

Chapter One -- Establishment of Seneca County Boundaries

Origins of Seneca County

Prior to March 24, 1804, Seneca County was part of various counties. When counties were established in New York State in 1683, the present-day Seneca County was part of the vast Albany County. A portion of Albany County became Tryon County on March 12, 1772. This county was named for William Tryon, colonial governor of New York. In 1784, following the peace treaty that ended the American Revolutionary War, the name of Tryon County was changed to Montgomery County in honor of the American general, Richard Montgomery. On February 16, 1791, portions of Montgomery County became Tioga, Otsego, and Herkimer Counties. Onondaga County was established from a portion of Herkimer County on March 5, 1794. The western portion of Onondaga County became Cayuga County on March 8, 1799. At that time, Cayuga County included the present Seneca and Tompkins Counties and part of Wayne County.

Seneca County was established from the western part of Cayuga County by an act passed by the New York State Legislature on March 24, 1804. At that time Seneca County stretched all the way from Lake Ontario to south of what is today Ithaca. More specifically, it was bounded on the north by Lake Ontario, east by Cayuga County, south by Tioga County, and west by Steuben and Ontario Counties. It was a strip some sixty-three miles in length with an average width of eleven miles, totaling 744 square miles or about one-half million acres.

Subsequent Boundary Changes to Seneca County

The southwestern portion of the town of Ovid was taken away on March 30, 1802 to become part of the town of Hector.

On April 7, 1817, the town of Ovid was divided, with the southern portion becoming the town of Covert. That same date, the town of Covert was taken away from Seneca County and become part of Tompkins County.

The former town of Covert was returned to Seneca County on April 13, 1819.

The northern portions of Seneca County (the towns of Galen and Wolcott) were taken away from Seneca County on April 11, 1823. At this point Seneca County totaled about 197,500 acres of land.

History of the formation of the various Towns

When Seneca County was created in 1804, it consisted of the towns of Ovid, Romulus, Washington, and Junius. The towns of Ovid and Romulus had been created March 5, 1794. The town of Washington had been formed from the northern portion of the town of Romulus on March 14, 1800. The town of Junius had been formed from the northern portion of Washington on February 12, 1803.

The town of Washington was renamed the town of Fayette on April 6, 1808.

The town of Covert was formed from the southern portion of the town of Ovid on April 7, 1817. On March 30, 1843, Military Lots 34, 40, 41 and 42 were transferred from town of Ovid to the town of Covert.

The town of Lodi was formed from the western portion of Covert on January 27, 1826. On May 5, 1837, the north line of the town was advanced one mile with the annexation of Military Lots 26, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39 from the town of Ovid.

The towns of Seneca Falls, Tyre and Waterloo were formed from portions of Junius on March 26, 1829.

The town of Varick was formed from the then northern portion of Romulus on February 6, 1830.

