Late in the 19th century, many thousands of gypsies came to America. They were nomads, always traveling. Most came through Waterloo, often making camp outside of the village. Some were good musicians, handing down to later generations the folk songs and proverbs which preserved their tribal customs, the laws by which they were self-governed. Local storekeepers and housewives maintained cautious watch of their properties while the gypsies went on their way.

"Sign on exhibit in Waterloo Historical Society"

The history of Seneca County provides discourses in addition to the economic ones that helped organize the interpretation of the summer's events. Local histories, folk descriptions, and tourist guides have often depicted Seneca County and the Finger Lakes region in general as an upper Garden of Eden, a place of natural beauty, abundant resources, and peace. The first white European inhabitants of the Finger Lakes were the patriotic soldiers of the American Revolution, who had been mobilized with a promise of land as compensation for their services in lieu of pay (Zinn 1980:85). One and a half million acres of this promised land were located in the rich, enticing Finger Lakes district, which was cleared of its Native American, British, and loyalist inhabitants in the Sullivan-Clinton Campaigns of the late 1770s and early 1780s. In 1980 this action came back to haunt Seneca County when the Cayuga Indians filed a lawsuit laying claim to sixty-four thousand acres in Seneca and Cayuga counties. When the encampment opened, the County was already considering the possibility that it would have to relocate seven thousand property owners and pay $350 million in damages if the Indians won their case.
Introductions

After it was cleared of inhabitants in the eighteenth century, this land was divided into twenty-eight townships, each containing one hundred lots of six hundred acres, which were given classical and mythological names: Ovid, Romulus, Virgil, Aurelius, Marcellus, and Ulysses. The plots were randomly distributed by lottery in Albany in 1790. Each soldier received six hundred acres, and officers received more (Patterson 1976:19). Records indicate that few of the soldiers actually settled in the area and most of the plots were sold to land speculators. Nevertheless, the area is still home to a few of the descendants of these original Revolutionary War soldiers.

Throughout the next two centuries, Seneca County experienced cycles of economic prosperity and significance in regional history. The great postrevolutionary westward expansion was facilitated in the Finger Lakes by navigable waterways, and transportation was later enhanced by a series of transportation projects: the building of the early roads, the Erie Canal system of 1817–1825, the railroads beginning in the 1830s, and the post-World II highways (called the Erie Canal of the Atomic Age and designed to serve troop movements in times of war and as a means of escape in the event of an atomic attack). Cities located on transportation routes grew, while those that were bypassed faltered. Since successive modes of transportation followed new routes, Finger Lakes towns went through boom-and-bust cycles.

Ever-improving transportation made possible the movement not only of people and goods but also of ideas. In the early nineteenth century, the Finger Lakes region was called the “Burned-over District” because of the many reform movements and religious revivals that were prevalent there, including women’s rights, abolition, millenarianism, Mormonism, spiritualism, utopianism, and temperance. The area was indeed “burned over” as one spiritual or social fire after another swept through the area in waves. They were local manifestations of the social reform associated with religious revivalism that was extremely influential in changing the larger American scene at that time.

The temperance movement began earlier than the religious revivals, was fueled by them, and in a sense has not yet ended (Cross 1950:211). The anti-Masons had supported temperance early on, but when the famous evangelical preacher Charles G. Finney in Rochester combined temperance with revivalism, the first crusade according to Whitney R. Gross, “was of interest because it was in effect a most departure from social and spiritual idealism and the existence of temperance in American society came to be considered the major hindrance to the revival of...
spirituality which was to introduce the early millennium" (1950:211).

Alcohol, the preachers insisted, was keeping people from salvation and preventing the millennium (Christ's thousand-year reign on earth) from coming. Intemperance was a convenient sin for most itinerant preachers to dwell on, but for some it became the most important religious and social issue. By 1855 thirteen states had prohibition laws and in the 1860s work on a constitutional amendment began.

Like the temperance movement, abolitionism was intimately tied to religious revivalism in the Burned-over District. The goal of millenarianism was to create the perfect society by eradicating every source of sin. Accordingly, some revivalists defined slavery as sinful and demanded its elimination. When these ideas reached the Finger Lakes, "The Burned-over District seized leadership in the abolition crusade, and the consequent influence of this region upon the enlarged antislavery opinion of the whole and upon the Civil War itself, constitutes the most important single contribution of Western New York's enthusiasm, next to the main currents of national history" (Cross 1950:217).

The women's rights movement can, if it chooses, also trace its history back to the Burned-over District and religious revivalism. Temperance, religious revivalism, and abolition all had significant effects on the roles of women in American society. The majority of the converts of the Second Great Awakening were women, and they were involved in all the related social reform movements. Those organizations gave women experience in public speaking and public self-presentation at a time when the "cult of true womanhood" was beginning to require middle- and upper-class women to be domestic, maternal, religious, idle, subservient, and restricted to the home sphere (Griffith 1984:15). Revivalism promoted the idea that women as well as men were redeemable individuals, and as Glenn Altschuler and Jan Saltzgaber remark, "Since the dynamics of religious enthusiasm denied feminine passivity, revivalism served as a training ground of women activists" (1983:77).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, two major figures in the American women's movement, both lived in the Burned-over District. Both also experienced frustration with the way women were treated within the social reform movements. It was this problem in part that led to the development of the women's movement, which Stanton helped organize and into which she drew Anthony.

In 1840 Stanton and Lucretia Mott met at the London World Anti-Slavery Convention where they were both angered by the convention's refusal to admit them. Stanton and Mott later organized the first women's
rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The convention at-
tracted three hundred participants and passed a series of resolutions about
women's rights. One of the resolutions, which Stanton had proposed,
demanded the vote for women. It passed despite heavy opposition from
participants who considered it too radical. Ironically, suffrage later be-
came the leading issue for the movement, but Stanton's radicalism, partly
derived from her religious revivification activities (she wrote a revised,
feminist version of the Bible), eventually led to a split in the women's movement.
Stanton's organization, the National Woman Suffrage Association, broad-
ened its goals to issues beyond suffrage. It was opposed by Lucy Stone's
American Woman Suffrage Association, which was more conservative and
limited itself to suffrage only, believing that all other social reforms would
fall into place if the vote was won. These activities by reformer women of
the Burned-over District, particularly those residing in or near Seneca
Falls, provided the basis for the suffrage movement of the 1920s and the
later resurgence of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

In some ways this rich and varied military and social reform history of
the region could be considered the basis for the events of 1983, for both
the depot and the encampment could claim their legitimacy through local
history. In the late 1930s, as the threat of war became more apparent in
the United States, the federal government began planning the Seneca
Ordnance Depot, as it was then called, which would be used for munitions
storage and preparation. Seneca County was chosen for several reasons: it
was inland and thus safer from enemy attacks; it already had a railroad,
which was essential for transportation; and its historically patriotic resi-
dents were considered "All-American," presumably making the project
safe from sabotage (Watrous 1982:8).

Early in 1941 the government announced that construction would
begin in July. The site would be an 11,500-acre tract of land on the eastern
shore of Seneca Lake, which was then occupied by 150 farm families.
These people got thirty days' notice to vacate their homes. Newspapers
celebrated the chance for county residents to do their patriotic duty but
also lamented the loss of land that in many cases had been owned by the
same families for many generations.

The immediate effects of the project on local communities were devas-
tating. By the time construction was going full-speed, approximately fifty-
seven hundred new workers, some with their families, had relocated to
Seneca County from New York City and from eleven states. This sudden
population increase strained the resources of the county. Housing could
not be found for many workers, who ended up living in tents and trailers.
The population of nearby Geneva increased by three thousand in the first year of construction. The roads became clogged with workers, and access to the area had to be controlled. The higher wages of the federal government compensated to those paid locally led to price inflation and lavish spending by workers seeking food, housing, supplies, and recreation. Black workers couldn't get housing at all and were resented for taking jobs away from white residents. A scarcity of clean water threatened health, and epidemics were feared. One newspaper editorial of the day contemplated the situation:

In other periods, this locality has escaped the full extent of such trends and life has never gone to extremes. We never had the booms of the twenties that the cities had, and we never had the bread lines of the depression that those cities also had. This project will certainly bring Seneca County and its villages an unprecedented boom. If this war-time project is going to be an economical windfall for our community, let us make the most of it in that a better community for the peace-time era that we know will follow. It is to provide many services for the defense of our nation, let us make this sacrifice worth bringing the character and qualities that have made this a good town for over a hundred years.

(Waterloo Observer, July 18, 1941.)

The depot cost $11 million and by the end of 1941, seven thousand people were employed on the project, both local and imported labor. After the December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor, the construction schedule accelerated, and military control of the entire southern part of the county increased. Even as construction continued, work within the munitions storage facility began. Three thousand people, many of them women taking over traditionally male jobs, found employment at the depot. In the meantime, other local industries could not fill all their vacancies, even with the influx of female workers.

After the war, the depot was expanded to store and process the munitions left from the war and produced in the subsequent cold war. In the 1950s, the weapons storage area was extensively renovated, reportedly to store nuclear weapons. A 1981 report by the Center for Defense Information, an independent research organization under the direction of retired military officers which monitors military spending, disclosed that the depot was a storage site for nuclear weapons, probably including the neutron bomb. To inquiries about the rumors about the storage of nuclear weapons at SEAD, Defense Department representatives reply that it is the
The policy of the Department of Defense neither to confirm nor to deny the presence of nuclear weapons or components at military installations.

The Seneca Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice opened in 1983 within a year of the initial discussions about developing a women's peace camp in the United States similar to the ones that had begun operating in Europe. The beginnings of these European camps were the root at Greenham Common, a Royal Air Force base that under North Atlantic Treaty Organization agreements is used by the United States Air Force. NATO's 1979 decision to locate ground-based nuclear weapons in Europe spurred the growth of the European peace movement and the development of the Greenham camp in 1981 (Cook and Kirk 1983:5). When it was proposed that ninety-six of the European-based cruise missiles be placed at the Greenham base, protesters gathered to oppose their deployment. A group of men and women staged a 125-mile walk to the Greenham Common base in August and September 1981. Attracted some of the women in the group who wanted to continue publicizing the nuclear issue set up the peace camp. These women also organized a large demonstration in December 1981, when thirty thousand people "embraced the base" by holding hands and completely encircling it. The Greenham Common camps are located on military land and are subject to constant harassment and violence from both the military police and local people who do not want the protesters there.

The Greenham Common camp and others like it in Italy and the Netherlands were well known to the women who met in New York in June 1982 for the largest U.S. antinuclear demonstration to date (with half a million people participating) and for the Conference on Global Feminism and Disarmament that preceded it. The organizing process for the development of a women's peace encampment involved women active in various peace and feminist groups including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Women's Pentagon Action, and the Upstate (NY) Feminist Peace Alliance.

Several women at the meeting suggested the Seneca Army Depot as an appropriate site for the first U.S. peace encampment. These women, members of the Upstate Feminist Peace Alliance, living in Rochester, Syracuse, and Ithaca, had been involved in an unusual protest at the SEAD that year which had gained some attention within the movement and got the participating women invited to the New York City conference. They had staged a "Miss Missile" contest at the base, a takeoff on the Miss America contest. The women dressed as various nuclear weapons and tried to convince the "judges" they should be "Miss Missile" by reciting the "vital
Nuclear Summer

statistics about their ability to cause destruction and death. Other groups, especially the Finger Lakes Peace Alliance (FLPA) and a group of Catholics from Rochester, had been protesting regularly at the depot in the early 1980s, but the depot was apparently not nationally known as a hot nuclear site (the Griffiss Air Force Base in neighboring Rome was better known). As one organizer explained, when women from upstate New York proposed the SEAD site at the New York conference, “nobody had heard of it.”

The organizers, however, thought they saw several advantages, both practical and symbolic, in the Seneca County location. The depot was located in a rural area where some organizers felt there might be more local support for peace groups. The Finger Lakes region also contained land that is claimed by Native American groups. Some of the women saw the American Indians as being in opposition to the same militaristic and patriarchal forces of the U.S. government that the women themselves were protesting. Some of the women hoped that locating the encampment near this Native American land claim would emphasize the connections among all oppressed groups.

The depot was also “consciously chosen” because it fit the idea of conversion (which the women wanted to promote), the theory that facilities presently being used for military production should be not closed down but converted into factories that would produce peaceful, nonmilitary products. The SEAD, some of the women would emphasize, could easily be converted to such peaceful production. The SEAD also gave the women a simple, concrete issue to focus on—the planned shipment that fall (1983) of nuclear missiles from their suspected storage place in Seneca County to U.S. military bases in Europe.

Perhaps most significant, however, was the location of the depot and the proposed encampment in an area that had a well-known and lengthy history of women’s rights and women’s peace activities. This historical connection was important to the organizers when they were initially looking for land in Seneca County and was later used extensively in the encampment’s promotional material. For example, the cover of the encampment’s Resource Handbook (see figure 1) establishes a tradition of women’s resistance in upstate New York.

The tradition of women’s activism in the area was said to have begun with a gathering in the late 1500s of women from the Iroquois Confederacy who demanded an end to the war among the Indian nations. It continued with the events of the mid-1800s, when Seneca County and other upstate New York communities were involved in the Underground...
Figure 1: Cover of the Resource Handbook
Railroad, which moved slaves from the South to freedom in the North. Harriet Tubman, a "conductor" in this network of abolitionists, resided near the present site of SEAD and was later honored by an encampment march that visited her home and gravesite. The best-known contributions to women's rights history in Seneca County occurred about fourteen miles from the encampment, in the town of Seneca Falls, site of the first gathering of American women demanding equal rights. Feminists consider Seneca Falls the birthplace of women's rights and the contemporary women's movement. It is now the location of a national park devoted to the history of women's rights, and the 1848 convention is commemorated by the Convention Days celebrations held every year in Seneca Falls. A Women's Hall of Fame, which commemorates famous women who have contributed to women's rights struggles, is also located in Seneca Falls.

This continuity in time and space with other women's peace and civil rights activities provided a compelling argument for locating the encampment in Seneca County. In fact the encampment soon became confused with Seneca Falls, and some called it the Seneca Falls Peace Camp. Although most of the participants were undoubtedly not familiar with all three details of women's history, the general sense of women's historic activism in this area provided the 1983 encampment with the sense of validation derived from invoking tradition. As Eric Hobsbawm explains, the "attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past" provides a group with the "sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law" which makes the group and its activities appear all the more inevitable, legitimate, and compelling (1983:1-2).

Feminists have been revaluing and re-membering such aspects of history, creating in turn "herstoriess," or stories not controlled by the patriarchy, to challenge standard histories that have systematically excluded the lives and deeds of women. These patriarchal histories are seen as denying women a past and defining and confining knowledge in such a way as to make women's present-day struggles seem natural and inevitable. This use and creation of history by the Seneca encampment subtly subverted the predominant discourse that says women lack a history of activism, cooperation, and political power.

This power of tradition and re-membering of history enabled the camp participants to employ historical precedents in their efforts to make the antinuclear/antipatriarchal protests appeal to a wide range of women. Since the organizers were hoping to draw feminist and peace activists as well as women who had never been involved in either movement, they needed a focus of protest to which many women could connect.
their interests. They also needed some element, a "glue," that would unite these diverse women and enable them to work together.

The depot itself provided an adequate target for the varied antipatriarchal, antimilitaristic, and antiviolence themes of the encampment's protests. For feminists it was a suitable representative of the patriarchal establishment whose threats could easily be defined and illustrated through its role in the promotion and storage of nuclear weapons. But it was less satisfactory in connecting peace activists to feminists. It was far from apparent to some participants and to many nonparticipants why it was necessary or desirable to restrict the encampment to women or why nuclear activism should be concerned with feminism or how simply invoking the unknown, albeit provocative, entity of the Seneca Army Depot would address problems with the patriarchal society. Finally, it was the theme of women working together for peace and justice, as local tradition showed they have been doing for decades, that was just the attractive binding force needed. The glue designed to connect all the issues and all the women was the notion that nuclear weapons, the violence of patriarchy, and women's oppression all affected women, as women, deeply and personally and negatively. Women who came to the encampment would, according to this approach, be participating in the long tradition of women's activism when they recognized that they needed to work with other women to change social conditions.