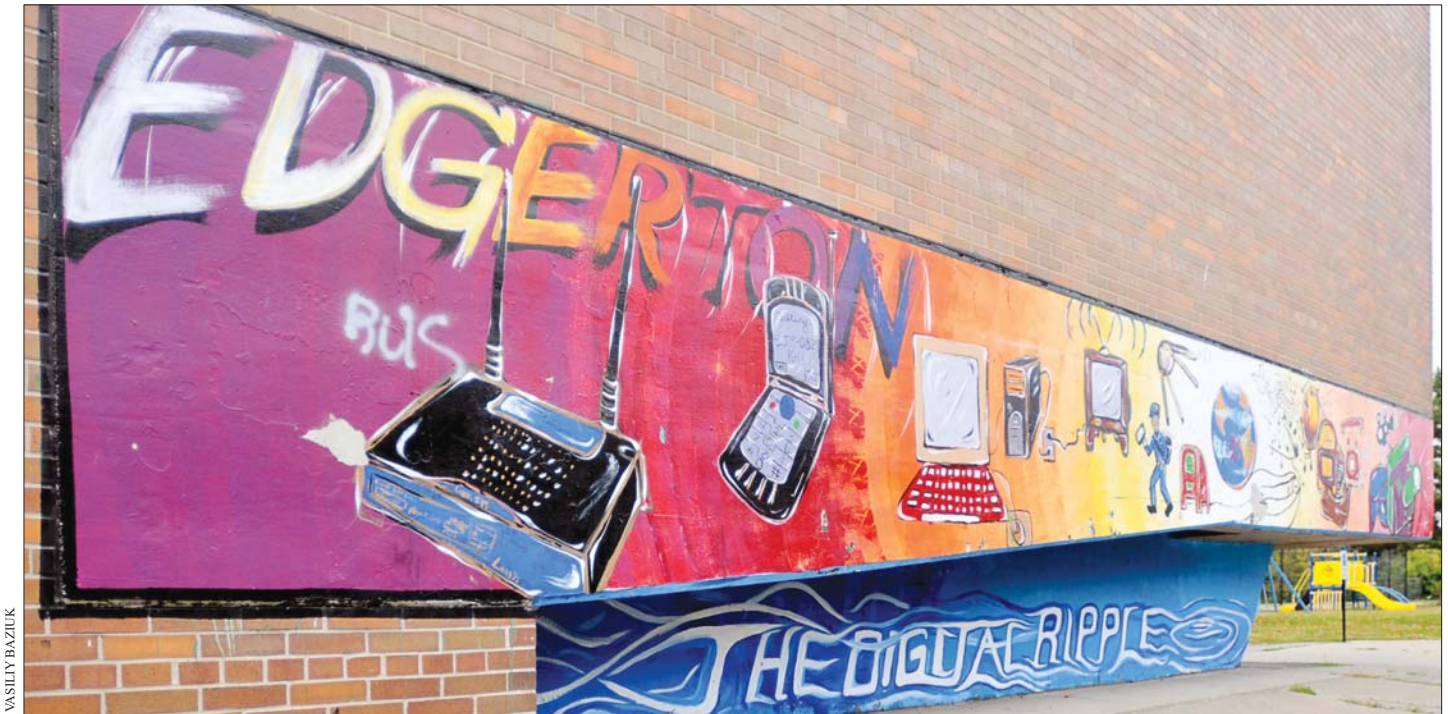


THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908



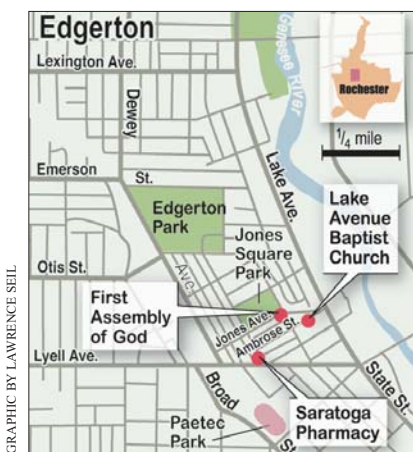
VASILY BAZUK

A mural on the wall at the Edgerton Recreation Center at 41 Backus St.

Edgerton

BY COLLEEN M. FARRELL

A drive by Jones Square Park at night will catch your eye, and not for the reasons it used to.



GRAPHIC BY LAWRENCE SEIL

Just recently, chances would have been high that a prostitute or a group of dealers on a corner would blemish the scene. But neighbors have been working doggedly to change that, and to that end, bring hope back to the streets of the Edgerton neighborhood.

A new fountain, illuminated at night, now graces the six-acre site — a testament to their

work. The park, one of the city's earliest green spaces, had one years ago.

"The fountain comes in and becomes a rallying point," said Tim McGrath of Saratoga Avenue. "We're hoping we see a result out of that — a very positive result out of that — and we think we will."

McGrath has been instrumental in helping to clean up the area around Jones Square Park, according to neighbors. When the former Penfield resident moved to Saratoga, he was looking for a big house with room for a home office at a reasonable price. He was happy with his Victorian-style home, which faces the park, but not so much with the "bad elements" around it, he said.

He started talking to neighbors, drug dealers, prostitutes: anyone around, to let them know bad behavior didn't have a place in the neighborhood anymore. He and others cleaned up the park and planted flowers, despite being told by some not to bother because they'd only be trampled or picked. If they were, McGrath planted more.

"One of the problems down here is that everybody who's been here a long time will give you all the reasons not to do something," he said.

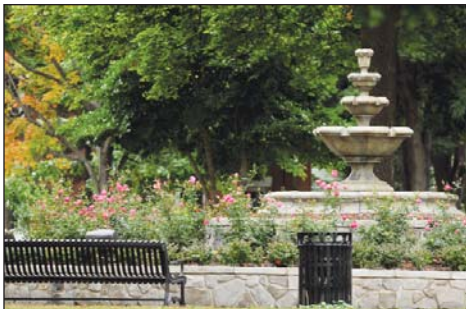
That's why the fountain is so important, he said. The Edgerton Neighborhood Association held a Jones Park Festival in August. "We're trying to spread this," he said. "We're trying to get more people involved."

The Edgerton neighborhood didn't always have such chal-

Continued ...

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908



A water fountain at the center of Jones Square Park in the Edgerton neighborhood.



A mall is planted with flowers at Glendale Park in the Edgerton neighborhood.



Edgerton Recreation Center at 41 Backus St.

VASILY BAZLUK

Continued ...

lenges. It was developed between the 1830s until the 20th century for the most part. Some of Rochester's finest citizens lived along Lake Avenue, building estates on the river side of the street, giving them incredible vistas of the gorge.

Edmund F. Woodbury lived at 145 Lake Ave., an 1872 brick Italianate home. President of the Woodbury Whip Company; his son John C. Woodbury was the father of Margaret Woodbury Strong, who lived at the home until 1923. Her collection was the inspiration for Strong - National Museum of Play.

George Eastman, founder of Eastman Kodak Co., called the Edgerton area home until he built his East Avenue estate.

Many of the grand homes along Lake Avenue were demolished to make way for commercial buildings, but remnants of the neighborhood's past still exist.

Glenwood Avenue has possibly the city's largest Queen Anne-style home, according to Cynthia Howk, architectural research coordinator for the Landmark Society of Western New York.

The southeast corner of Lake Avenue and Ravine Avenue is an example of an early apartment building. Built in 1888 and designed in the Chateausque style, it bears a round turret.

Jones Square has the First Assembly Church of God, which was built in the 1830s as Trinity Episcopal Church in the High Victorian Gothic style by noted Rochester architect Andrew J. Warner.

Besides Jones Square park, the neighborhood also has another green space. Before becoming Edgerton Park, the land bordered by Emerson, Backus and Bloss streets and Dewey Avenue was home to a children's institution, the Western House of Refuge.

Built during the 1840s, it was originally a reform school for boys until girls were added later. At that time it was adjacent to the Erie Canal, which provided easy transport for inmates.

The 42 acres comprising the grounds were full of imposing and numerous buildings, Howk said. A drill hall, dormitories, chapel, workshops were just a few. A 12-foot stone wall encompassed the grounds.

Inmates were required to learn a trade. At its peak, 700 children lived there. Riots weren't unheard of, as the children protested their living and working conditions, Howk said.

Eventually, attitudes changed, and the school eased its ways.

Its organizers decided to move to a more rural setting, opening what is now the Industry School in Rush in 1902.

The city renamed the area Exposition Park in 1911. There, the Chamber of Commerce held an annual event that promoted the city. While some of the buildings were razed, others stayed. The chapel became the assembly hall, the drill hall became the exhibition building and the girls' department building became a library and museum.

The Central Library, Rochester Historical Society, Rochester Museum & Science Center all were born in Exposition Park, according to Howk.

"That campus alone has a tremendous history, from developing as a juvenile penal institution to a public gathering space to, really, an incubator for some of our major cultural institutions," Howk said.

The park was renamed after Rochester Mayor Hiram Edgerton in 1922. The drill hall was turned into the Edgerton Park Arena. Rochester's NBA team, the Royals, played there from 1945 to 1955.

Only one building from that era is left. The Western House of Refuge's former chapel is now the Edgerton Community Center, which is home to the Stardust Ballroom. Thomas Jefferson High School, which first opened as a middle school in the 1920s, still stands, too.

Frank Shephardson has lived on Emerson Street, across from Edgerton Park, all of his life for more than 50 years. Edgerton has about 5,000 residents.

"I think what I like about the neighborhood is [that] everything's convenient," he said. "It's on a bus line. I've got a park right across the street, which is about 35 acres. Crime is not that bad. I feel safe, so to me, that's what's important."

His neighborhood, he said, is on a rebound, and he wants to keep it that way.

To stay on top of things, Shephardson is active in not only his neighborhood's organization but the ones that border it, too. He also has become a landlord, putting money in to some of the houses he purchased, and is known to help out neighbors with trips to the doctor.

"I don't plan on going anywhere," Shephardson said. "I've got to have some kind of stake in the neighborhood."