



Waterloo c. 1975. Rather than dominate the environment, traditional settlements in Seneca County depend on their ecological context for water supply, air quality, the processing of waste, food, recreation, and other necessities.

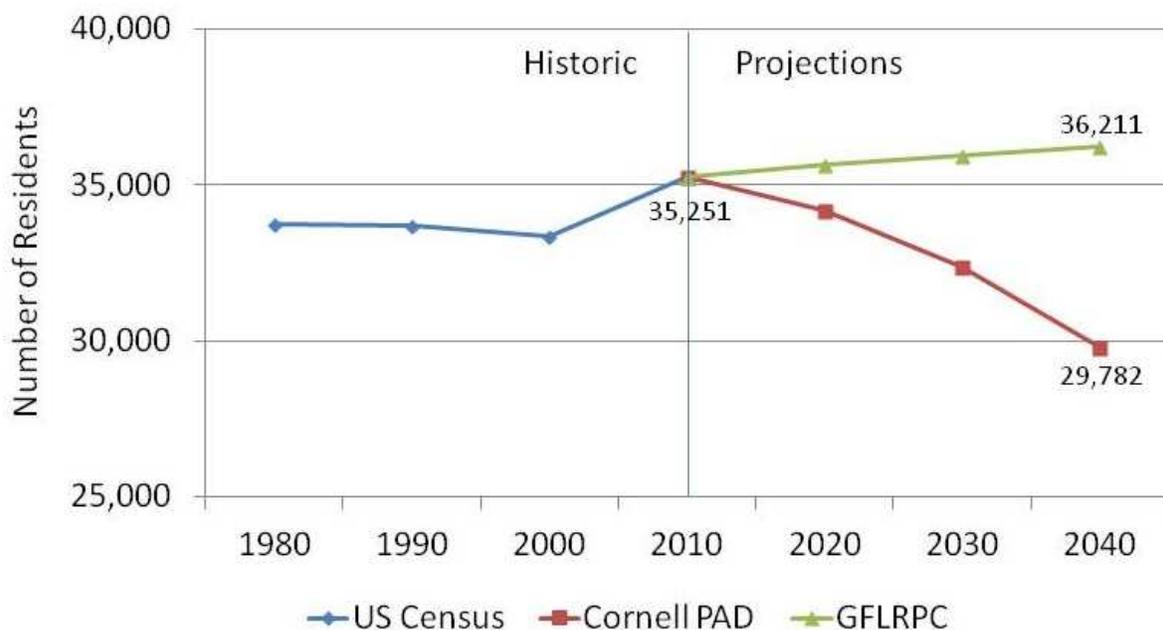
Population Statistics and Projections

Between 2000 and 2010, Seneca County was one of the fastest growing counties in all of New York State. The County's population growth rate of 5.7% was nearly triple the State's rate of 2.1%. A sizable portion of the population growth was due to the opening of two new correctional facilities. Not including the increased inmate population, Seneca County's population grew 1.9% between 2000 and 2010.

What will happen over the next 10 to 30 years? Projecting population change into the future can allow the County to anticipate and plan for future needs. However, accurate demographic projections are difficult to develop, especially for areas of modest population like Seneca County. Assumptions must be made about such unknowns as market conditions and life expectancies. Small differences in base calculations can compound to big differences in estimates over time. And unforeseen events, like the opening or closing of a prison or army base, can add to the difficulty of making predictions.

Both the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council and the Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics have projected Seneca County's population to 2030. The Regional Planning Council estimates a small but steady increase in the number of residents. Cornell, on the other hand, forecasts a slow but steady decline. In both cases, the rate of projected change is very, very low. The Regional Planning Council estimates the population will grow at a rate of 0.09% per year; Cornell estimates the County's population will decrease at a rate of 0.56% per year. Change at these rates, either positive or negative, is likely to be highly manageable.

Table 1. Seneca County Population Trends



Population change within the County was relatively robust, with nine of the ten towns and two of the five villages experiencing an overall population change of greater than 5%. Romulus accounted for virtually all of the County's net population growth between 2000 and 2010. The Town's growth corresponds directly to the opening of the Five Points State Correctional Facility (2000) and the new Seneca County jail (2005).

Table 2. Population by Municipality

Population Comparisons			
	2010 Population	Population Change 2000-2010	Median Age
Seneca County	35,251	5.7	41.0
Towns			
Covert	1,552	-0.1	45.4
Fayette	3,002	6.6	43.8
Junius	1,471	8.0	39.4
Lodi	1,259	10.6	42.7
Ovid	1,728	-20.1	43.9
Romulus	4,297	112.8	33.4
Seneca Falls	2,362	-5.4	41.5
Tyre	981	9.1	40.0
Varick	1,857	7.4	40.7
Waterloo	3,402	-5.1	43.3
Villages			
Interlaken	602	-10.7	38.1
Lodi	291	-13.9	40.3
Ovid	602	-0.2	39.3
Seneca Falls	6,678	-2.5	41.0
Waterloo	5,167	1.2	42.3

Sources: Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council and US Census Bureau (median age)

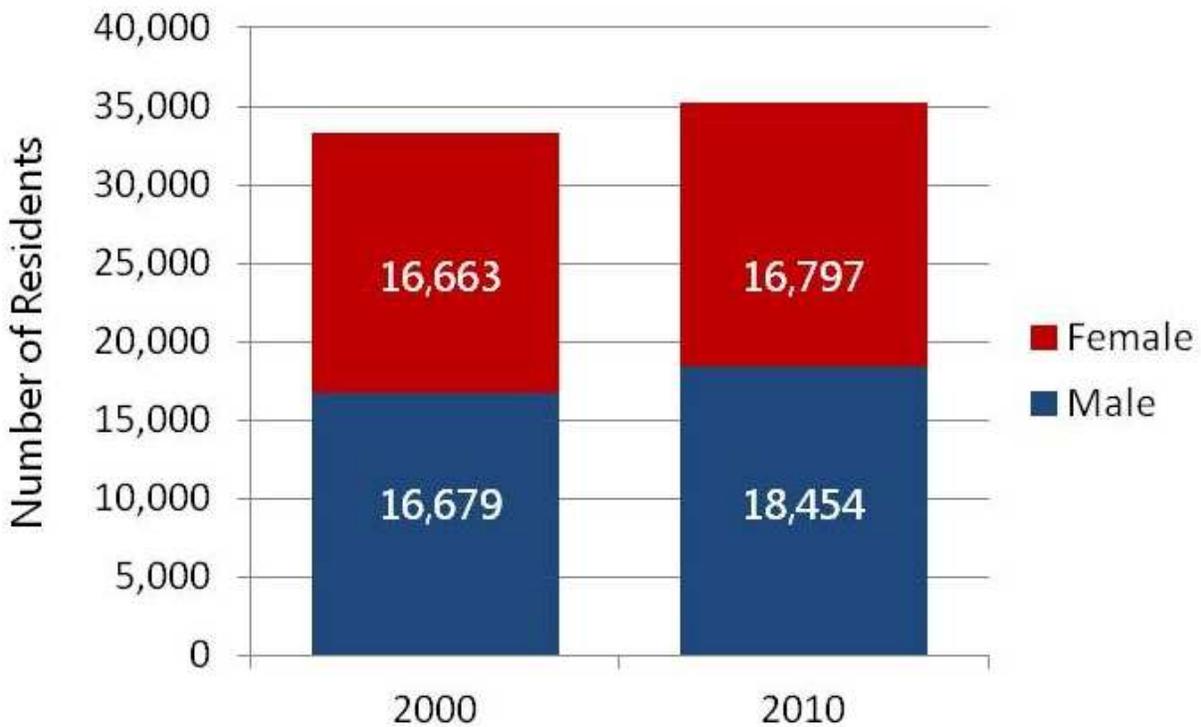
The African-American population increased 105% between 2000 and 2012 to about 1,800 individuals, or 5.1% of the County's total population. There are about 1,100 Latinos in the County, an increase of 44% since 2000, and 3.1% of the total population. African-Americans and Latinos are the largest minority groups in the County, which is 91% white. The prison population accounts for a significant part of the non-white population.

The age of the average person in Seneca County is 41, but women, with their longer life expectancy, have a median age of 43.3 years old, compared to men’s median age of 39.2. Since women statistically outlive men, there are slightly more women in the nation, state, and most counties in the US.

In Seneca County, the increase in the number of men far outpaced that of women. Since 2000, when the number of men and women in the County were about equal, the female population increased by 134, or 0.8%, and the male population by 1,775, or 15.2%.

Again, the presence of new correctional facilities explains the disparity. Not including the prison population, the number of men in Seneca County increased by about 115, or 0.7%, between 2000 and 2010.

Table 3. Population by Gender, 2000 and 2010

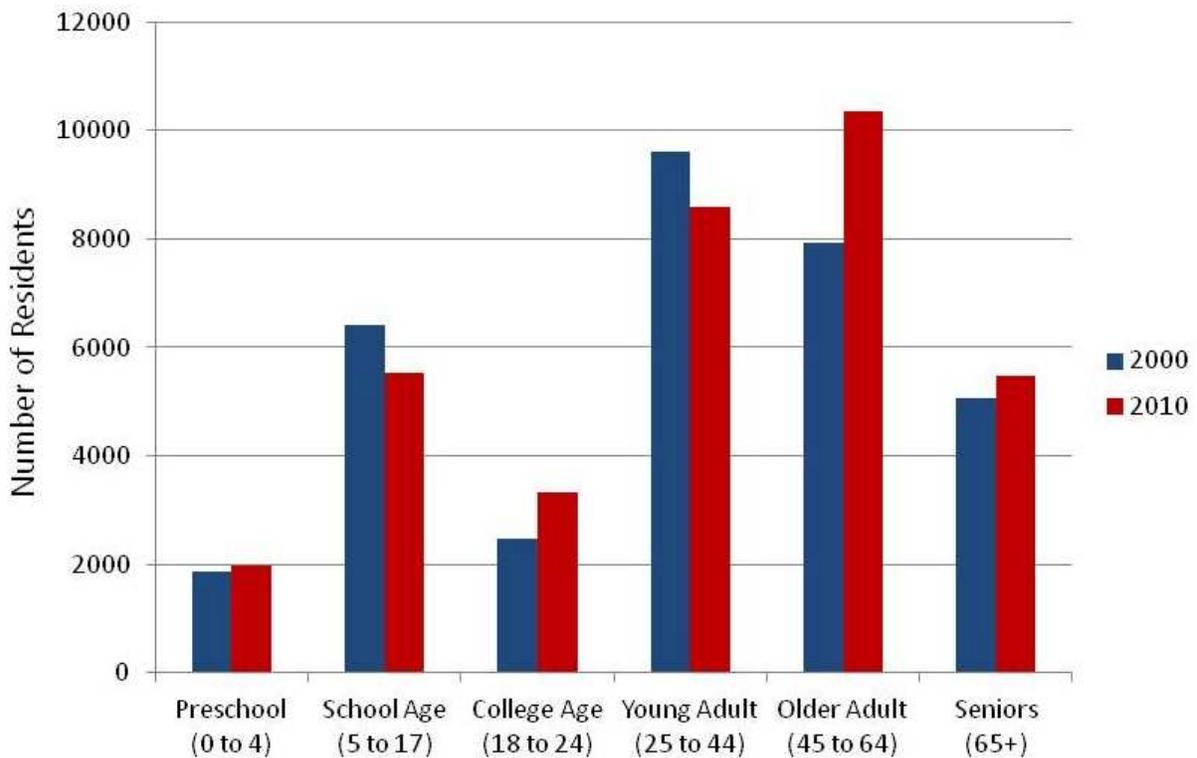


Source: US Census Bureau

The following graph illustrates the population age trends between 2000 and 2010. Unlike most counties in the state, Seneca County gained population in the 24 and younger range. Growth in these younger age groups appears to be largely independent of the prison population, which is primarily older according to State data.

About 29% of County residents in 2010 were between 45 and 64 years of age. This group is followed by young adults ages 25 to 44, who comprised 24.4% of the County’s total population. The working age groups (16 to 64) accounted for 66.1% of all residents. Those too young to work made up 18.4% of the population, and those of traditional retirement age, 15.5%.

Table 4. Population by Age, 2000 and 2010



Source: US Census Bureau

Where people in the County reside today aligns with historical patterns of agriculture and industrial development.

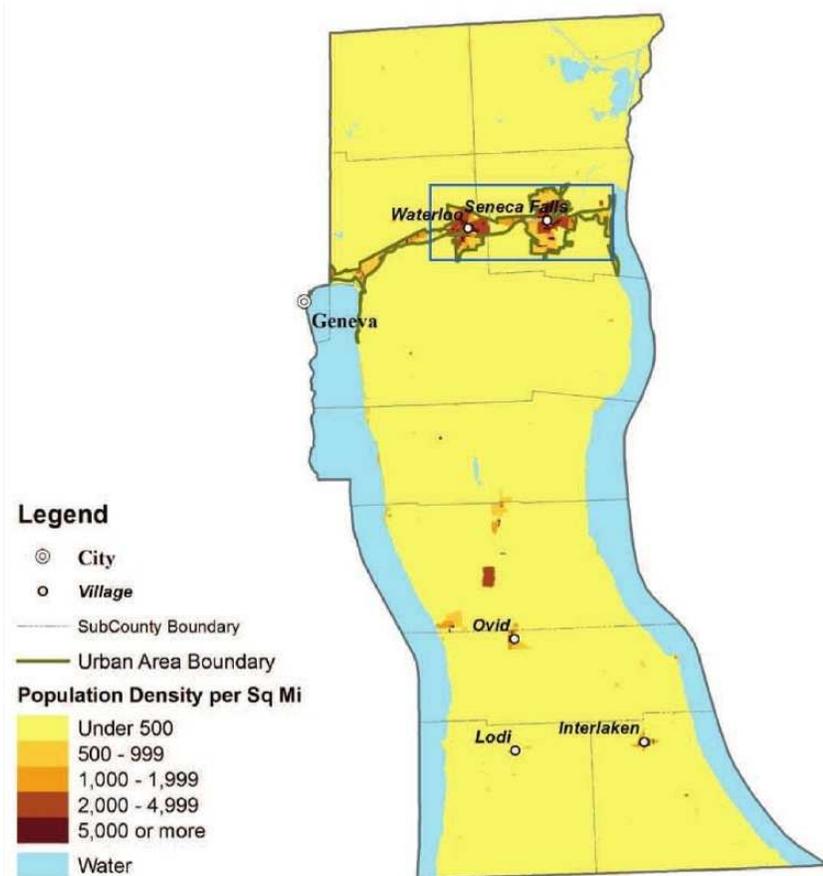
The average population density for Seneca County towns and villages is provided in the following table and map. The data are from the 2010 Census. Village calculations include the Village of Seneca Falls, which was dissolved and merged into the Town of Seneca Falls in 2011.

Table 5. Average Population Density, 2010 >>

Average Population Density	Persons Per Square Mile
County	108.5
Towns	70.9
Villages	2,240.8

Source: US Census Bureau

Map 1. Seneca County Population Density, 2010 >>



Source: Cornell Program on Applied Demographics

Geology

It is no exaggeration to say that Seneca County's society, economy, and history are products of its geology. As Dr. Warren Allmon, Director of the Paleontological Research Institute at the Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, writes, "From the settlement patterns of Native Americans around sources of rock salt, to the modern patterns of forests, dairy farms, wineries, and recreational activities, geological history in the Finger Lakes region has profoundly affected where people have lived and what they have done on (and to) the land," including Seneca County.

Eons ago, the County was covered by water, part of the Devonian Sea. For nearly 300 million years, soil was deposited by ancient rivers on the Sea bottom, creating layers of sediment.

Advances and retreats of glaciers, beginning two million years ago, carved channels into the Sea, forming our present rivers, hills, gorges, waterfalls, lakes, and ponds.



*Seneca Stone Quarry, Fayette. **Geology helps us understand the history, culture, economy, and settlement of Seneca County.***

Permanent settlement began around the falls in the Seneca River, and the population remains densest in this glacial lake plain, 5 to 6 miles wide, along the Seneca River. The level terrain and generally sandy soil made this stretch a convenient route for builders of the Erie Canal, railroads, and New York State Thruway.

Seneca and Cayuga Lakes are two of the deepest lakes in the United States. The true depth of the glacier carved rock may be more the twice the lakes' current depth of 618 and 435 feet, respectively. There may be as much as 1,000 feet of glacial sediment below the current lake bottoms. The central and southern shores of both lakes have high walls, and are ringed by steep slopes, which are crossed by steep gorges.

In the 1900s, the exposed rock formations attracted geologists from around the world. Much of the foundational science of American geology was developed in the Finger Lakes Region, including Seneca County. Many of the seminal American geologists were associated with

creationism. Their fossil discoveries helped fuel religious revivalism in the United States, which, in turn, nourished the temperance, abolitionist, and women’s movements for which Seneca County is renowned. Some of the best sites in the world for collecting trilobites, crinoids, and other fossils are in the County.

Today, the lakeside slopes are the site of many wineries, profiting from soils enriched by lime churned up by glaciers. Other fertile soils in the County are composed of glacial sediment, or till, deposited thousands of years ago. Many of the uplands created by the glaciers are now forests and woodlands; the gorges between them are important wildlife corridors.

Other visible evidence of the glaciers are drumlins and the Junius Ponds. Drumlins are distinctive hills of glacial till and hard rock ranging from 20 to 75 feet tall found in the northern edge of the County. The Junius Ponds are a series of hydrologically interdependent ponds, designated by New York State as a Unique Natural Area. Underground mineral deposits make the water ideal for the growth of rare plants and animals.



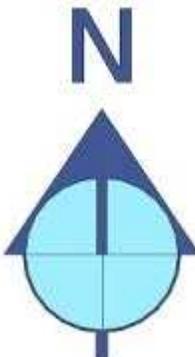
Many of the County’s soils and landforms contain glacial till.

Underground, Seneca County is characterized by distinct layers of rock that change, not only according to depth from the surface, but also from north to south. The table on the following page describes the major underground rock formations in the County.

These layers are buried in deep glacier drift in the northern part of the County, and are close to the surface or exposed in the south. The layers include the most important limestone bed in the State and potentially abundant natural gas deposits. According to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, 212 wells produced nearly 1.1 million cubic feet of natural gas in Seneca County in 2011, up from 160 wells and 0.5 million cubic feet in 2004. The first natural gas well in the County was drilled in 1887.

Geology is ever-present in Seneca County. It affects every landscape: natural and built; past, present, and future.

Table 6. Underground Rock Formations in Seneca County from North to South

Underground Rock Formations (North to South)	
<p>Camillus Shale <i>Deeply buried, this is the oldest and most northerly formation in the County.</i></p>	
<p>Akron Dolomite <i>Also deeply buried, Akron dolomite has become a focus of exploratory oil and gas drilling in western New York.</i></p>	
<p>Manlius Limestone <i>A thin bed of dark blue layers found near Waterloo.</i></p>	
<p>Onondaga Limestone <i>The most important limestone bed in the state, the belt crosses Seneca County from northwest to southeast. It is quarried for highway and industrial uses and contributes lime to soils.</i></p>	
<p>Marcellus and Skaneateles <i>Considered gas shales, these formations are found from Waterloo to Ovid and add to the dark color and heavy texture of soils.</i></p>	
<p>Ludlowville and Moscow Formations <i>Hard layers rich in coral and resistant to erosion, these formations are responsible for the waterfalls throughout the County and add to the shaley character of some soils.</i></p>	
<p>Tully Limestone <i>A fossil-rich shale, this layer is exposed in many ravines and gullies.</i></p>	
<p>Genesee Shale and West River Shale <i>Overlays the Tully Limestone and contributes dark shale fragments and medium texture to soils.</i></p>	
<p>Cashaqua and Hatch Shale Formations <i>Responsible for flagstones and medium texture materials in soils in the southern portion of the County.</i></p>	
<p>Lower West Falls Group <i>These formations underlie the highest hills in the County.</i></p>	

Sources: 1995 Seneca County Comprehensive Plan and Soil Survey of Seneca County (USDA: 1972).



Moving Forward

Seneca County has a history of responding to challenges and charting new paths to the future. We work with the resources we have. We have looked to balance economic and environmental considerations for decades before such symmetry became part of the sustainability trend. Change in Seneca County may be slow and incremental, but it's always thoughtful.

Our strength is in our commonly shared values, which guide us and unite us. The comprehensive plan articulates what community members want to see in their County and how they want their values reflected in the choices County officials make. The plan does this by establishing realistic priorities for allocating resources and responsibilities. It encourages community action, and will help us raise resources for improvements.

The comprehensive plan is a flexible framework to ensure that all of our residents, businesses, officials, and other stakeholders are moving forward together. In other words, the comprehensive plan is our plan.