

A HISTORY OF POLITICS VILLAGE OF DEPEW

The First Fifty Years

Upon the Incorporation of the Village of Depew, New York, on July 23, 1894, the following were the first officers of the New Village. Dr. William Fairbanks was President, John Graney, George Waltz and John Zurbrick served as the first Trustees. The first person to serve as Village Clerk was James Oswald. These officers were to serve for a period of two years. This Village Board held its first official meeting on Wednesday August 22, 1894.

In 1895 Martin Kieffer replaced Dr. Fairbanks as President with the other three members of the board remaining the same.

On March 9, 1896, a resolution was passed by the village board to elect a President in the place of Martin Kieffer, Trustees for two years in the place of John Graney and John Zurbrick in addition to a Treasurer in place of Anthony Hartung and a Collector in place of Jacob Margrander. Additionally three Trustees to be elected, one to serve two years, and two to serve for one year each.

In the election of 1896, Martin Kieffer was re-elected Village President. Trustees elected were Ernest Woelfell, George Waltz, William S. Bostwick, Edward Byron, John Zurbrick and Edward Hennessey. Also elected were Joseph Dunbeck, Collector and Anthony Hartung as Treasurer. Patrick E. Scully was appointed as Village Clerk. All of the elected were members of the Workingman's Party.

The March 12, 1887 issue of the Depew Herald stated that two tickets have been placed in the field for the up coming election of village officers, one under the name of the "Citizens Ticket." Most of which was nominated at a public meeting of the Citizens, held at the Waterworks Building. The other party known as the Workingman's Ticket, the nominees of which have been slated for two months past by the element which now has absolute control and directs the affairs of the village, three of whom are now members of the Board of Trustees, Messer. Zurbrick, Byron and Waltz, who are seeking re-election.

Nominated on the Citizen's Ticket were S. Jay O'Hart, candidate for President with P.B. Blaine, P.J. Galligan and George W. Scyces the Trustee candidates. M. Kauffman was the candidate for Treasurer while William Fairbanks sought the Police Justice position. Others on the Citizen's Ticket were C.E. Gilbert, J.C. Horriffan and J.C. Glade seeking the Assessor's positions.

The election of the candidates of the Workingman's Party, so designated will be an endorsement of the management of Depew's affairs ever since the organization of the village up to the present time, for the same potent power has been exercised during the past year, as before, and will continue just as long as the voters perpetuate it by their ballot.

The village election in March 1897 was significant as for the first time; the elected position of Village Police Justice appeared on the ballot. The following resolution adopted by the Board of Trustees on February 13, 1897, directed that at the next annual election and every fourth year thereafter, there shall be elected a Police Justice in and for

the Village of Depew, pursuant to the provisions of the statutes in such cases made and provided. The first elected Village Justice was William P. Ahern, who was endorsed by the controlling Workingman's Party.

Also appearing on the ballot in the election of 1897 were three assessors with the term of office to be (1) Three years, (1) Two years and (1) One year.

The Workingman's Party continued their dominance of village government by sweeping all of the elective offices in that 1897 election.

While the People's Party was defeated, there is not a man who composed it, from Mr. O'Hart down, but who made a fair and honorable fight. In defeat they have the satisfaction of knowing that their canvass was a clean one, and that they are deserving of the respect of their successful opponents.

In the makeup of the new Board of Trustees, the Sawyer Avenue District will have one representative, the Broadway District two, the Eastern Portion one and the North Side three.

Prior to the 1898 village election, twenty-five electors, qualified to vote, petitioned the village board to arrange to hold a special election prior to the regular village election, to determine the number of Trustees the voters desire to elect at the coming village election.

A special meeting of the village board was held on March 4, 1898 at which time a resolution was adopted, which set the annual village election for Tuesday, March 15, 1898. The ballot called for the following village offices to be filled. Village President, (2) Trustees for a two year term, (2) Trustees for a one year term, a Treasurer, Collector, an Assessor for a three year term and a Police Justice to fill a vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term thereof.

The March 10, 1898 issue of the Depew Herald published a facsimile of the paper ballot to be used in the March 15, 1898 village election. There were two opposing slates listed with the Workingman's Party being opposed by the Citizen's Party. The emblem of the Workingman's Party was the Muscled Arm with rolled up sleeve wielding a hammer. The Citizen's Party emblem was represented by an inverted Carpenter's Square. Provisions were also made for a write-in vote.

The Citizen's Ticket nominated Edward Byron for President, Martin Kieffer, Bernard J. O'Rorke, Henry Ullman and Gustav Gramlich for the Trustee positions. George A. Cotton for Collector, Cornelius N. Sullivan for Police Justice and Charles Deuttweiler for Assessor were the other candidates.

George Waltz candidate for President headed the Workingmen's Ticket, with Joseph Dunbeck, Edward J. Hennessey, John Stein and Michael K. Dobbins as Trustee candidates. Anthony Hartung was the candidate for Treasurer, Patrick E. Scully for Collector, Daniel Graney for Police Justice and Alois Weible was the candidate for the Assessors position.

The Workingman's Party was again victorious with one exception, losing the Assessors seat by a scant two votes.

Village President George Waltz, who had been elected in March 1898, unexpectedly and as a decided surprise to the people of Depew, submitted a letter of resignation citing poor health for the resignation.

It was written, that the duties of the position of President of a new village like Depew are more arduous than one would expect without investigation, and there are

constantly coming up many matters that require much time and effort upon the part of the President and Trustees, which was done without compensation.

S. Jay O'Hart was appointed to replace Mr. Waltz and was known to be fully qualified and competent to discharge the duties of the position and his appointment met with hearty approval by the citizens. Mr. O'Hart was defeated for the President's position in the 1897 election and had served as Village Attorney for several years prior.

The village election of 1899 had two tickets on the ballot with the Workingman's Party again opposed by the Citizens Party. An interesting aspect to the makeup of the Citizen's Ticket was that several of the candidates supported by the Citizen's had formerly been associated with the Workingman's Party and in fact had previously been elected with the Workingman's backing.

This was a fact of life here in the local political scene, whereby; candidates and their supporters would jump from party to party. This was often driven by dissatisfaction with the people in office or the people controlling the political party and family considerations also played a role in shaping some of the party makeup. History would show that some candidates would from year to year end up on opposing sides, having been denied endorsement by the party which endorsed them in a prior year. Often the jump from one party to another was driven by the desire for some individuals to be with the party in power to see what could be gained for them.

S.J. O'Hart headed the Workingman's Ticket as the candidate for Village President and the Trustee candidates were George Weimer and John Zurbrick. Anthony Hartung was the nominee for the Treasurers position with Thomas Maher for Collector and John Klepfer was the candidate for Assessor.

Edward J. Byron the candidate headed the Citizens Ticket for Village President, Martin Kieffer and John Stein for Trustees with the nominee for Treasurer being Jacob Marggrander with P.E. Scully running for Collector and Hugh Collins for Assessor.

With the election of Edward Byron as President and Martin Kieffer and John Stein under the banner of the Citizen's Party, control of village government swung over from the Workingman's Party which had dominated village politics since the organization of the Village of Depew.

The further significance of the election of 1899 was that it signaled domination of village politics by the Citizen's Party and it's successor Independent Party, which would continue with some minor interruption into the later 1950's and beyond.

On Monday evening, the date of the first meeting of the new board since the election, the Como Band was engaged; the "Friends" of the newly elected Citizen's Ticket had decided that a celebration was in order. The group met on Sawyer Avenue and marched over to the Council Chambers, in the North Side Firehouse on Ellicott Road, to serenade the President on his induction into office. Due to the short agenda, the first meeting had already been adjourned before the group reached the Council Chambers.

The boys had started out for a "Jollification" and were not to be disappointed. The President and Trustees were hunted up and with other additions to their ranks, the parade was continued out Transit Road as far as the residence of Mr. John Graney at Transit and the Boulevard (George Urban) and back again to Sawyer Avenue (with numerous stops along the way to-----serenade). Before they were finished, all the newly elected officials, as well as the defeated candidates were treated to a serenade. It was a

“Jollification” all around, and exhibited a friendly feeling for all parties, both the “ins” and the “outs”.

The annual election of 1900 again had the same two tickets on the ballot, the Citizen and the Workingman’s. The race featured a re-match for the office of President with the incumbent Edward Byron, of the Citizens Ticket, being opposed by S.J. O’Hart, of the Workingman’s Ticket, who was defeated in the previous election. Joining Mr. O’Hart on the Workingman’s Ticket were George Weimer and Michael Dobbins, Trustee candidates, Anthony Hartung candidate for Treasurer, Thomas F. Maher Collector candidate, Maurice Walsh Assessor candidate and Daniel Graney candidate for Police Justice.

In addition to Edward Byron, Percy Malone and Charles Lindholm were the Trustee candidates, joined by E.J. Nash the candidate for Treasurer, W.H. Murray Collector candidate JNO. M. Witherspoon Assessor candidate and C.N. Sullivan candidate for Police Justice.

In addition to the election of village officers, a proposition to purchase certain property for a disposal site from the Messer’s Zurbrick, for the sum of \$10,500, was placed on the ballot.

The proposed purchase of the property for a disposal site was a contentious and divisive issue. Charges and counter-charges were leveled about the manner in which the incumbent administration had tendered several contracts to provide lighting, water and telephone service to the village, at costs, which were thought to be excessive.

Despite all of the allegations of mis-management, the Citizens Party maintained control of the Village Board of Trustees, however, the proposition to purchase the property for a disposal site was defeated.

This was the first election in village history in which the “Man With The Anvil” emblem appeared on an election ballot and it became the symbol of the Citizens Party and it’s successor, the Independent Party and later the Independent-Progressive Party.

The March 19,1901 village election resulted in yet another clean sweep by the Citizens Party. The big majorities given President Edward Byron and his running mates this year show conclusively that the voters were more than satisfied with the way that village affairs had been conducted during the past year.

Martin Kieffer and Michael Fitzgerald defeated J.C. Kirkpatrick and H.P. Sweeney for the Trustee positions. Elmer J. Nash retained his seat as Treasurer by defeating George Waltz. William H. Murray was the winner of the race for Collector and Matt Kupczynski defeated Louis Handel for the Assessors seat.

In late February 1902, election talk in Depew, which had been very quiet all winter, took a sudden turn during the last several weeks of the month.

First, a party of citizens met on February 19th and organized themselves, nominating a slate of candidates and calling themselves the Independent Ticket. James N. Oswald was nominated as the candidate for President with Charles Duttweiler and Charles Rogers as the Trustee candidates. Marion D. Fenner was nominated for Treasurer, Walter F. Inskip for Collector and Hugh Collins for Assessor.

On February 25th, the entrenched Citizens Party met in caucus and nominated a slate of candidates by acclamation. The slate included Edward Byron for President with Henry Ullman and Elmer F. Wilcox as the Trustee candidates with Elmer J. Nash the

Treasurer candidate. Jacob Marggrander was the candidate for Collector and Herbert Green was the candidate for Assessor.

A third party nominated a slate with candidates for the office of President and two Trustees on February 26th but adjourned to meet at a later date to complete their slate and was to be called the Young Men's Ticket. A fourth party was reported to have met and was to be called the Old Men's Ticket. This ticket, however, did not materialize which left three tickets in the field.

The Young Men's Ticket in a subsequent meeting, which was much larger than the first meeting, completed their slate and decided to call their slate the Reform Ticket. The emblem selected to represent this ticket was the "Arm with the Uplifted Hammer", which in years past had been used by the old Workingman's Party.

John Klepfer, the candidate for Village President, headed the Reform Ticket. John N. Mumpton and Hippolit F. Heyza were the candidates for Trustee and Anthony Hartung was nominated for Treasurer with Henry Illig for Collector and Appolis Hitchcock for Assessor.

Prior to the election of 1902, several articles were published in the pages of the Depew Herald extolling the virtues of the various candidates and of course also making various allegations concerning the makeup of the slates as were to appear on the ballot.

The citizens of Depew who have put the Independent Ticket in the field made this brief statement and pledged themselves to:

1. A taxpayers and not a saloon administration of village business.
2. To spend public monies, so far as possible, so it shall benefit Depew and Depew citizens, and not go to Buffalo.
3. To make an effort to have a new deal with the water company to put an end to the harsh impositions and inconveniences, as well as burdens now forced upon the people.
4. To a reduction of the present waste of money paid for street commissioners, police, sewer inspectors, etc., and especially to get value received for the money paid out, and no useless inspectors.
5. To carry into effect provisions of franchises, which are to benefit the village and citizens, and not to disregard them because of corporation, holds them.
6. To see that the village obtains a reasonable fire alarm system.
7. To reduce the tax rate so far as possible in interest of both the manufacturers and small property owners, and to induce other manufacturers to come to Depew.
8. To give public hearing on letting of all contracts or franchises, so as to get public opinion, to secure better protection to the village in giving franchises or permits, and that contracts shall be let to lowest bidder, unless it is evident that the Depew citizens are connived against at the expense of the village.
9. To see that no favors are given to any one race or creed, but that all have a fair and equal treatment. That favor shall be given a poor and needy citizen and his family and not to a saloon hanger on. Good pay in interest of laborers, but good value in return in interest of taxpayers, and no saloon boss system.

An individual who used the penname "Damifino" wrote the most interesting of the articles. "Damifino" of course appeared to be the voice of the Reform Ticket. As is usually the case when a third party enters a slate of candidates, the incumbents generally

benefit and in this election, the incumbent Citizens Party was victorious with one exception despite the ramblings of “Damifino”. Henry Illig of the Reform Ticket was elected to the Collector position.

In a careful analysis on the candidates for the various elective offices in the Village of Depew, it was found that almost all of the candidates through these early years were members of the several fire companies, which made up the Depew Fire Department. This is not really surprising since one of the original reasons for incorporation of the village was to provide fire protection for the area. A recap of the various elected Presidents, Mayors and Trustees showing their fire company membership when elected to the board is an attachment. Also noted are those officials who were Charter Members in their respective fire companies.

In 1903, the entrenched Citizens Party was opposed by the Independent Party, which had fielded a slate in the prior election of 1902. While the Citizens Party maintained their complete control of the village board, the Independent candidates for the office of Treasurer, Frank Klepfer and Collector Henry W. Illig were victorious.

The losing Independent candidates were James N. Oswald, candidate for President, Oliver W. Day and L.P. Reuther, Trustee candidates and John Zurbrick and George Waltz, Assessor candidates.

The victorious candidates of the Citizen’s Ticket were Village President Martin Kieffer, Trustee candidates John F. Carlson and Michael J. Garry and Assessor candidates, Eugene J. McGuire and Jacob Marggrandner.

The annual election held in March 1904 was very quiet, there being only one ticket on the ballot that backed by the Citizens Party.

Retaining their seats were Village President Martin Kieffer, Trustees Henry Ullman and Elmer F. Wilcox.. Also Treasurer Elmer J. Nash, Collector J. Wesley Steen and Assessors Matt Kupchinski and Charles Duttweiler. C.N. Sullivan retained his seat as Police Justice.

The coming village election of 1905 saw the birth again of a new political party, named the Union Party. The emblem of this new party depicted an eagle perched upon a pair of hands joined in a handshake with a ribbon in the beak of the eagle stating “In Union Is Strength”.

The Union Party nominated Michael J. Garry for Village President with George Weimer and John F. Carlson trustee candidates. Frank J. Klepfer received the nod for Treasurer with Henry Illig for Collector and Daniel Kennedy the Assessor candidate.

Martin Kieffer was the Citizen’s candidate for President with J.W. Preston and F.J. Wendel the Trustee candidates. Elmer J. Nash was again seeking the office of Treasurer with J. Wesley Steen the candidate for Collector and Charles Duttweiler as the candidate for Assessor.

The 1905 ballot included a proposition to raise, by taxes, the sum of \$3,290.00 for the purchase of a suitable lot and erecting thereon a firehouse for the use of Central Hose Company No. 4. This was the second time that this proposition was put on the ballot, having previously been defeated by the voters in 1903.

The New Union Party was able to win two seats on the village board, electing George Weimer and John F. Carlson as Trustees, while the Citizens Party maintained control of the board by a 5 to 2 margin by re-electing President Martin Kieffer with the two holdover Trustees, who were elected in 1904.

In 1898, the village board was reduced from six Trustees to four by petition of the voters. The make up of the board would consist of the President and four Trustees. This would continue until after the village board was petitioned by the citizens to hold a special election to change the number of Trustees from four back to six. The special election held on February 19, 1906 affirmed the number of Trustees at six and has continued thusly ever since.

With the special election changing the number of Trustees to six, it became necessary to elect four new Trustees in the election of 1906.

Frank J. Wendel of the Union Party would oppose incumbent Village President Martin Kieffer. Union Party Trustee candidates Henry Ullman, Anthony Hartung and William Keefe would oppose the Citizen's Elmer F. Wilcox, Gustave Gramlich and Hippolit F. Heyza for two-year terms while John Getzin of the Union Party would oppose Citizen's Party member Elmer J. Nash for the one-year Trustee position.

Other Union Party nominees were Frank J. Klepfer candidate for Treasure opposing Newell McDonald. Charles Hyman would oppose Eugene J. McGuire for the Assessors post. Union nominee John Graney would oppose James D. Higgins for the Police Justice post and Union's Henry W. Illig would oppose J. Wesley Steen for the Collectors slot.

Although Tuesday March 20th was a typical winter's day in Depew, and the traffic was impeded with snowdrifts, a large array of voters were on hand to cast their ballots for their favorite candidates.

The Citizens Party supporters evidently came primed for business as shown by the landslide that resulted in their favor. The candidates for President, Trustees, Treasurer, Assessor, Collector and Police Justice all won easily. The Citizens Party now held a five to two majority in the make up of the village board.

The result of the vote on the proposition for \$1600.00 for the firehouse for the Central Hose Company No. 4 was again defeated by 14 votes. While close to 500 citizens voted for the village officials, only 116 were interested enough to vote on the proposition.

The annual election on March 19, 1907 resulted in the Citizens Party candidates going down to defeat, the Union Party followers electing every candidate on their slate. The control of the village board now swung to the Union Party, who now held the majority by a five to two margin.

The winning candidates of the Union Ticket were Michael J. Garry, Village President, and Trustees Frank J. Klepfer, William Palmer and Robert Hutchinson and William Keefe. George Weimer was elected Treasurer, Henry W. Illig won the Collectors race while Anthony Hartung and Apollis Hitchcock were elected to the Assessors post.

The losing Citizen's candidates were Elmer F. Wilcox candidate for President, Trustee candidates Benjamin H. Eden, John Krzywicki, E.J. Nash and John Witherspoon. Newell McDonald was the losing candidate for Treasurer, and J. Wesley Steen lost the Collector's race. Matt Kupczynski and Walter Inskip were the losing Assessor candidates.

A proposition on the ballot for \$2,500.00 to erect a firehouse for the Cayuga Hose Company was defeated by 36 votes with only 174 votes being cast on the proposition while well over 500 citizens took part in the election.

In the election of 1908, the Union Party was again victorious, with every man on the ticket being elected. The Union Party now assumed total control of the village board and all of the other elected offices.

Frank J. Klepfer defeated the incumbent Village president Martin Kieffer by 73 votes. Union Party Trustee candidates William Keefe, Frank J. Wendel, Fred Duttwieler and Henry C. Lauck defeated the Citizens candidates Gustave Gramlich, John H. Green, Anthony Siminski and Ambrose B. Walters.

George Weimer defeated Treasurer Elmer F. Wilcox, while Dennis J. Crowley won the Collectors race opposing the Citizens, Joseph Roll. Michael J. Garry of the Union Party defeated Police Justice James D. Higgins by 7 votes and Walter F. Inskip won the Assessors race by defeating the Citizen's candidate Daniel Kennedy.

The election of 1909 seen the resurgence of the Citizens Party, which took control of the village board by electing Henry Wannamaker as Village President and three new trustees including Walter F Schultz, Ambrose Walters with John Green and James D. Higgins both claiming the third seat.

The losing candidates were President Frank J. Klepfer and Trustee candidates Elmer J. Nash, Joseph Miller and Henry C. Lauck. The Citizen's Party candidate for Treasurer Felix R. Doherty defeated Robert Hutchinson and Hugh Collins bested Apollis Hitchcock for the assessor's seat.

The re-organization of the newly elected Village Board on March 22, 1909 was a highly contentious affair. The outgoing Village President Frank J. Klepfer presented a sworn affidavit stating " He was acquainted with James D. Higgins, who was a candidate for the office of Village Trustee at the election held on March 16, 1909. Klepfer's contention was that the property in which Higgins maintained his barbershop and the house wherein he resides is assessed on the Village Tax Rolls to Mary A. Higgins, wife of James D. Higgins

This contention was backed up by a sworn statement from the Village Treasurer George Weimer, which affirmed outgoing Village President Frank J. Klepfer's contention that Higgins not being a property owner of record was not entitled to sit on the Village Board of Trustees.

Attorney Clute on behalf of Mr. Higgins maintained that Mr. Higgins was elected by the people and sworn in and was entitled to his seat; and that he could only be removed by a court order.

The chair called on Attorney O'Hart for an opinion on the case. Attorney O'hart addressed the board and stated that he would give his opinion, not as Village Attorney, but as a private citizen. He stated in substance as follows: He had not had much time to examine the question but would go back and cite an opinion from Judge Daniels, in which the question came up as to what constituted an owner. The attorney stated that Judge Daniels had decided that property which was owned by the candidate, but which appeared upon the previous roll, was a sufficient qualification. Later the Supreme Court had given another similar decision on the same grounds. Later on, in the year 1906, the State Legislature had later on amended the law to read as follows: "A President or Trustee, or a fire, water, light, sewer or cemetery commissioner must, at the time of his election, and during his term, be the owner of property assessed to him upon the last preceding assessment roll, and must also be the owner during the term of his office of property assessed to him on the assessment roll of said village".

He advised that under the amended act Mr. Higgins was ineligible as a Trustee, on account of Mr. Higgins not having property assessed to him on the previous assessment roll. He stated that the situation called for a display of patriotism from all concerned in

order to come to an amicable adjustment. The attorney said that he believed that Mr. Higgins should be given an opportunity to confer with his attorney. He said that the question of the right successor to the office offered no end of difficulties in case that Mr. Miller was not chosen. He advised having all concerned getting together and presenting the statement of facts to the Supreme Court for a quick decision, with the understanding that there be a "Gentlemen's Agreement" to abide by the decision of the court.

The attorney proposed that the appointments be left open until the question of Mr. Higgins eligibility was settled by the court.

Attorney Clute stated that he would object to Mr. Miller acting as a member of the board if Mr. Higgins was left out.

Trustee Higgins made a motion that the opinion of the Village Attorney be accepted; Seconded by Trustee Schultz.

Trustee Wendel demanded a roll call vote with Trustees Schultz, Higgins and Walters voting Aye. Trustee Duttweiler, Wendel, Keefe and Miller refused to vote on the question.

The attorney suggested that the board should be organized without either Higgins or Miller voting, and that in the meantime the matter be referred to the First Division of the Appellate Court for a quick decision.

Attorney Clute declared that the board should organize with Mr. Higgins as a member, and then let the protestors carry the matter to the Appellate Court to unseat Mr. Higgins. He declared that Mr. Higgins was duly elected, and could not be unseated by a mere technicality.

Mr. Barry, attorney for Mr. Miller stated that there was absolutely no question of technicality involved. The amended act was an absolute prohibition against Mr. Higgins taking office, according to Mr. Barry's statements, and Mr. Higgins had no more authority to sit on the board than a private citizen. He declared that if Mr. Higgins illegally sat on the board, that every act, depending on Mr. Higgins vote would be null and void.

Attorney O'Hart spoke of endless complications that might ensue if the court decided that neither Mr. Miller nor Mr. Higgins was the rightful Trustee.

Mr. Miller stated that he would bind himself to the decision of the court, in Mr. O'Hart's proposed solution to taking the statement of facts to the Appellate division of the Supreme Court, was agreed to by the other parties.

Mr. Higgins said that he could make the same agreement provided that special election was held to determine the result in case neither was selected.

President Wanamaker stated that the court would decided on the matter of a special election.

Attorney O'Hart suggested that the board adjourn for one week. After his suggestion was made several other routine motions failed to be carried and the meeting was finally adjourned.

The issue was finally resolved when Mr. Higgins resigned in April 1909 and John Green was appointed to serve the term of office upon Mr. Higgin's resignation.

The following year, 1910, there was but one ticket in the field, the Union Party having failed to make any nominations. This was the second campaign in local politics in which but one ticket was nominated. In the campaign of March 1904 the Citizens Party was also unopposed.

Elected without opposition were Village President Henry Wannamaker, Trustees Albert Nelson, David Crowninshield, and James D. Higgins and Charles Reimer. Felix Doherty was elected Treasurer, Cornelius Gibbs, Collector and Joseph Wisniewski Assessor.

Trustee David Crowninshield tendered his resignation on October 10, 1910. John Jepson was appointed to fill the vacancy until the next election.

In early February 1911, with the village election but a few weeks away, there seemed to be little interest manifested towards the seeking of nominations. Whether or not there would be more than one ticket in the field was a matter of conjecture. It seemed that the older politicians were disinclined to take up the political strife, however, the Union Party dropped out of the political picture in the village and was replaced by the People's Party.

The newly organized People's Party was successful in electing George F. Eckstein as Village President and three Trustees, namely Anthony Hartung, William Cleveland, Joseph Miller, thereby taking control of the village board. Guy E. Wheeler of the Citizen's Party defeated Stanislaus Lysiak for a one-year term as Trustee. The party's candidates for Treasurer William Dougherty, Assessor Henry Ullman were also elected defeating Newell McDonald and Elmer F. Wilcox respectively. Cornelius C. Gibbs of the Citizen's Party defeated People's Party candidate for Collector, Walter Schultz.

The following year 1912, the election was held on March 19th, with the result that the People's Party elected the majority of their ticket, retaining control of the village board. John R. Robinson and Edward Sturm were the winning Trustee candidates while the other Trustee candidate Michael Potoczak lost his bid for a Trustee's seat. The Citizen's Party was successful in electing the head of their ticket, Ambrose B. Walters as President who defeated incumbent George F. Eckstein and their candidate Edward G. Waltz for Collector.

William F. Dougherty retained his Treasurer's seat by defeating Daniel J. Sullivan while incumbent Police Justice of the People's Party defeated James D. Higgins The People's Party candidate for Assessor, J.W. Steen defeated Hugh Collins of the Citizen's Ticket.

The 1912 campaign was conducted in an orderly manner by both parties and as a rule; good nature prevailed between the opposing candidates.

In this election a tie vote occurred between the Citizen's Party candidate Albert Nelson and the People's Party candidate Jeremiah F. Rolan, each man receiving 311 votes. The village board decided that the winner would be decided by a lot pursuant to Village Law of the State of New York. Two slips of paper with the candidates name were placed in a hat. The draw from the hat was made by Village President Ambrose Walters as per resolution of the Village Board which stated that the draw would be made by the President with his back to the hat after which he would hand the paper lot to the Village Clerk who would open said paper and read the name of the winner of the draw who was Jeremiah F. Rolan

The 1913 election had but one full ticket in the field that of the Citizen's Party. The only contest was for the office of Village Treasurer. Candidate Guy E. Wheeler defeated his independent opponent Stephen D. Siegert by a wide majority.

Running unopposed Ambrose B. Walters retained the Presidents office. Elected to a two-year term, as Trustees were George F. Eckstein, Elmer J. Nash and Walter

Witkowski. Joseph Wisniewski and Carl G. Weiss were elected as Assessors for 3-year and 2-year terms.

On July 7, 1913, the resignation of Trustee George F. Eckstein, who had been elected in March, was presented and accepted. Dr. Daniel R. Stratton was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the resignation. Dr. Stratton was well conversant with the conditions in Depew and was one of Depew's most prominent professional men. His appointment met with general approval and proved to be a valuable acquisition to the village board.

In 1914 the Citizen's Party retained control of the village board by a 4 to 3 majority. Joseph Miller of the People's Party defeated Cornelius C. Gibbs for the President's seat. The People's Party won three seats on the board by electing Robert Hutchinson, Walenty Kwak and Fred Duttweiler as Trustees. The only Citizen's Trustee candidate to win was Thomas McHugh but this win allowed the Citizen's Party to retain control of the board.

Nicholas J. Becker, Walter A. Schultz and Robert Watt were the losing Citizen candidates for Trustee and John R. Robinson was the losing People's Party candidate.

William F. Finnigan of the People's Party defeated Grover Durham for the Collector's seat while Guy E. Wheeler of the Citizen's won the Treasurer's race. Rees Philips defeated Anthony Hartung of the Citizen's Party for the Assessors post.

In 1915 both the Citizen's and People's Party endorsed Dr. Daniel R. Stratton, running for a two-year term as a Trustee. Dr. Stratton garnered the highest total of votes on the ballot with 100 more votes than his closest competitor.

The Citizen's Ticket administered a decisive defeat to the People's Party in this election. Cornelius C Gibbs heading the Citizen's defeated the incumbent President Joseph Miller and Elwin B Rowley of the Citizen's won a seat as a Trustee. The only bright spot for the People's Party was the election of John R. Robinson to a Trustee seat.

Running as an independent candidate, Anthony Hartung won the Assessors seat in a three- way race with Bernard Bergmanski of the Citizen's and Waclaw A. Schultz of the People's Party.

Guy E. Wheeler, Citizen's defeated G. Watson, People's candidate for Treasurer while Alexander Utecht, Citizen's defeated Lawrence Kamien, People's and Joseph C. English an independent candidate for the Village Collector's post.

In the race for the un-expired term of Police Justice, James D. Higgins defeated the People's candidate William P. Finnigan.

The 1915 election would be the last election in which the People's Party would field a ticket for many years to come.

The 1916 village election was rather unique in that there were three parties nominating slates. They were the Citizen's Party, Independent Party and the American Party. The emblem of the American Party was the "Man Behind the Plow". This emblem had previously been used in the 1903 election by the then Independent Party.

Both the Citizen's and Independent Party now endorsed Cornelius Gibbs, the incumbent President, who had been elected in 1915 with the endorsement of the Citizen's Party. Mr. Gibbs was running un-opposed.

Trustee candidate Matt Dworzanowski was endorsed by all three of the parties as was the Assessor candidate Joseph (Cherry) Wisniewski. The Treasurer's race was a three-way race with Guy E. Wheeler endorsed by the Citizen's, Grant Watson,

Independent and Walter A. Schultz the American Party nominee, who won the three-way race.

John Polaski, endorsed by the American Party was vying for the Collectors post against Alexander Utecht, endorsed by the Citizen's and Independent Parties, Utecht winning that race.

In the Trustee's race Matt Dworzanowski, Henry Dobbins, Independent-American and Stanley Lysiak, American were the winners. The losing candidates were Charles Crommett, Citizen's, William Walters, Citizen's and Harry Seeberg of the Independent Party.

The incumbent Police Justice James D. Higgins, Independent-American candidate defeated H.C. Hendryx, Citizen's quite handily.

When the votes were tabulated, it showed that the Citizen's Party had maintained control of the village board, although the American/Independent coalition did make some headway by electing two Trustees, Treasurer and the Police Justice.

The 1917 village election had two tickets entered, the American Party and the Citizen's Party. President Cornelius Gibbs who had previously been elected with backing from the Citizen's Party, now appeared on the ballot endorsed by the American Party, having been dropped by the Citizen's Party in favor of candidate Alexander Utecht, a former Village Justice.

Mr. Gibbs was re-elected President by defeating Mr. Utecht by a 23 vote margin, however, looking at the make up of the board following the 1917 election, it was difficult to determine who now had control of the board due to the cross endorsements in 1916 and again in 1917, although it did appear that control of the board rested with the American Party.

Elected for a two-year term, as Trustees were, George D. Illig, American-Citizen's, Albert Gangloff, American and Michael K. Dobbins, Citizen's. The other candidates were, Stephen Sass, American and Elmer J. Nash, Citizen's.

Both Citizens' candidates for Treasurer and Collector were victorious. Guy E. Wheeler defeated Walter A. Schultz and Dennis D. Graney defeated Walter F. Schultz, both endorsed by the American Party.

Rees Philips endorsed by both the American and Citizen's Party ran un-opposed for the Assessors slot.

The 1918 election had two parties on the ballot. The Citizen's Ticket was headed by Alexander Utecht for President opposed by John R. Robinson endorsed by the American Party. Mr. Robinson had previously served on the board as a Trustee having been elected with the endorsement and backing of the former People's Party.

In this election Alexander Utecht handily won the office of President and his Citizen's Party continued its domination of the village board by a 5 to 2 majority. It should be noted here that the office of President has been a one-year term thus was on the ballot each year while the Trustees were elected for a two-year term.

The Citizen's Party would continue to dominate politics in the Village of Depew every year thru 1928 and for several years controlled all of the seats on the village board.

The American Party would continue to endorse a slate in each yearly election except in 1926 and 1927.

In 1920, the Village Board of Trustees determined that the number of electors entitled to vote in the village exceeded 800 and that it was expedient to divide the Village

of Depew into two election districts. Heretofore, all voting in village elections was held in the south side fire hall at the corner of Gould and Penora Streets.

Election district No. 1 included all of the Village of Depew south of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railway Company and voting would continue in the south side fire hall. Election district No. 2 was designated as all of the area of the Village of Depew north of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railway Company with voting to be held in the north side fire hall on Ellicott Road.

Thus the 1920 village election was the first in which voting was held on both sides of the village.

A Proposition No. 1 appearing on the ballot in 1920 called for the annual compensation to be paid to the village officers. The Village President a sum not to exceed \$150.00 and each of the several Trustees to be paid a sum not to exceed \$100.00. The proposition further stated that the payments were to be paid in installments and with such reasonable deductions for absence from meetings or other sessions of the Board of Trustees, or other omissions or neglect to discharge official duties, as said board may determine, and under such reasonable rules and regulations as said board of Trustees shall from time to time prescribe and determine.

The 1921 election saw the Citizen's Party sweep the election, badly defeating the American Party candidates.

The Proposition on the ballot to build an incinerator plant in the Village of Depew to dispose of refuse heretofore dumped in various unsightly piles at points on the border of the village was carried with 313 votes cast in favor of the proposition and 139 votes against.

The March 3, 1922 issue of the Depew Herald noted that for some unexplained reason the political situation in Depew was very quiet, all of the candidates working under cover until the filing of the nominating petitions the following week.

Following the filing of the nominating petitions, conditions in Depew were expected to return to normal, "where the annual election is the greatest event of the year and even the cats and dogs fight it out".

The Citizen's Party and the American Party both filed a full slate of candidates along with an independent nominee for Village Collector.

Veteran campaigners seeking the office of President headed both tickets. Cornelius C. Gibbs again opposed Alexander Utecht, the incumbent. Both men having faced each other previously, each having held the office.

Cornelius C. Gibbs, endorsed by the American Party, was victorious over Mr. Utecht by a 46-vote margin. The American Party was also able to elect former Fire Chief John C. Carlson as a Trustee. The Citizen's Party also re-elected the Treasurer, Collector and Assessor.

The 1923 election again featured the Citizen's and American Party with Joseph W. Collie heading the Citizen's Ticket. Mr. Collie was victorious in defeating Floyd F. Dykstra endorsed by the American Party. Although losing the President's seat, the American retained two seats on the board by electing Joseph Dworzanowski as Trustee.

After completing a two-year term as a Trustee, John C. Carlson headed the American Party slate as a candidate for the office of Village President in 1924. Elmer J. Nash, endorsed by the Citizen's Party, opposed him. Mr. Nash headed the slate after the

incumbent President Joseph Collie withdrew and replaced Mr. Nash as a Trustee candidate.

Also endorsed by the Citizens were Stanley J. Jakubowski, Joseph W. Collie and John P. Murray for the trustee positions. Cornelius C. Gibbs, Alexander Utecht and Michael Swiatek were endorsed for the Treasurer, Police Justice and Collector positions respectively with Ira First endorsed as the candidate for Assessor.

Opposing them on the American Ticket were Joseph Wojciehowski, Albert Simbritz and Joseph Ren as the Trustee candidates with Francis J. Janik nominated for Police Justice, Walter Witkowski, for Collector and Henry Ullman was the Assessor candidate. Augustus M. Stratton was the lone nominee on the Independent Ticket as the candidate for the Collector's slot.

Following the election, the Citizen's Party held a 6 to 1 majority with holdover Trustee Joseph Dworzanowski being the lone American Party member on the board.

As the 1925 Spring election neared, the Depew Herald headline stated that both political parties have complete tickets endorsed for the upcoming election and "There will be a hot time in the old town tonight," is sure to be the grand ballet on March 17th this year with the two tickets in the field.

Elmer J. Nash will head the Citizens while Joseph H. Dworzanowski tops the American Ticket as candidate for Village President.

The Citizens candidates for Trustee were Michael Potoczak, Arthur Prestine and Felix Kocalski, opposed by American Party candidates Walter Witkowski, George Hammond and John Carlson.

Michael Swiatek, Citizens opposed Michael Swierat, American for the Collector slot, Cornelius C. Gibbs, Citizens opposed Jacob Mohr, American for Treasurer and Joseph Pautler, Citizens was opposed by Anthony Hartung, American for the Assessor position.

From 1925 thru the election in 1929 the Citizen's Party held total control of the village board by holding all seven seats.

In 1926, the Citizen's party endorsed a full slate of candidates headed by Elmer J. Nash, the incumbent President. Stanley J. Jakubowski, Joseph W. Collie and John P. Murray were the trustee candidates. They would be opposed by Guy E. Wheeler, Sr., Francis J. Janik and Leslie Waite of the Taxpayer's Ticket. The Dollar Sign was the emblem of the Taxpayer's Ticket, a new party formed for the 1926 election.

Cornelius C. Gibbs, William H. Walters and Lawrence Kamien were the Citizens' Ticket nominees for Treasurer, Collector and Assessor respectively and were unopposed.

The American Party failed to endorse a slate of candidates in 1926.

The Taxpayer's Party in an open letter to the Voter of Depew published in the Depew Herald charged, "That a certain clique has become so bold that it not only attempts, but actually controls both the Village Board of Trustees and the Depew School Board of Trustees. It has grown so bold, that it holds the public in contempt. The wishes of the public are disregarded, whenever they conflict with the plans of the clique. The personal ends of the clique are foremost, the wishes of the public are last".

Considering the fact that only three offices were being contested, it was a spirited affair. A large majority elected the entire Citizen's Ticket.

In 1927, though the election was expected to be the dullest and quietist on record in the village, it turned out to be somewhat interesting.

Had it not been for the fire apparatus proposition on the ballot it was thought that less than one hundred votes would have been cast, since there was no opposition to the candidates seeking re-election on the Citizen's Ticket. However, on the south side some of the firemen worked hard for the proposition and taxied many voters to and from the polls. Most everyone on the north side was opposed to the proposition and some 107 declared their opposition by voting against the proposition.

In all there were 247 votes cast for the unopposed candidates, the same number of taxpayers cast ballots on the proposition.

1928 was yet another significant year in village government as the village board re-organized with the office of President changed to that of Mayor and the various department heads who were previously elected were now to be appointed by the village board. The work of the Collector was to be combined with that of the Treasurer and the position of the Assessor was now reduced from three to one. This was done to be in compliance with changes in Village Law enacted at the state level. Elmer J. Nash, who had been elected as Village President, was the first to carry the title of Mayor.

After a three-year hiatus, the American Party re-entered the political scene in the spring of 1928 by endorsing a full slate of candidates. Alexander Utecht, a former Village President, was a candidate for Police Justice. Both the American and Citizen's Party endorsed Mr. Utecht.

The complexion of the village administration could not be changed by the election should the American Party be successful in electing its complete slate of Trustee candidates. The majority Citizen's Party would still control the board of Trustees with Mayor Nash and the three Trustees, who were holdovers in office. After the 1928 election, the Citizen's Party would continue their dominance of the village board by sweeping the opposition American Party candidates and returning to office the three incumbent Trustee candidates. The three losing Trustee candidates were Joseph E. Pautler, Joseph H. Dworzanowski and Bruno Bogdan.

In the most exciting and hotly contested village election held in Depew in years, the 1929 election seen the American Party elect three of its candidates. Joseph H. Dworzanowski was elected Mayor defeating the incumbent Mayor Elmer J. Nash and the two Trustee candidates, Felix Kocialski and Michael Potoczak. Arthur Prestine was the only Citizen's Party candidate able to weather the storm. He was re-elected to the position of Trustee. Jacob Mohr also lost in the Trustee's race running on the American Ticket.

Apparently the people of the village had become dissatisfied with the party in power, which had absolute control of the village board for ten years and desirous of seeing change, cast their votes in favor of the American Party. Not since 1923, had the American Party been able to elect one of its candidates to a village office. In that year one Trustee and one Assessor were elected on that ticket, each by a small majority. Since that time, Citizen's Party candidates on several occasions have run for office without opposition.

Election day March 19, 1929 saw a rejuvenated American Party organization. Urged on by the support pledged them during the several weeks preceding the election, the candidates and workers went hard at it and succeeded in electing three of their four candidates. The Mayor elect was the only one of the three successful candidates who has

had any previous experience in village politics. He had served on the village board, the Depew School Board and also served as Village Tax Collector.

The Citizen's Party would still retain the balance of power by a 5 to 2 majority despite losing the Mayor's slot.

In October 1929, the stock market crashed and signaled the start of the Great Depression and put the Village of Depew into a deep financial hole not unlike many other municipalities in the country.

With two complete tickets in the field, the annual village election, to be held on March 18, 1930, promised to be one of the greatest battles for positions on the village board in the history of the village.

For the first time since its incorporation, the offices of only three Trustees were to be filled by the people at the annual election for two-year terms. In 1929, under the new village law, the Mayor was also elected for a two- year term and the positions of Village Treasurer and Assessors were made appointive.

Trustees to fill vacancies caused by the expiration of the terms of Joseph Collie, John P. Murray and Stanley J. Jakubowski were to be filled in the election.

The candidates on the Citizen's Ticket were, incumbent Stanley J. Jakubowski, Nathan Bertelkamp and Henry Young.

The American Party candidates were: Frank Wienckowski, Jacob C. Mohr and William Carlson.

The incumbent candidate Mr. Jakubowski had served several terms on the village board and had also served as Village Collector. Mr. Bertelkamp was a member of the Depew School Board of Education for several terms; Mr. Mohr had been an unsuccessful Trustee candidate in 1929 on the American Ticket. The three remaining candidates were making their debut in the political arena.

On Election Day, the American Party found that it lacked a single vote of making a clean sweep of the annual village election with candidates Jacob Mohr and Frank Wienckowski were elected to office while incumbent Stanley J. Jakubowski and William Carlson tied with 693 votes each.

Judge Alexander Utecht interpreting the 1928 state law declared that a tie vote was to be decided by the village board by casting lots to determine the winner of the contested position.

As a result of the election, the Citizen's Party, for the first time in ten years did not have control of the village board. A special meeting of the village board was held on March 21st to decide the winner of the final seat on the board of trustees.

Spontaneous with the calling of the meeting to order, suggestions were advanced as to how the lots should be cast. They varied from putting the names of both candidates in a hat and drawing one out, to cutting cards, matching coins and rolling dice. Finally Judge Utecht's suggestion of flipping a coin was declared the most feasible.

The Judge then offered a twenty-five cent piece and a fifty-cent piece for inspection by the members of the board and the two candidates. The half-dollar was chosen as the coin to be flipped. Mr. Jakubowski asked Mr. Carlson what he chose and as the coin was twirling in the air, Mr. Carlson chose "heads".

All eyes were strained as the coin hit the deck bounced, and fell with the "heads" up. Mr. Carlson was declared the winner. As a result of William Carlson's selection, the

American Party now took control of the village board by a majority of 6 to 1 with Trustee Arthur Prestine as the lone member of the Citizen's Party on the board.

When the village board met to re-organize, Mayor Dworzanowski appointed the standing committees for the coming year. The American Party now in complete control of the board, as was expected took control of all the committees and membership on all of any importance. Trustee Arthur F. Prestine, the lone Citizen Party man on the board fared as anticipated, was appointed to serve on the two committees, which were considered to be insignificant.

It should be stated here that over time, Mayor Joseph Dworzanowski would become probably the most controversial chief executive in the history of the Village of Depew.

The reigning American Party evidently took exception to the article that was written and published following the re-organization meeting. The following week, an editorial was written in the Herald entitled "Party In Power". The editorial is being re-printed in its entirety since this was a shot fired, which started several years of controversy and a war of words between the American Party controlled village board and the Depew Herald. The controversy would eventually lead to the boards discontinuance of having the minutes of the village board meetings printed in the Herald.

PARTY IN POWER

"When a political party gains control of city, county, state or federal branch of government, it is natural to expect that, in our system of democratic government, other things being equal, appointment made will be from the members of the party in power. This has been an unwritten law almost since the early days of our national existence.

"To the victor belongs the spoils", is an old adage in American politics and I think that history has told us that this has been, and will continue to be a practice while our form of government exists.

When this paper was termed antagonistic because of a news item appearing in last week's issue, stating that the American Party of the Village of Depew having gained control had proceeded to do just as they were expected to do. We are compelled to answer the charge.

We are inclined to believe that our readers do not take this version of the news item. In fact many have expressed themselves to us, since the statement was made. We did not intend it as a criticism.

Any person, group of persons or institution has the right to support a political party or lend it their support to any movement in the administration of public affairs. Under this right, this newspaper has often declared itself for or against this or that party, person or movements. The Herald and News has supported the Democratic Party, has declared itself against Prohibition, as well as it supported the Citizen's Party in village politics.

We have never assumed that because these were our policies that all of our readers would take them for their own, or that these policies being ours, that our readers would think that we expected them to adopt them, regardless of their own opinions. A newspaper editor or publisher who would be foolish enough to believe that he could force other people to accept his opinions as the only opinions to which they were entitled, would have no place in the field of American Journalism, and I do not think such an editor or his paper would long exist in this country.

Needless to say we have our own reasons for our stated policies. We are opposed to prohibition because we believe it to be one of the most damnable laws ever enacted or attempted and, unlike President Hoover, we term it a damnable experiment. We believe the day is not far distant, when President Hoover will alter his opinion on this question. We have supported the Democratic Party, because we believe in Democratic policies.

We have supported the Citizen's Party in local politics because for the most part, the opposing party sometimes known as Taxpayers or American Party, has been made up largely of those who have been at one time or another been members of, and held office through the Citizen's Party, and after having taken their portion of the spoils, have gone over to the opposing party with their support, and again lined up for a portion of the spoils.

We do not state that all the backers, or all the members of that party or perhaps even a small fraction of the rank and file have done this, but apparently a number of the leaders have done so. Likewise we do not believe that, because a person is a member of the American Party, whether he was at any one time a member of any other party, that he is any the less qualified to hold office or to administer the affairs of his office, than any other man of like character or ability. However, we believe loyalty is a cardinal principle in any man.

But we do not believe, that any party led by those whose only concern is to wreak vengeance on any who oppose them; will give the best possible to the people to whom he or they owe their best efforts."

Over the next several months various issues before the village board were reported in the pages of the Depew Herald and Cheektowaga News and included the Depew Street Fires, the Broadway-Borden Storm Water Sewer Project and the proposed Sewage Disposal Plant project.

In the September 11, 1930 issue of the Herald, a headline read "Village Board Charges Herald and News With Unfair Criticism and Adopts Long Resolution Citing Alleged Instances". The resolution adopted by the village board was published in its entirety with the board taking exception to items published in the Herald and at the suggestion of the Village Attorney; the board adopted the Resolution of Condemnation. The resolution was quite lengthy and pointed out wherein and in what instances the Board of Trustees of such village was misrepresented to the taxpayers, and to the readers of said newspaper, and also of stating the truth in reference to the charges made by the Herald.

In the same issue of the Herald, the Editor of the Herald charged that the Village of Depew Administration was in error, stating that the press exercises its right and duty in honest, sincere criticism of the acts of public officials. The article went on to refute the arguments presented by the village board and went on to further justify the position taken by the Herald in each instance.

As the election of 1931 approached, both parties were gearing up for the election by nominating a full slate of candidates. Arthur F. Prestine, currently serving on the board as a Trustee, was nominated to head the Citizen's Ticket as the mayoral candidate. His running mates were Stanley J. Jakubowski, John Mlynarczyk and Cornelius C. Gibbs.

Mayor Joseph Dworzanowski was the American Party candidate to succeed himself. Trustees Earl W. Hadsell and Joseph A. Rogacki were also candidates for re-election and William Lindholm rounded out the ticket.

“ In seeking election to the office of Mayor” said Mr. Prestine, “ I point to my creditable record as Trustee; particularly my vigorous and unrelenting opposition to the proposed sewage disposal plant project and extras on certain paving jobs. It will be well remembered by the people of the village, that I was the only member of the board who fought their fight against the disposal plant”.

“ The fact that I have repeatedly served the people of the village in every office within their power to elect or appoint me, is a mighty proof that the people are convinced that I serve their best interests”, declared Mr. Gibbs. And further, I defy the Mayor to substantiate his statement in the Buffalo Courier-Express of Sunday, February 8, that there will be no deficit at the end of the fiscal year.

It should be noted here that the nation was now in the throes of the Great Depression and the fiscal position of the Village of Depew was not in the very best shape due to circumstances dictated by the times.

The election of 1931 with the many issues that arose over the past two years led to the largest voter registration in the history of the village when at the close of registration, 1,935 citizens registered to vote.

St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, 1931 seen a record turnout of voters for what was the most spirited election that the Village of Depew had ever see. A total of 1,760 voters turned out at the polls and handed the American Party a handy win. Mayor Dworzanowski defeated Arthur Prestine by 149 votes and elected two Trustees and the seat vacated by Mr. Prestine going to John Mlynarczyk of the Citizen’s Party thus allowing the American Party to retain control of the board by the same 6 to 1 majority as they enjoyed during the past two years.

In an editorial following the election the Herald wrote, “ There is no reason to believe that we can not have good, substantial, constructive and still conservative administration under Mayor Dworzanowski as anyone else. Mayor Dworzanowski can succeed by respecting the wishes, as well as the rights, of the people who elected him to office”.

As the March 15, 1932 election approached, 2,054 citizens registered surpassing the record number set in 1931. It looked like it was going to be “ a hot time in the town tonight”

The heavy registration, plus three full tickets and one independent candidate seeking the office of Police Justice assured a contest that would reach record heights in the history of village elections.

The two old traditional parties, the Citizen’s and American Party were being challenged by a third party, the Peoples party which had been active in village politics twenty years ago.

The Citizen’s slate included Trustee candidates Walter Szyperski, Arthur Prestine and Charles E. Gangloff and Frank S. Kwak was the candidate for Police Justice.

The American Party offered Frank Wienckowski, William Carlson and Arthur Quiram as Trustee candidates with Mayor Joseph Dworzanowski as the candidate for Police Justice.

The People’s Party candidates were Stanley J. Jakubowski, Alexander Brogowski and George Urschel as Trustee candidates and the incumbent Judge Alexander Utecht. Judge Utecht was the prime mover in the organization of the party.

The independent candidate for Police Justice was Robert J. Dobbins.

It is interesting to note that the Campaign Committee Chairman of the Citizen's Party was E.M. Clemons Editor and Publisher of the Depew Herald and Cheektowaga News and that the independent candidate for Police Justice was Robert J. Dobbins, Associate Editor of the Herald.

Also on the ballot was a proposal of the village board to spend up to \$100,000 on the construction of a disposal plant.

The Citizen's Party was able to take two of the three seats on the village board by electing Arthur Prestine and Charles Gangloff while William Carlson retained his seat giving the American Party control of the board by a majority of 4 to 3. Police Justice Alexander Utecht was re-elected over his three opponents. The sewage plant proposal was defeated by almost a 7 to 1 majority. This was not surprising considering the financial condition of the village and the controversy, which surrounded this project over the last few years.

Following the election it was revealed that a campaign circular that the American Party had circulated pointed with "pride" to the great saving of the present village administration. Of course the figures used were "campaign figures", compiled for the purpose of getting votes.

Among the figures shown was one of \$3,000 supposed to have been saved in the streets department. Perhaps it was on paper, but not in fact. Just prior to the election a number of men were employed on the streets to push brooms and otherwise keep themselves busy. Of course the purpose of hiring men at this particular time, was to gain votes. Before all the men could get the dust off the streets, winter paid a visit and piled up a lot of snow, thereby giving real work to a large number of men. When payday came most of the \$3,000 that was saved had somehow evaporated. Some of the workmen were not paid and had to wait until the village could secure a loan to enable the village to carry on.

"That's Politics", so said Mayor Joseph Dworzanowski when he was criticized by Trustee Arthur Prestine for awarding the contract to collect garbage at \$1,100 over the lowest bid figure, and under the guise of economy would also stop publication of the village board minutes in the Herald.

The Herald editorialized that " Apparently in the opinion of the Mayor, politics is everything, public service and the will of the people, nothing. One would gain the impression that the Mayor thinks himself a Mussolini, a dictator. It is not what the people want, but what he wants. In our humble opinion, "he may have the mouth of a Mussolini but he has the brains of an ass."

Sincerely, we do not think that the Mayor has the interest of the Village of Depew at heart. To the best of our knowledge, he is no longer a taxpayer here and if he is not a taxpayer, he could not be re-elected to the office he now holds"

As the Mayor and village board prepared the budget for the following year, the running battle between the board and the Herald continued.

Following the Herald's criticism of the Mayor regarding the awarding of the garbage contract, it was found that the tentative budget, which had contained \$1,000 for publication fees and printing expenses, had been reduced to \$500 and a resolution was adopted to cease publication of the village board minutes. It was believed that this was not an economy move but rather a political club intended to prevent the Herald from criticizing that what the Herald believed to be wrong.

As the disposal plant project continued to be a focus of the village board, questions arose at the budget hearing as to who was to be paid the fee for engineering services. Village Attorney Joseph Kaszubowski stated, "The newspaper ought to let the Village Attorney handle such matters". The Mayor declared the question out of order and would not allow further discussion on the question.

Again the Herald used the editorial page to state and defend its position on the matter.

"We believe we have the right under the law both as a citizen and as a public institution, to question or criticize such matters, and we shall continue to do so. We would like to feel that Attorney Kazubowski was above erring in the handling of the public's affairs. We know that it is human to err and know that the best do make errors. Certainly Attorney Kazubowski would grant us this. The length of Mr. Kazubowski's term in public office is not short. We would like to feel that he merits our confidence but past experiences do not permit it.

In 1926, the Depew Board of Education engaged Mr. Kazubowski as their attorney to prepare a bond issue. For these services Mr. Kazubowski received a fee of \$600, one percent of the bond issues. Later the Board of Education was required to hire the services of former Senator Gibbs to correct the errors of Mr. Kazubowski at a cost in excess of \$250. On another occasion while acting for the Depew Village Board, it became necessary for the board to send the village clerk to the offices of Clay, Dillon and Vandewater in New York City to have corrected, the wrongs that existed because of Mr. Kazubowski's faulty procedure in the matter of bond issues.

We trust that this answer will satisfy Mr. Kazubowski and hope that in some future time he will merit our confidence by reason of his accomplishments. When this day arrives we shall cease to criticize except when we find that which we believe to be wrong".

The ongoing war of words, which had been going on for some time between the administration of Mayor Joseph Dworzanowski and the editor of the Depew Herald, who was also a staunch supporter of the Citizen's party, came to an end at least temporarily.

In mid-January 1933, a group of village citizens from the Depew community, which was like a who's who in the political and business scene met and organized the Depew Taxpayers Association. The meeting was held on January 12th at Andy Bandy's Café and Restaurant.

Albert Simbritz President, Alexander Brogowski, E.M. Clemons, Secretary and Andy Bandy, Treasurer, were the officers elected for the year 1933.

The first resolution adopted by the new organization was to affiliate with the County Association and work in co-ordination with that body.

President Simbritz appointed a committee of the officers, Attorney Harold P. Kelley and Joseph Collie to draft up a set of by-laws for the organization.

Many questions of concern to the taxpayers of Depew were discussed among them, State Aid for education, regulation and taxation of the truck and bus, ways and means of reducing the cost of local governments, town village and school.

The following Tuesday evening another group of citizens met at the Gould Coupler offices and announced the formation of a group to also be named the Depew Taxpayer's Association. Michael Dobbins and Valenty Kwak were appointed to visit the Herald and News offices and to seek publicity for this organization. Mr. Dobbins stated that this

group would be affiliated with and be a co-partner of the Lancaster Taxpayers Association.

Mr. Dobbins and Mr. Kwak said that there would be a mass meeting at the Depew High School on January 31st, and that all taxpayers in the village were invited to attend,

They stated that the preliminary meeting held at the Gould plant had about 60 members in attendance.

A number of speakers, in both the Polish and English language were to be present from the Erie County Taxpayers Association for the mass meeting. Officers for the organization were to be elected at the meeting on the 31st.

The announcement of a second Taxpayers organization drew an immediate response from Albert Simbritz, President of the Taxpayers Association. Simbritz said, "We were the first organized here in Depew and are entitled to be know as the Depew Taxpayers Association and our Association is to be of, and for Depew".

He further stated, "It is our intention to co-operate with both Lancaster and Cheektowaga and the county organization". "If however the Lancaster Association is attempting to reach out and cover our village it will remain with the taxpayers of Depew to make our own choice".

"Our village is located partly in two towns and we have nothing to gain so far as the village is concerned by part of our members joining a Lancaster Association and another portion of our membership belonging to a Cheektowaga Association".

In the mean time with the annual village election in the offing, the depression, technocracy, beer bills and such heavy subjects were to be laid aside for a little bit of comedy.

This was evidenced on Tuesday morning January 31st when a Buffalo newspaper carried a story to the effect that the G.O.P. with two local "boys" at the helm would proceed to nominate a Mayor and three Trustees for the March election.

With one grand gesture these gentlemen announced that the majority of the American Party were Republicans and they would be sorted out and the rest would be cut adrift to shift for themselves in these troublesome times.

This startling bit of humor interjected so early was heartily appreciated by the affiliated Democratic voters of the village. In reviewing the figures of the November election it was found that the numbers of Democrats to Republicans had not changed a bit.

Every Democratic candidate received a majority from 500 to 600 within the confines of the Village of Depew. The boys must have their joke declared a village punster; next they will be telling us that the next election will not be held in March at all, but on April 1st.

The information handed out by one of the Buffalo papers about the intended third party headed by Judge Utecht seems to have fizzled out as was the talk of putting the election on partisan lines, that is under the auspices of the Democratic and Republican parties.

The places to be filled at this election were the Mayor and three Trustees. It was common knowledge that Mayor Joseph Dworzanowski would not be seeking re-election although there did not seem to be a surplus of candidates this year, perhaps due to the fact that public office in these times carried with it a certain amount of grief. Everyone wanted a job and there were not that many jobs to be passed out.

Trustee Arthur Prestine headed the Citizen's Part slate with John Mlynarczyk, Walter Szyperski and John P. Murray the candidates for Trustee.

American Party candidates were Trustee William Lindholm seeking the office of Mayor with his running mates for Trustee Earl Hadsell, Stanley Zynda and Casimer Cybulski.

Incumbent Trustee Joseph Rogacki, who was denied the backing of the American Party, was seeking re-election as an independent candidate.

With slightly more than a week prior to the election, neither party had as yet announced a platform, but it was understood that despite the times both sides would wage a vigorous campaign.

During the past three years the American Party has controlled the Board, although last year it was but by a majority of one.

All of the patronage, Village Clerk, Village Treasurer, Street Commissioner, Assessor and a variety of lesser jobs were to go with the party in control of the Board. Although those to be appointed to serve in these positions would undoubtedly serve for some time before the village was in a position to pay their salaries, many were lined up by both parties for these jobs.

While the talk of conducting the local election under the party emblems and auspices was prevalent for some time prior to the election, no effort was made to file tickets so designated. However, from the tickets that were filed it would appear that the Citizen's was made up mostly of Democrats while the American had at least two Republicans.

In presenting their platform, the Citizen's Party Ticket stated that they were 100 percent solidly behind the glorious statesman and noble leader Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his economy program, in his public works program, his prohibition program and all other vast enterprises that turned this country over night from a fear ridden populace to enthusiastic, brightened and happy citizens.

Indications were that this election would be just as thrilling as previous years despite the condition of the village finances. Registration for this election stood at 2,170 voters, according to Village Clerk Jacob Mohr with a vote of nearly 2,000 expected.

The American Party made public its platform in a Buffalo Daily Newspaper issued by Campaign Manager Joseph (Joe Face) Lewandowski. The platform outlined ten points that, was immediately challenged by the Citizen's part thru their Campaign Committee Chairman E. M. Clemons.

The most interesting point of the American platform stated that they would eliminate the present waste and extravagance from village government. The Citizen's Party took sharp issue on this point. In April 1933, when Mayor Prestine took the chair, \$8,778.85 in old bills exclusive of bond debt awaited him as a "hangover" from the American Party Administration. The bond service required \$4,695.04. This too was left. In addition the American Party regime borrowed \$5,000 from the M&T Bank in anticipation of 1933 village taxes, which was supposedly borrowed to pay bonds and interest, which were then due and payable. The credit of the Village of Depew was greatly impaired, when the \$5,000 borrowed was used to pay salaries of the officials which included \$951.94 paid to Joseph Lewandowski on garbage contract, who this year appears as the campaign manager of the American Party. The Citizen's party shouldered these extravagant expenditures and came through with no increase in the tax rate.

The entire Citizen's Party slate, the unofficial Democratic Party ticket was elected by overwhelming majorities.

Joseph C. English one of the most active party workers and former Seventh District Assembly Democratic leader was Chairman of the Citizen's Party and the Chairman of the American ticket while largely Republican in structure was under the leadership of Mayor Joseph H. Dworzanowski, a Democrat.

The election of the Citizen's Party placed control of the Depew Village government in their hands for the next two years with Trustee William Carlson the lone member of the American Party serving on the board.

The organization meeting of the new Depew Village Board was held on April 4, 1933, when political control of the community was officially wrested from the American Party in an overwhelming triumph by the Citizen's Party.

Alexander Brogowski was appointed a Trustee to fill the un-expired term of the newly elected Mayor Arthur F. Prestine. Mayor Prestine indicated the new regime would start of as a "new broom, sweeping clean", by appointing an entire new slate of appointments.

Albert Simbritz was appointed Village Clerk, succeeding Jacob Mohr. Felix Kocialski was appointed Village Treasurer succeeding Edmund Kupczynski. Harold P. Kelly was appointed Village Attorney succeeding the controversial Joseph Kazubowski. William (Baldy) Gonglewski was appointed Streets Commissioner. A number of lesser appointments were also made, filling those positions with Citizen Party faithful.

The business of paring expenses for the village, which was a difficult task as a result of the recent closings of almost all industrial plants in the village and the closing of the Bank of Depew, which had most of the village finances, was begun. Mayor Prestine announced there would be no contract let for garbage collection this year since arrangements had been made for the streets department to take over this work at a savings of \$1,000 a year.

Employment for at least 150 men within 30 days was promised by the County according to an announcement by Mayor Prestine at the close of the meeting.

He levied some direct criticism at the former Mayor and board in a statement that the County Officials had informed him that no prior request had been made by Depew for this aid. Trustee William Carlson took exception to this, but Mayor Prestine answered that this was the information given him by County Officials, and they pointed to their records to prove their statements.

He stated that engineers would be sent here within a few days to check on the projects he proposed, and that the village would be required to furnish only such tools and material as would be necessary.

No projects involving the purchase of any great amount of material by the village would be considered at this time, according to the Mayor. Putting the sewers in good condition, cleaning drainage trenches and natural watershed streams were to be given first consideration.

In 1934 William Carlson, the lone member of the American Party serving on the village board, went down to defeat and now the Citizen's Party had total control of the Village Board of Trustees.

Going down to defeat with Carlson were running mates Barney Gramza and Michael Lesczynski. Incumbent Trustees Alexander Brogowski and Charles Gangloff were re-elected along with newcomer John F. Bauer.

Party leaders hailed the victory by the Citizens Party as repudiation by the people of those who would besmirch the reputation of the community for political gain.

When the results of the election were announced, Joseph C. English, leader of the Citizen's Party, smilingly stated that it was just as he had expected and that it was gratifying to know that the people of Depew were satisfied to again place the conduct of their official affairs in the hands of men who hold office as a public trust.

In June 1934, slightly one year after Mayor Prestine took office, the New York State Conference of Mayors and Other Municipal Officials held their twenty-fifth annual meeting.

A symposium was held on the Progress and Problems of New York State Villages. Mayor Arthur Prestine was one of the presenters and the following is the presentation made by the Mayor and how his administration dealt with the problems created by the Great Depression.

"Depew, we hope has passed the lowest point, which it is to reach during the depression, as conditions now seem to be gradually improving. While the improvement is slight it is noticeable in a village like ours where the employment situation could hardly have been more severe. Most of our remaining local industries have called the majority of their men back to work. This, of course, will have the effect of reliving our uncollected tax situation to some extent, as we may now expect those wage earners to pay their taxes.

To relieve the taxpayers, who, during good times, were accustomed to paying their taxes regularly and promptly but who, due to unemployment brought on by the depression, have been unable to so pay during the past year, we have inaugurated a system, which harks back to the old times of the dirt roads. Instead of hiring workmen in our street department and other departments who are not taxpayers, we are attempting to pick out needy taxpayers, whose taxes are in arrears. The money so earned is applied on the taxes owed by such individuals. In some cases, where there is one member of the family working elsewhere but who is not earning enough to pay his taxes after paying his living expenses, we employ another member of the family in the same manner. We, of course, are not able to have all of the unemployed taxpayers work off all of their taxes. However, the benefit derived from this system is felt both by the village and by the individual.

We have collected a considerable amount of money on our back taxes from the Home Owners Loan Corporation. These payments came at a very opportune time, due to the fact that they came when our funds were very low. The amount so collected to date from this source is approximately \$5,029.84.

A project was submitted to the Public Works Administration for a sewage disposal plant and a garbage incinerator, which is to cost approximately \$190,000. Of this we are to get the usual 30% grant from the Federal Government and we are to finance the balance by issuance of long-term bonds. We felt that this project would not only aid in relieving the employment situation in the village, but that it would eliminate a nuisance of long standing, that of polluting one of our local streams with untreated sewage. The State Department of health, on numerous occasions, has called this condition to our

attention and requested that it be remedied. While the project has been approved, we are awaiting definite action on it from Washington.

In order to affect an economy, the village has been able to do away with certain streetlights, which are unnecessary. The total so eliminated is 62 lights at a saving of \$3,185 annually. We feel that this has been done without any curtailment of efficiency. There, however, can be no further saving from this source as the number of street lights now in operation is the minimum allowed under our contract with the lighting company.

Entirely as a result of the efforts of the Mayor and the Board of Trustees of the village, the bus fare from the Village of Depew to the Village of Lancaster has been reduced from ten cents to five cents. There have been many favorable comments received because of this reduction.

Another saving to the taxpayers, which was accomplished during the past year, was in having Olmstead Avenue and Burlington Avenue taken over by the County of Erie and made a part of the county system of highways. These two streets connect Transit Road and Ellicott Road, which are two county highways. Not only will the village escape the yearly cost of maintenance of these streets but also it is apparent that both of them will have to be resurfaced. The cost of resurfacing alone will be a major item of expense eliminated, as these streets total approximately one mile in length.

The suit, which the Village of Depew instituted against the Town of Lancaster for payment of franchise taxes erroneously retained by the Town of Lancaster, was settled out of court. As a result of this settlement, the village received \$12,374.66. The Town of Cheektowaga, however, has contested the action and the matter is still in the courts. Depew is in the particular situation of being located in two townships. Therefore, we had to sue both the Town of Lancaster and the Town of Cheektowaga.

At the suggestion of a representative from the Comptrollers office, we raised our budget for the current year to make up for the estimated uncollected taxes. We hope, in this way, to secure enough taxes so that there will not be a deficiency of money to meet the operating expenses of the village.”

Reports were presented by 21 other villages from throughout New York State at this symposium.

The 1935 election was decidedly in favor of the Citizen’s Party as all of the incumbents including Mayor Arthur Prestine defeated the candidates of the American Party by a vote of better than two to one. Mayor Prestine defeated Alphonso Butlak while incumbent Trustees John Murray, John Mlynarczyk and Walter Szyperski defeated Thomas Sharpe, Frank Kerl and Thaddeus Miklinski, endorsed by the American Party.

Following the election, Mayor Prestine called to attention the fact that for the first time in many years the governing body was able to finish its fiscal year without resorting to borrowed funds to carry out its work.

On February 12, 1936, a meeting of the Citizen’s Party Committee was held at which time Ingve Stohle, former popular fire chief, was chosen to be a candidate for village trustee to take the place of incumbent Charles Gangloff who declined the nomination. The other two nominees were incumbent Trustee Alexander Brogowski and newcomer Joseph Wallo. Alexander Utecht was designated as the Police Justice candidate.

Shortly after this meeting rumors of strife within the Citizen’s Party surfaced within the village. The dove of peace seemed to hover over the February 12th meeting and all

was well, but after the meeting it was said that some members of the party headed by Mayor Arthur Prestine, dissatisfied with the selection of Ingve Stohle decided to run a ticket of their own using the Citizen's Party emblem.

Immediately upon hearing of this, Joseph English and the loyal members of the group, secured a new emblem for what was to be known as the "Original Citizen's Party" and were backing the slate nominated at the February 12th meeting.

Word was that several men nominated for office on the Prestine ticket had declined to run. Members of the group were hopeful that the differences between the parties would be resolved with only one Citizen's Party ticket on the ballot. The American Party had not put together a slate for the ballot and was not expected to do so.

The Citizen's Party led by Mayor Prestine were backing John Bauer, Alexander Brogowski and Charles Gangloff for Trustees and Casimer Dworzanowski, a Druggist and brother of former Mayor Joseph Dworzanowski for Village Justice.

As the election approached, there was a great deal of rivalry between the two parties. Members of the Original Citizen's Party claimed that there should have been no cause for a split in the organization. At the committee meeting held on February 12th, plenty of opportunity was given for the members to express their opinions and to nominate whomsoever they chose. Evidently, this opportunity was not taken advantage of, as a second meeting was held by a group who had other intentions than those expressed at the first meeting and a second ticket placed in the field.

Leaders of the Original Citizen's Party charged that this group betrayed the loyal members of the old Citizen's Party in order to gain control of the village government for some hidden purpose.

In the election, the Citizen's Party led by Mayor Prestine was victorious electing its entire slate of three Trustees and a Police Justice. The Police Justice elect Casimer Dworzanowski defeated Alexander Utecht who had held the position for twelve years.

Alexander Brogowski was a candidate on both tickets and received more votes on the Original Citizen's Party line than on the Citizen's totaling 1,306 votes that was more than any other candidate on the ballot.

The 1937 election found three parties placing tickets in the field, two of them headed by Mayor Arthur Prestine, being identical. The Independent and People's Party was headed by Mayor Prestine along with incumbent Trustee Walter Szyperski, Michael Leszczyński, who had previously ran on the American Party slate and newcomer Theodore Nelson.

The Original Citizen's Party slate was headed by Leon J. (Shammy) Winkler, candidate for Mayor with Trustee candidates, incumbent Trustees John P. Murray and John Mlynarczyk and Barney Gramza who had previously been a trustee candidate on the American Party slate. It appears that the makeup of the election was to keep the Prestine forces in power.

The newly organized Independent Party handily won all of the seats in the 1937 election and with holdover Trustees John Bauer, and Charles Gangloff siding with Mayor Prestine's Independent Party would hold a 6 to 1 majority with only holdover Trustee Alexander Brogowski being the sole representative of the Original Citizen's Party.

As the 1938 village election approached, interest in the annual election was thus indicated to be high with three tickets in the field and only one of the retiring members of the village board running for re-election.

Trustees whose terms were expiring were Charles Gangloff and Alexander Brogowski and John F. Bauer who was running for re-election.

Candidates nominated by the Independent Party were John F. Bauer, Michael Swierat and Albert Lux.

Candidates nominated by the Citizen's Party were William Carlson, Edward McGuire and Stanley Zynda.

Candidates of the newly organized Progressive Party were Boleslaw Bodziak, Bolard Blighton and John F. Niedbala.

All three candidates of the Independent Party received large pluralities in the election allowing the Independent Party to take total control of village government in an election where 88% of the registered voters turned out at the polls.

In 1939 a coalition of the Progressive-Citizen's Party entered a slate of candidates but were unable to muster enough support for their ticket and all went down to defeat. An airplane was adopted as the emblem of the coalition party.

Endorsed by the Progressive-Citizens Party were mayoral candidate Stanley Zynda and trustee candidates William Carlson, Edward McGuire and Boleslaus Bodziak.

Mayor Arthur Prestine was re-elected to his fourth consecutive term, as was Trustee Walter Szyperski. Trustees Michael Leszczynski and Theodore Nelson were elected to their second consecutive terms.

The 1940 election was a rather quiet, dull affair by previous standards with a slate offered by the People's Party and the incumbent Independent Party Trustees and Police Justice.

People's Party candidates for trustees were George Matesz, Ernest Robinson and Stanley Kocialski. The Justice Party as well as the People's Party endorsed Francis A. Rozek for Police Justice.

Robert M. Dobbins filed petitions for the post of police justice under the name of the Lawyer Party, however, he would withdraw from the race leaving two men in the race, namely incumbent Casimer A. Dworzanowski and Francis Rozek.

Candidates of the Independent Party, all incumbents, were re-elected by overwhelming majorities over their People's Party candidates with a voter turnout of 74% of the registered voters. This was the lowest turnout in quite a few years with the voter turnout in the 1930's running in the 80% area. The high turnout was in 1938 when 88% of the registered voters went to the polls.

As the 1941 village election drew near, two parties had filed nominating petitions. Mayor Arthur Prestine seeking re-election, with incumbent Trustees Walter Szyperski and Theodore Nelson and John Murawski seeking the expiring seat of Michael Leszczynski, headed the Independent Party slate.

Mayoral candidate Michael Leszczynski, currently serving as a Trustee, having been elected on the Independent Party ticket, headed the opposing Industrial Party slate. His running mates were Joseph Drost, John Repka and Edward Pulaski.

The emblem of the Industrial Party was an industrial complex with smoke stacks emitting smoke.

The Independent Party was returned to control the village board for another two years by sweeping all of the contested offices in the annual election. The Industrial Party of this year gave the Independent Party the closest run recorded in several years. Mayor

Arthur Prestine received 1,222 votes, only 54 votes more than his opponent Michael Leszczynski.

In 1942 the same two party names appeared on nominating petitions filed with Village Clerk Albert Simbritz.

Trustees John F. Bauer, Michael Swierat and Albert Lux were the nominees of the Independent Party. Joseph Lewandowski, Frederick G. Wander and Stanley Zynda were the nominees of the Industrial Party.

Once again the Independent Party candidates were returned to office in the election held on St. Patrick's Day

Following the election in 1942, Mayor Arthur Prestine tendered his resignation as Mayor and was immediately after appointed to the position of Village Treasurer. Trustee Walter Szyperski was appointed to fill the un-expired term of former Mayor Prestine and Cornelius Pfohl was appointed to fill the un-expired term of Mr. Szyperski.

The 1943 annual village election again had two slates of candidates on the ballot. The Independent Party was headed by Mayor Walter Szyperski to succeed himself. Trustees Cornelius Pfohl, John Murawski and Theodore Nelson were his running mates seeking re-election.

Mayoral candidate Michael Leszczynski making his second attempt to win that position headed the Industrial Party slate. The three Trustee candidates were Edward McGuire, Joseph Ploszczyca and William Hess.

This election was the first in this village where the candidates of the Independent Party were endorsed by Local 1630, U.S.W.A.-C.I.O the union representing the workers at the Symington-Gould Corporation. Two of the four Independent Party candidates were employed at the Symington plant and were represented by the union.

Once again the Independent Party candidates made a clean sweep of the field and would continue to dominate the board of trustees with all seven positions in the Independent fold.

The Independent Party running unopposed in 1944 and 1945 would continue their domination of village politics like no other group had in the first fifty years of the existence of the Village of Depew.

The last fifteen years, a period from 1929 until 1944, were the most significant period in the first fifty years of the village's existence. While the early political figures played a role in the shaping of the village none played a role as significant as that of Mayor Arthur Prestine and his administration during the period from 1933 when he was first elected Mayor until his resignation in 1942. One must examine the record of accomplishments during Mayor Prestine's administration, which also reflects on the record of the Independent Party. Mayor Prestine said that when he was first elected to be Mayor, no one wanted the job, as the village was broke

When Mayor Prestine and his administration were placed in charge of the affairs of the Village of Depew in the spring of 1933, the village was in a critical state of affairs.

The village was bonded to the extent of almost \$277,000; the Bank of Depew was owed \$35,000 for outstanding loans and the previous party in control had left outstanding bills for materials and in wages to employees, which were not paid in the amount of \$21,000 or a total indebtedness at the time of \$333,000. This was the time of the Bank Holiday when a great number of banks were closing and the village could not borrow any money from the local banks.

With very great difficulty, because of the financial condition of the village, a loan was secured from the Manufacturers and Traders Trust Company after the New York State Comptroller interceded on behalf of the Village of Depew. In this way the employees and officials of the village were paid and current bills met until taxes could be collected. There were 100 to 150 men looking for work at the village garage each morning, and to satisfy the people was an extremely difficult job. Shortly thereafter, because of the Depression, the New York Central Shops, American Car & Foundry Shops and other large buildings were torn down, which caused a drop in the assessed valuation and which would have ordinarily brought about a rise in the tax rate.

Despite all of these difficulties, the village had pursued a sound fiscal policy and was economical and careful in the spending of village monies.

The tax rate for the Village of Depew had steadily declined from the year 1935, when the Bank of Depew loan was paid, from a tax rate of \$22.98 to a tax rate of \$18.55 in 1942.

During that period of time a great number of permanent improvements were installed, such as the Borden Road water line, Sanilac Street improvement, improvement of Tyler, Rumford and Brewster Street, and Bostwick Place; twenty-three miles of sewer cleaned, installation of maps in the village hall and re-numbering of all homes in the village; planting shade trees which were much needed in the residential sections, improving and modernizing of the village hall and also fire houses, which were in deplorable condition; repairing the main trunk line sewers, particularly on the north side, and constructing about 168,960 square feet of sidewalks, and installing of surface water sewers on Terrace Boulevard, Preston Street, Hawro Place, Calumet Street and Manitou Street.

In addition to these public works projects, which were accomplished during the Depression years, the Fire Department equipment, which had badly deteriorated was replaced with modern, motorized equipment. A new hook & ladder truck was provided for the Depew Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1 as well as three new pumping engines for the Depew Hose Co. No. 1, Central Hose Co. No. 4 and the Cayuga Hose Co.

The Department of public works was furnished with modern equipment including a new grader, tractor for plowing sidewalks and several new trucks. The streets were kept in good shape in summer as well as winter and have always been a source of pride in our community. The sanitation department took over the work of collecting rubbish, which had previously been contracted out, although it was difficult to get men to work at this unpleasant task.

In order to get non-paying property back on the tax rolls, the Village Board had instituted a program of foreclosing on properties on which taxes had not been paid for a certain number of years. This property so acquired was then sold and netted a profit to the village. There was additional property still available to be disposed of which would bring additional monies to the village coffers.

Since the country was now involved in World War II, some of the property, which was owned by the village, was turned over to residents of the village to be used for Victory Gardens in which the residents could plant gardens to provide fresh vegetables for the residents. This was an effort to show support for the troops fighting on foreign soils.

A back tax system was installed, which had a complete record of the unpaid taxes against all the parcels of land, thus saving a great deal of time for the village and the taxpaying public.

During all of the time that this was accomplished, the bonded indebtedness was reduced from \$276,724.18 in 1933 to \$150,550.00 in 1943. In spite of paying off all of this bonded indebtedness and providing better service to the taxpayers and the modernization of all departments, the tax rate was reduced each year.

Arthur F. Prestine served as Mayor for a total of nine years from 1931 thru 1942 followed by Walter Szyperski who served from 1942 thru 1953, a total of eleven years.

Except that Mayor Walter Szyperski had proclaimed it a holiday to mark the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the Village of Depew, July 23, 1944 was just another day to its citizens.

The only semblance of observance was the mayor's proclamation, which in part said:

“Proper credit and tribute should be paid to all persons, citizens as well as public officials, who have had any part in the steady growth and accomplishments of the village.”

Christ Lindauer, one of the few residents who remembered the day that the village was granted a charter by the state said, “The occasion created no more excitement than did the marking of the anniversary on July 23, 1944.

Revised: August 10, 2007

