

Aerial view looking west over the Hamlet of Victory in 1947, prior to the introduction of State Route 370.

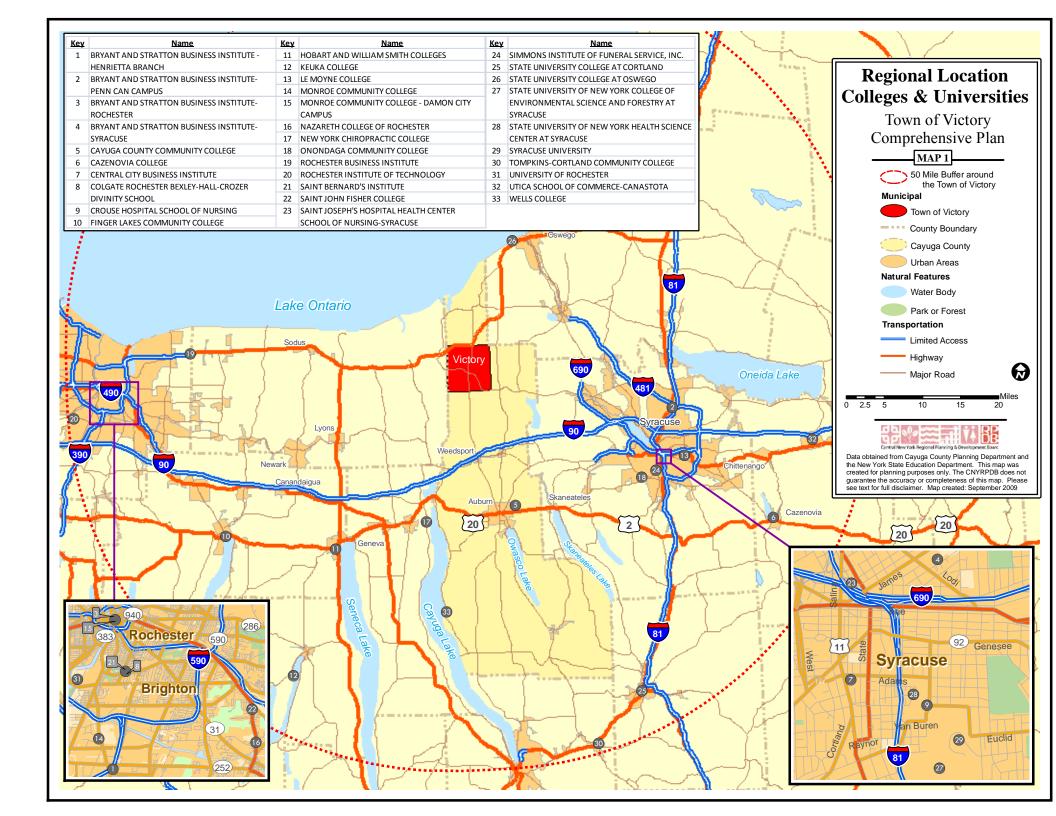
# CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND, HISTORIC INFORMATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

## Location

The Town of Victory, with a total land area of approximately 34.4 square miles, is located in Cayuga County in the northeastern part of the Finger Lakes Region of Central New York. Cayuga County is comprised of a hilly southern plateau, a relatively flat central plain region with drumlins in the north where Victory is located. Cayuga, in the Iroquoian language of the Cayuga people native to the region, means "people of the wetlands". Largely a rural, agricultural community, Victory is located to the northwest of the City of Syracuse, New York about halfway between the southern shore of Lake Ontario and Interstate Route 90. The region features rolling hills and drumlins and vast tracts of farmland interspersed with forested areas, rivers and streams. The Town of Victory borders Wayne County to the west. To the north it borders the Town of Sterling, to the east the Town of Ira, and to the south the Town of Conquest. Sterling Creek flows northward through the town to Lake Ontario. New York State Route 38 intersect New York State Route 370 adjacent to the Hamlet of Victory, and New York State Route 104 travels along the north town line.

TOWN OF VICTORY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - MAY 2011

The quality of life in Victory is enhanced by its rural-agrarian character, historic resources, sense of family, and good schools. Outdoor recreation opportunities abound in northern Cayuga County with many opportunities for hiking, biking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and enjoying the outdoors. In the Town of Victory, easy access to Lake Ontario offers plenty of opportunity for water activities including boating, sailing, canoeing and kayaking, swimming, and sport fishing.



# **History of the Community**

Prior to Euro-American settlement, lands in the Finger Lakes Region of Central New York were home to the Haudenosaunee people of the six nations of the Iroquois. The Haudenosaunee, raised crops and livestock in clearings, wetlands, and forested areas they maintained near regionally nomadic settlements. In 1795 and 1807, as the new American colonial government continued to pursue a westward push, the State of New York purchased the lands of the region from the Iroquois, although the state land purchases were never ratified by the U.S. Congress.<sup>6</sup>

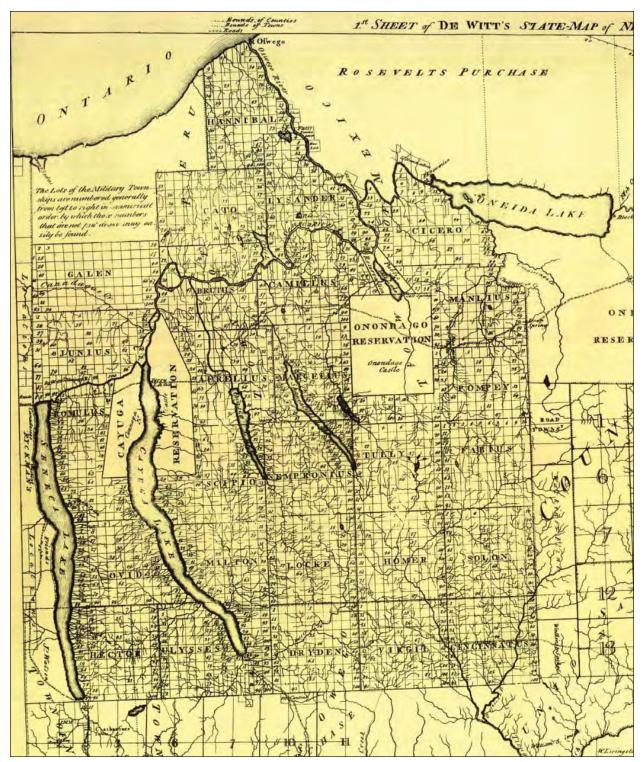
During the Revolutionary War, both New York State and the Continental government offered land as a bounty for enlistment in the military forces. On March 20, 1781, in an attempt to raise two regiments, New York State passed legislation promising bounties of unappropriated land equal to five times the grant of the federal government (500 acres) to an enlisting private fulfilling a three year enlistment. By July 1782, an area known as the Military Tract was set aside for this purpose. The Military Tract, situated in the Finger Lakes area, contained 28 townships, each comprised of 60,000 acres. These townships were named for classical heroes as they were surveyed, mapped and numbered 1 through 26. Gradually over the years, it was recognized that the townships as originally surveyed were too large and geographically challenging to administer. Many of the original large townships were eventually divided into smaller towns. On March 16, 1821 the Town of Cato was subdivided into four smaller towns including Victory, Conquest and Ira. The names Victory, Conquest, and Ira reflect the intense emotion over the fight for separation.

New York State, a major theater of the Revolutionary War, was a ravaged and depopulated state at the beginning of the eighteenth century, only 6th in population among the thirteen former colonies. By 1820, New York had recovered substantially becoming "the Empire State," the most populous and the prosperous of the 23 states in the Federal union. With crude roads and poor river passage, a state-wide system of artificial canals was developed, including the Erie Canal connecting New York City with the Great Lakes waterway. The Western Inland Lock Navigation Co. (1792-1820) made improvements and opened up an effective water transport between the Atlantic freight port at Albany and the Great Lakes port at Oswego as well as linkages to the rapidly developing Finger Lakes region with eventual expansion westward. Completed in 1825, this system of canals led to widespread settlement and economic opportunity in central New York beginning in the early nineteenth century.

Some of the earliest settlers of the Town arrived in 1802. Because there was no federal money after the Revolutionary War, military lots were surveyed and given to qualifying soldiers as payment for services. James Gregory settled in the Hamlet of Victory in 1806 building a log tavern there near the site of the future Hager general store, now the Victory Fire Department. The first settlers in the Hamlet of Westbury in 1806 were William and Jacob Burgduff.

During the early part of the nineteenth century, the Town of Victory featured dense mature forests, graveled hills and swamplands located in the southwestern part of town. The headwaters of Red Creek flowed through the western part of the Town, and Little Sodus Creek ran north through the Town just east of the center. Early colonial settlement meant that woodlands were cleared and swamps drained for useable farmland. The area in the southwestern part of the Town of Victory, c.1840, was settled by the Flatt family and was later known as Flattville. The settlement included a group of eight cabins in the swampland near Stahlnecker Rd.

6 (Source: Iroquoia, William Engelbrecht, 2003, Syracuse University Press)



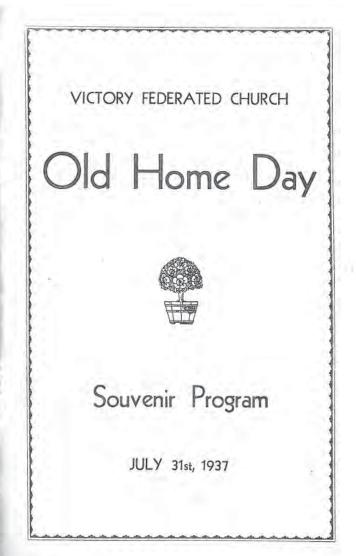
Map of the Military Tract of Central New York, 1793 (source: http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nycayuga/maps/1793/dewitt.jpg.

In the nineteenth century, the stage coach from Red Creek made its rounds most days to Victory, Cato and back again, resulting in the establishment of many general stores in the hamlet at this time. The Southern Central Railroad (formerly the Ontario/Auburn and New York Railroad) did not have a station stop near Victory, and only passed across the very most northeastern portion of the town, and the closest stop was at Ira Station in the Town of Ira.

During these years, the Hamlets of Victory, North Victory and Westbury featured stores, schools, churches, blacksmith shops, harness shops, tanneries, carriage shops, cooper shops, shoe and boot stores, and in Victory, a hotel. Grist mills were found at Sebastian Stumm's at North Victory in 1812 and John Hooker put up a still, saw mill, and grist mill in the southeastern part of Victory on White Road at the headwaters of Little Sodus Creek, in 1820. In the Hamlet of Victory, a drug store was opened by James Hager in 1820 and William Hager's general store was opened in 1832. Most people outside of town worked the land as farmers and regularly came to the hamlets with a cart to peddle their farm grown goods to the merchants. In 1875, out of more than 21,000 acres in the Town of Victory, over 16,000 were improved, over 4,000 remained woodlands, and over 500 acres were unimproved.

Victory was not always a hospitable place to live however. Early settlers lived off the land, traded goods and services, and hunted wild animals for the most basic necessities of life. Many died from disease. In 1875 a typhoid outbreak occurred and quarantine signs were seen on the roads leading into town. In 1877, and again in 1939, Scarlet Fever ran rampant, and in 1918 the Spanish flu took the lives of anyone who had traveled east toward New York City and brought it home.

In early days, the center of government in the Town of Victory was likely at a private home or at the school house. When the Baptist Church closed in the early 1900s, the building was purchased by the Town to establish a Town Hall which continued there until the early 1970s when the new town building on Town Barn Road was constructed. The Town Hall in the old Baptist Church was the scene of many dramatic plays and concerts with the Victory Band through the years. Children loved the balcony where they could sit and see backstage during play performances.



The challenging climate with lake effect snows, and a short growing season in the Town necessitated, and resulted in, a strong sense of community in Victory. The local Fire Department regularly sponsored dances in area barns before the harvest each year. The Grange also held dances and sponsored the local Boy Scouts. Men and boys played baseball in county teams and picnics and church socials were commonplace events. Hunting and fishing trips were organized in preparation for the long, hard winters. The Hamlet of Victory has a long history of hosting recreational pursuits, from a tradition of skating on Coppernoll's Pond, one mile west of the four corners in the Hamlet of Victory, and early movie screenings in the auditorium on the top floor of the Grand Hotel, to the annual Old Home Day Celebration. An annual event, traditionally sponsored by the Victory Federated Church and local businesses, Old Home Days was held on the last Saturday in July beginning in 1929 in the Hamlet on the grounds of Victory Federated Church, and included events such as championship ball games, band concerts, speakers, games, and dinner for all who attended.

Many successful businesses were launched from the Town of Victory. Joseph Raiti from Linguaglossa, Sicily came to America in the 1920's and bought Hager's general store in Victory in 1929. He brought with him his grandfather's cheese recipe and turned the general store into a cheese processing venture that prospered until a fire destroyed the Victory building in 1958. The cheese factory building was not rebuilt, and the lot was eventually sold, along with the Post Office next door, to the fire department. Another resident of the Town of Victory, Jean G. Butts designed and patented a process for moving grown trees. Butts had a large home and buildings on East Street in Victory where he and his wife Maude Thompson Butts lived as well as buildings at Butts' farm on Schuler Rd. where he also kept equipment. The Butts Tree Moving Company employed many men in town, and notably planted trees in March of 1955 at the newly acquired country home of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Gettysburg, PA.



Raiti's Cheese Factory, the old Hager General Store in the 1940s before it was destroyed by fire, and the old Post Office next door.

As the industrial age brought new technologies and ever more efficient ways of mass producing products once the economic backbone of central New York State's rural communities, small scale farming and production operations began to decline. Area drying houses of the 1920s became mechanized canning factories in the 1940s. Local blacksmith shops gave way to service garages with the advent of the automobiles in the 1930s and 40s. During the mid-to-late twentieth century, many smaller rural industries were lost completely as a new service economy began to take hold offering economic opportunity unrelated to local agriculture and merchandising pursuits. The hamlet of Victory, once a bustling center of business gradually became a quiet, rural crossroads. Today, cars and trucks representative of a much larger, regional-scale of commerce, speed through Victory every day without much more than a glance.

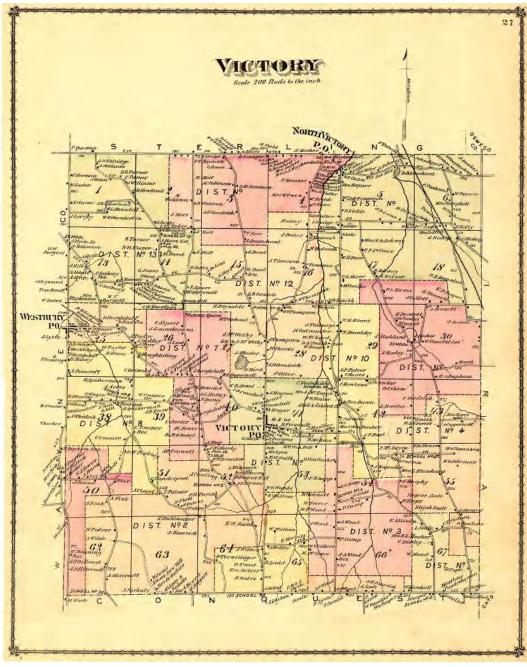
Land in close proximity to centers of economic development has become more highly valued for residential development than as productive farmland, and many farms have succumbed to the pressure to subdivide and sell their land. The landscape of the Town of Victory reflects these land and cultural value changes today with areas of residential development no longer consolidated among the small land parcels in hamlets, but spread out in the large parcel subdivisions of former farmland. Still, Victory today retains much of its historic and scenic rural character, especially along its rural roadways where remnant historic buildings remain and large lot residential development patterns have not yet consumed the agrarian landscape.



A tree-lined and bustling Downtown Victory, c.1920s, looking north on what is today State Route 38 near the center of the Hamlet. W.A. "Bige" Hager's General Store, which later became Raiti's Cheese Factory is at the left, and The Grand Hotel at right. Both buildings, along with many others have been lost over the years. The Victory Fire Department now stands on the site of the old Hager Store.

#### Hamlets and Historic Settlements

The Town of Victory is located in a geographic region of central New York that offers much of historical interest. Nearby county historic sites to the south include the boyhood home of Millard Fillmore, the 13th President of the U.S., the home of William Seward, President Lincoln's Secretary of State, the Harriet Tubman Home and Reference Library in Auburn, and the Hamlet of Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District in the Town of Scipio. Willard Chapel, located in Auburn, is the only complete Louis Comfort Tiffany religious interior remaining in the world. Ted Case, at Case Research Lab in Auburn, pioneered the sound used in talking movies.



An 1875 map of the Town of Victory (Source: http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html)

The Hamlet of Victory at the intersection of Route 38 (Old State Road) and Rt. 370, was first settled in c.1806 by James Gregory who built a log tavern soon followed by a store and ashery (Maude Thompson Butts, c.1970). A grist mill was established in 1812 at Sebastian Stumms in North Victory. North Victory was a small hamlet near the town line (mostly in the Town of Sterling) on NY 104; and Ira Corners is located on the east side of the town at Watkins Road and Ira Station Road. In 1820, John Hooker built a stillery, saw mill, and grist mill in the southeastern part of Victory on White Road at the headwaters of Little Sodus Creek, and a drug store was opened in the Hamlet that same year by James Hager. The Hamlet of Westbury, in the north west corner of the Town, was settled in 1806 by William and Jacob Burgduff.



Aerial view, looking north, of the Hamlet of Westbury at the west edge of the Town of Victory (Source: http://www.bing.com/maps)



Looking west at the Hamlet of Westbury in the Town of Victory, April 2010.

The development of the Erie Canal in 1825, less than ten miles to the south of the Hamlet of Victory, and the opening up of water transport between the Atlantic freight port at Albany and the Great Lakes port at Oswego by the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company (1792-1820), brought an influx of settlers to the area, and the Hamlets of Victory and Westbury were connected by a stage that operated most days between Red Creek and Cato and the Southern Central Railroad Station. It is no wonder that the Town center at Victory was a bustling place. Even though the closest rail station was in Ira, by late in the nineteenth century one could travel on the Southern Central and New York Central Lines through the Town of Victory to the city of Oswego on Lake Ontario, Chicago, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Albany, Boston, and New York City.



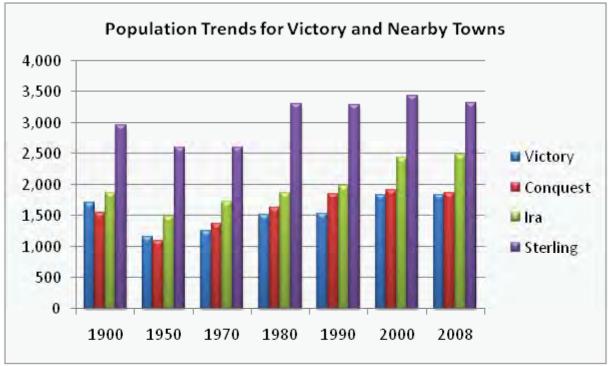
Above Left, the Grand Hotel; above right, a phonograph shop; bottom, the old Hager General Store c.1925, were among the many businesses operated in the Hamlet of Victory.

A variety of merchant and service businesses were established in the Hamlet of Victory as a result of its location along the stage coach line. Churches and other community organizations and facilities were established as the region was settled and farms and mills were constructed. William Hager's general store opened in 1832 on the site of what is now Victory Fire Department on Main Street (Rt. 38). Businesses including tanneries, stills and grist mills developed in several locations across the area during the nineteenth and early twentieth century filling a local and regional demand for high quality products. Farmers carted their produce from the surrounding farmlands to merchants in the Hamlet of Victory. The hamlet featured various merchant stores, a post office, grist mills, churches, a dance hall, a grand hotel to accommodate visitors passing through the hamlet, and a school, Victory Academy, located in the cobblestone house built in 1836 located at the four corners in the hamlet. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Hamlet of Victory also featured two blacksmith shops, an undertaking business, harness shop, four general stores, three churches, a meat market, milliner shop, and a creamery.

# Population

Cayuga County's total population for 2000 was 81,963. The largest proportion of this population resides within the center of the County and includes the City of Auburn with a population of 28,574, surrounded by the five towns of Sennett, Throop, Owasco, Fleming and Aurelius. Other than the City of Auburn, there are twenty-three incorporated towns in Cayuga County ranging in population from Brutus with 4,777 residents in 2000 to Sempronius with 893 residents.

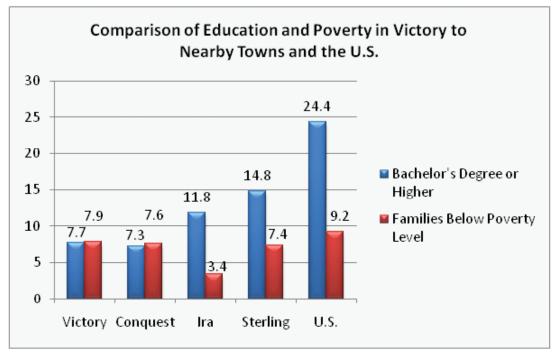
The Town of Victory lost about 1/3 of its population during the first half of the 20th century, but the numbers from that point grew steadily until the 1980s. According to the 2000 census, the population of the Town of Victory was 1,838, up 20% from 1990. Population density in the Town of Victory was 53.5 people per square mile, and the racial makeup of the town was 97% Caucasian.



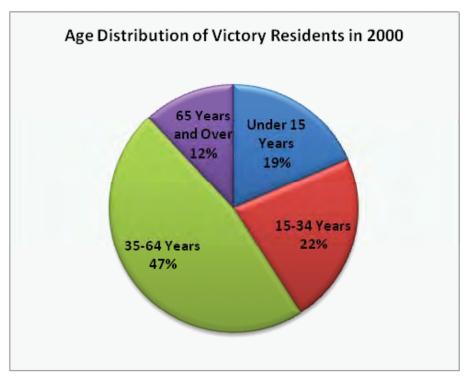
<sup>(</sup>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

The percentage of the Victory population with Bachelors Degree or higher is 16.7% lower than the national average (compare that to the Town of Sterling w/9.6% lower than national average).

Victory has a 1.3% lower than the national average rate of families below poverty level.



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

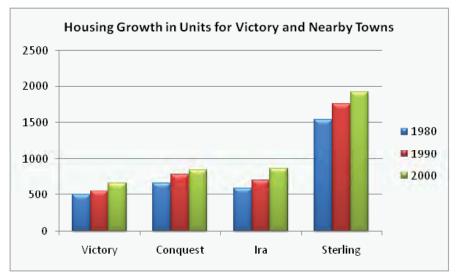


(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

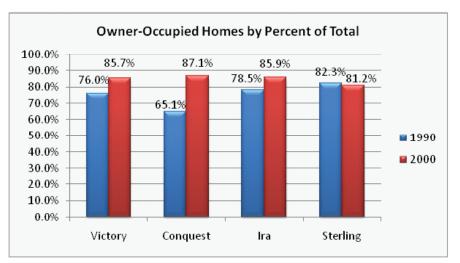
### **Housing Demographics**

The total number of households in the County is approximately 30,558, with approximately 11,411 of those in Auburn. Although the County offers a diversity of housing choices, the majority of homes were built before 1939 and the County is well known for its wealth of 19th century architecture.

In the rural Town of Victory, the 2000 census found there were 1,838 people, 617 households, and 481 families residing in the town. Out of the 617 households, 43% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 63% were married couples living together, 7% were single females, and 22% were non-families. 18% of all households had someone over the age of 65, and 6% of all households are comprised of someone over 65 who is living alone. The average household size was 2.98, and the average family size was 3.36 with the median age of 34 years. Housing construction in Victory has been fairly steady since the 1980s, but slower than nearby Towns. Owner occupancy in the Town of Victory grew 9.7% (to 85.7%) between 1990 and 2000. A similar trend is evident in the U.S. Census data for Conquest and Ira.

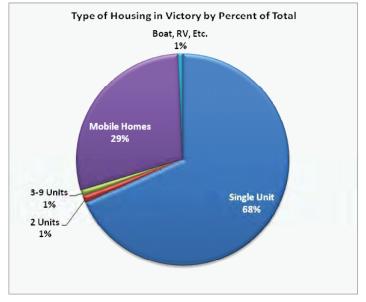


<sup>(</sup>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)



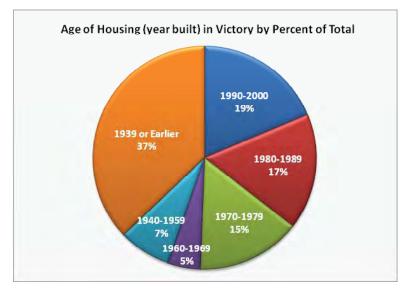
<sup>(</sup>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

It is notable that Victory has very little variety of Multi-Unit housing types with only 2% in 2 or more Unit housing such as apartments. What really stands out in housing statistics for Victory is that a very large number (29%) of Housing Units in the Town are Mobile Homes. These two statistics suggest a need for affordable housing in the Town. In addition to a need for more diversity in affordable housing, there may be potential for environmental and visual impacts related to the high percentage of Mobile Homes in the Town.



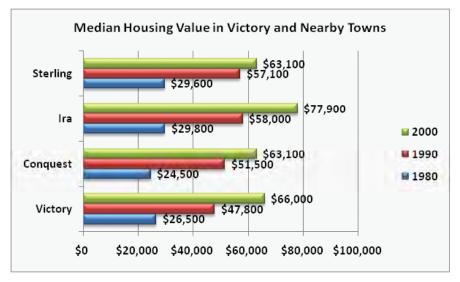
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

Another notable fact is that 44% of the housing stock in the Town of Victory is more than 50 years old, and nearly 37% is older than 70 years. Older housing stock may represent a cultural asset that the Town can leverage to acquire Historic Preservation and Community Revitalization Grants and funding.



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

Between 1980 and 2000, the Median Home Value in Victory grew 249% from \$26,500 to \$66,000. In 2000, the Town of Victory was second only to the Town of Ira in terms of Median Home Value.



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

# **Business Development and Economic Base**

Situated in central New York State between Syracuse and Rochester, Cayuga County's principal source of employment is manufacturing, with most of the industry located in or near the City of Auburn. Manufactured products include electrical and electronic components, fiber optics, diesel engines, auto parts, glass bottles, plastic products, and high quality steel and machined products. Agriculture is also vital to the area's economy, with Cayuga County producing some of New York State's finest livestock, dairy products and cash crops. Cayuga County is the State's number 1 corn producing county and ranks 4th in New York State for milk production. Agriculture generates \$125.4 million in income for the County.

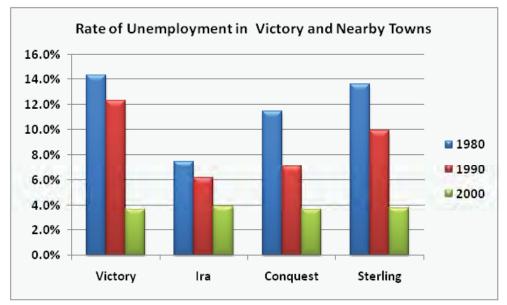
In 2000 in the Town of Victory, the largest percentage of residents were employed in the Production, Transportation and Material Moving occupations, followed by Sales, Management, Construction and Service occupations. What stands out here, given the rural-agrarian character of the landscape in Victory, is that only 1% of residents were employed in Farming, Fishing or Forestry occupations.



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

Unemployment rates in the Town of Victory fell from an extreme high of over 14% in the 1980s to less than 4% in 2000. It's interesting to note that while unemployment rates were very high in other area Towns in 1980, they never rose above 8% in Ira.

A local comparison of income trends indicates that the Town of Victory was doing better than Sterling and Conquest by a small margin in 2000, but not as well as the Town of Ira. The median family income for the Town of Victory in 2000 was \$38,672. The per capita income for the town was \$15,462, and about 7.99% of families and 10.6% of the population were below the poverty line.



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

Victory has the longest average commute time to work compared to nearby communities. (Chart - Mean Travel Time to Work) Agricultural products produced in the Town of Victory include hay, corn, soy beans, oats, vegetables, dairy products, and lumber. In addition, Victory features a variety of service and amenity businesses catering to both residents and visitors to the area. Some of the businesses currently operating in the Town of Victory include:

Matt's Service Auto Repair Shop Beautician Canoe Repair Shop Crafts/Arts Machine Shop Day Care Facility Preserves/Jams/Fruit Stand Firewood Processing and Sales Jack's Christmas Trees Farm Stand Nodine's Heating and Air Conditioning Income Tax Preparer IOOB Ira Station Club Baker Used Auto Parts The Old Soap Factory/Lavender Farm Rick's Tire Service Storage/Disposal Facility Snow Plowing





# **Municipal Infrastructure and Public Services**

The Town of Victory, with one voting district, is comprised of 34.4 square miles of land area. Municipal water service extends just over 1/2 mile east into the Town of Victory through the Hamlet of Westbury along Victory Road, but that is the limit of water service in Victory, and there is no municipal sewer in the Town. Most properties in the Town have both private well water and septic systems.

During March of 2003, the NYS Department of Health water quality testing found that 34 private wells sampled in a proposed public water service area (WD #2) were positive for coliform bacteria, and 11 wells were positive for E. coli. The Town of Victory currently has a project listed in the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Project Readiness List (DWSRF project number 17220 at 55 points and is estimated in the amount of \$3.39 million) for Water District #2 extending a public water distribution system from the Hamlet of Westbury to portions of Victory Road, Kasson Way, Duck Lake Road, Upton Road, Timerson Road, NYS Route 104, Maroney Road, NYS Route 370, Coleman Road, NYS Route 38, Bell Road, and Old State Road. Although the prompt resolution of the problems associated with water in the prospective new service area are considered a priority of the Cayuga County Health and Human Services Department, without significant additional funding resources available, local taxpayers have proven to be squarely against a levy for the cost of water district formation.

The Victory Town offices are currently located on Town Barn Road in the Hamlet of Victory. A new Town Hall and Highway Complex, to be located on Upton Road, is in the planning stages (see next page). Victory Fire Department is located on Route 38, in the Hamlet of Victory. The town owns a salt shed located on an 18 acre parcel on Upton Road, also the location of a proposed new town barn. The closest hospitals are Auburn Memorial Hospital and Oswego Hospital. There are also several hospitals in Syracuse, NY. There is a medical center in the Town of Wolcott and ambulance service from Red Creek, Cato, or Fair Haven. Physicians have practices located in Wolcott and Cato.



Victory Town Offices on Town Barn Road in the Hamlet of Victory, NY





Victory Fire Department on State Route 38 in the Hamlet of Victory, NY.

The Hamlet of Victory is about equal distance from Red Creek Free Library and Stewart B. Lang Memorial Library in Cato. There are State Police offices in Auburn and Wolcott.

There are no public schools located within the Town of Victory, but the Town is served by two school districts, Red Creek Central which covers most of the north and west portion of the Town, and Cato-Meridian along the south and east sectors.

The electric service provider for Victory is Rochester Gas & Electric (RG&E). There is currently no cable television service in the town. The town has telephone service, and parts of the town have access to high speed internet provided by Frontier Communications and Verizon.

There is currently no public transportation provided in the town. The Town of Victory is bisected by Routes 38 and 370 which run generally north/south and east/west respectively. Within the Town of Victory, the most heavily travelled roadways are Route 370 between the Hamlet of Victory and Cato at over 4,000 average daily trips, Route 104 across the northwest corner of the Town at nearly 3,500 average daily trips, and Route 370 between the Hamlet of Victory and Wayne County to the west. Route 38 has a daily average of between 722 and 945 trips per day. The Southern Central Railroad corridor between Cato and Fair Haven is no longer an active rail corridor, but remains in place and crosses the Town of Victory at its northeast corner along Ira Station Road. Currently, this railroad corridor is used as a recreational trail.

The Victory Highway Department provides snow plowing for town roads and some county roads. New York State plows all state roads. The town Highway Department provides paving of local roads, and there is a trash collection drop off at the Town Barn each Saturday.

