

The Birth of Torrey Park

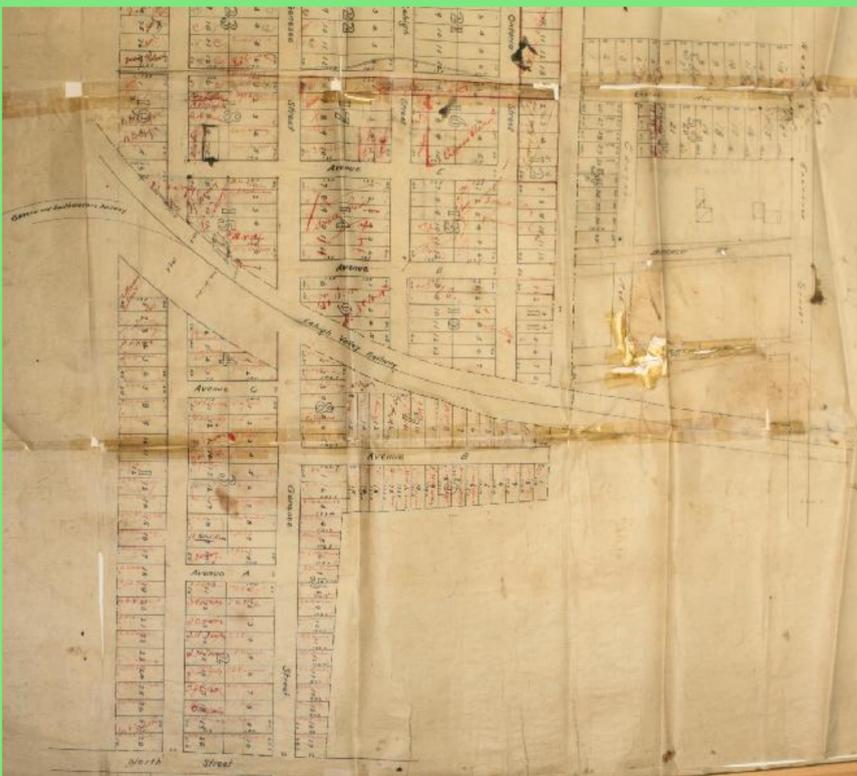
In the 1700s and 1800s, Geneva developed near the lake. In 1892, the Lehigh Valley Railroad station was built on the north end of town. Factories began locating nearby, and a working class neighborhood was born.



“Bird’s-eye view” shows Torrey Park in 1893, before there was any development north of the train station.



Lehigh Valley Railroad passenger depot, early 1900s

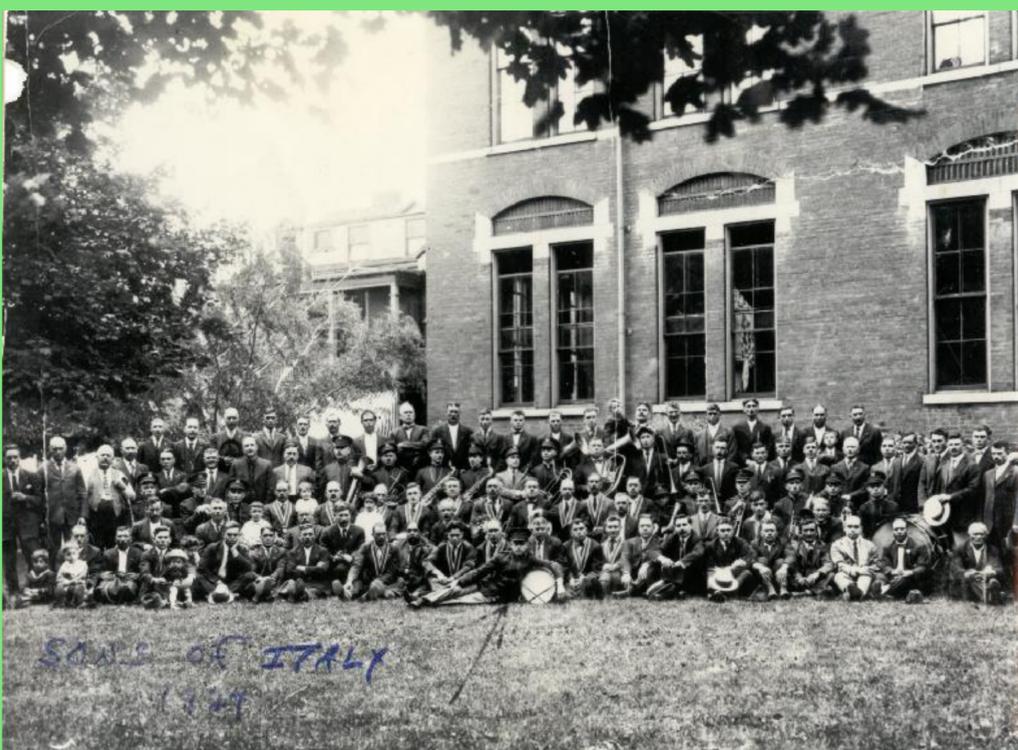


Early lot map of the Torrey Park Land Company with handwritten notes of who purchased property.



“A large gang of Italians arrived here Tuesday night to go to work for the canning factory [Geneva Preserving Company], in picking peas it is said.It is probable that the bringing of scores of Italian laborers here from Buffalo under the padrone system will lead to trouble in the long run. We wish that Mr. Palmer [company manager] has seen fit to try and get home labor before he contracted for these people.”

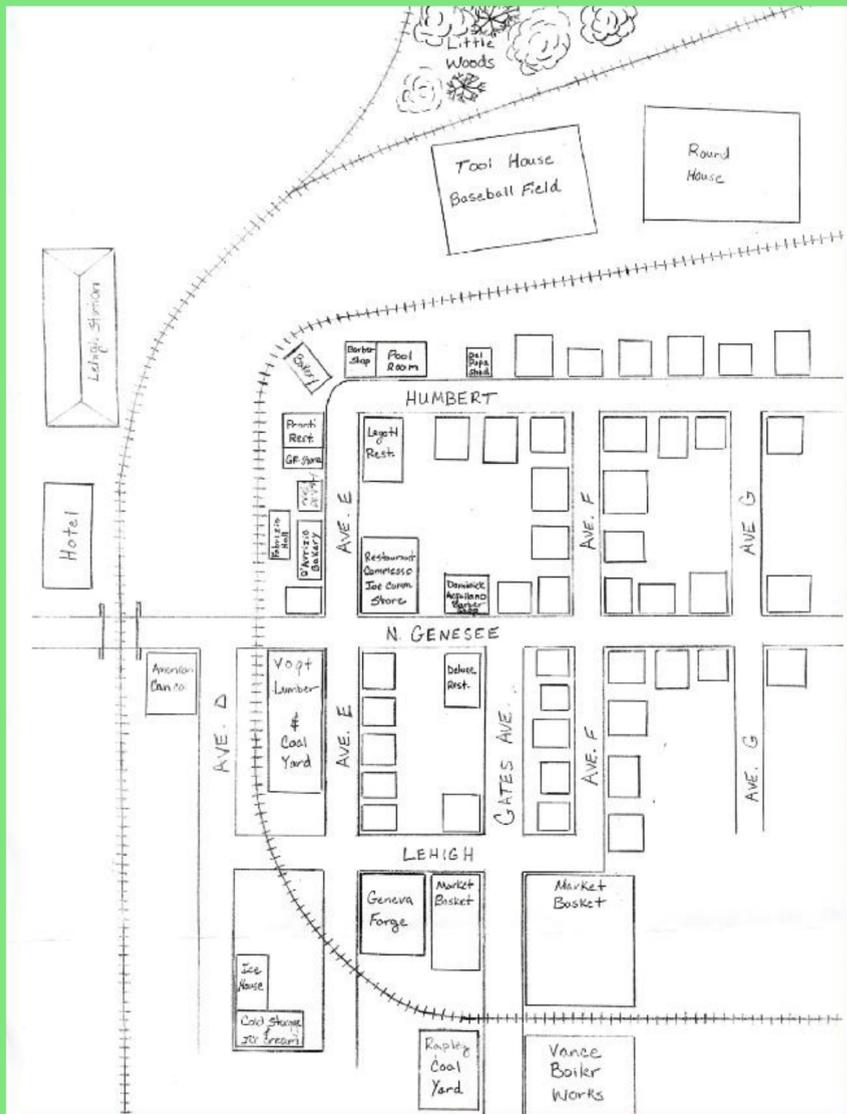
- *Geneva Advertiser*, June 29, 1897



Italians began arriving in Geneva in the mid-1890s, often recruited for manual labor and farm field work. Unwelcome in most neighborhoods, Italian immigrants settled in Torrey Park.

They began businesses, shared resources, and set up mutual aid societies. This Sons of Italy Lodge was chartered in 1916; the photo was taken in 1922. A brass band was a big part of the lodge’s identity in the early 1900s.

The Old Neighborhood



Map of businesses in Torrey Park, 1930 to 1942



Compresso's on the corner of Genesee Street and Avenue E, now the Club 86 parking lot



Brotherhood of the Maintenance of the Way (railroad workers union) dinner at the Sterling Hotel, 1930s



American Can Company building with Lehigh Valley Railroad tracks on the right



Torrey Park youth, 1930s



Mrs. Buck's third grade class, Prospect Avenue School, 1935

A Geneva Landmark

Club 86 is remembered for the internationally-known performers who played there in the 1940s and 50s. Equally important is the club's history as a center of community activity. Local groups got bookings, community groups held fundraising dances, and probably everyone in Geneva attended at least one wedding reception there.



In the 1960s, Wilmer and the Dukes were regulars at the club until the Legotts ended the nightclub and focused on private parties.



The Chess Men were a local combo that included the future jazz legend Scott LaFaro (third from left) while he was still a high school student.

“[Geneva Men’s Club] put on dances, for adults, at Club 86. Yeah, we put on big dances, hired the best bands in the area, black bands—this here again was an opportunity where people from all around—they used to come from Elmira, Ithaca, Syracuse, Rochester, they’d come down.”

—Charles Kenney



Jane Augustine dancing at a wedding



Amelia Calabrese (right center) and friends



Maria Davoli, Donna Scala, and Louie Quethara

Club 86 has been a part of Geneva as a whole, but it sits in the heart of Torrey Park. In 1976, a Torrey Park Festival was held over several days, including a street fair, vendors, and an open air Mass outside Club 86.

