

Ken-Ton Bee Article January 2011
Anthony F. Caruana, Supervisor, Town of Tonawanda

As the holiday season winds down and the New Year begins, let us resolve to continue to maintain the Town of Tonawanda as a great place to live, work and play as it has always been in our 175 year history.

On April 16, 2011, our Town will celebrate its 175 birthday. Plans are now underway for special year-long celebrations. In conjunction with the Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce and our Town Youth, Parks & Recreation Department, we are working with local business organizations to celebrate our heritage.

In 1836 our Town was large in area, but small in population. Unknown to many, the Town back then included the present day Town, but also the Village of Kenmore, the City of Tonawanda, Grand Island, and the islands in the nearby Niagara River.

The population in these areas was approximately 1,200. The Erie Canal ran through the farmland and marshes along the Niagara River and much of the lumber industry located near the Canal joining Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. The original "Military Road" ran through the Town coming from Buffalo and going on to Youngstown. The two major old Indian trails became Delaware Road and Englewood Avenue. Our Town Historical Building on Knoche Road provided German-Christians a place to worship when it was St. Peter's German Evangelical Church. Father John Neumann (now St. John Neumann) founded the St. John the Baptist R.C. Church in North Bush, as that part of the town was then called. The chapel on the corner of Englewood and Belmont was the spot for the original church later replaced by the current chapel and then later the new church on Highland and Englewood. A replica of the first wooden chapel is on display at the Amherst Museum. As we will see over the next months, our Town grew from these humble beginnings to be the first community in WNY to have 100,000 residents and became a great place to live, work and play. And we intend to keep it that way now and into the future.

As we begin this new year, we hope to reconnect our past with our future. The tough economic times are reminiscent of the hard economic times of the 1930's that our predecessors endured until boon times returned in the 1950's. Hopefully, recent encouraging events will spur the national, state, and local economies again and bring better days for all of us.

Historically, our town has moved from an agricultural and trading economy, to an industrial and manufacturing base, from a rural to a suburban area. As we evolve into the next phase of our development, we intend to attract cutting edge high technology, more manufacturing, and green energy jobs.

With our prime location on the Niagara River, with easy access to Canadian markets, with state and federal highways and rail transportation, low cost energy, and abundant high quality working base, we are once again in a great position to attract new businesses and industries to our newly created Riverview Solar Technology Park, our North Youngman Commerce Center, and our Colvin Woods Business Park.

With new businesses and industries come increased jobs, revenues, and opportunities for even better things. This is my hope for the coming year, that our economy improves, our employment returns and flourishes, and we become a stronger and greater town. Best wishes to all for a healthy and prosperous 2011, our 175th anniversary year.