



HIGH HOPES

THE RISE AND DECLINE
OF BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Mark
Goldman

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State University of New York Press

ALBANY

**Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany**

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**For information, address State University of New York
Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246**

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Goldman, Mark, 1943-

High hopes before the fall.

Bibliography: p. 000

Includes index.

1. Buffalo (N.Y.)—History. 2. Buffalo (N.Y.)—Social life and customs. I. Title.
F129.B857G64 1983 974.7'9704 82-19629

ISBN 0-87395-734-2

ISBN 0-87395-735-0 (pbk.)

*To my mother, Tillie, who introduced me to history;
to Kitty, who introduced me to Buffalo;
to Charlie and Lydia for being themselves.*

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Acknowledgments

For helping me develop my ideas about American cities in general and Buffalo in particular, Michael Frisch, Professor of History at the State University of New York at Buffalo; for creating a climate conducive to research and writing, Peter J. Ristuben, Dean of the Niagara Frontier Regional Center of Empire State College, SUNY; for helping me with my research, Dr. Herman Sass, Head Librarian at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. In addition, other members of the staff of that marvelous institution have been extremely helpful. They are Clyde Helfter, Mary Ann Hickey and Pat Gabor. Shonnie Finnegan, Director of the Archives at SUNY Buffalo, was very supportive in offering valuable suggestions throughout the course of this project. I would also like to thank Helene Watson and Pat Losey who typed the manuscript. Finally, I would like to thank my children, Charlie and Lydia, who waited patiently for me while I finished this book on the third floor of our house.

Introduction

In 1901, the year Buffalo hosted the Pan American Exposition, the city was buoyant and rapidly expanding. With over 350,000 people its population was growing rapidly while its economy was strong and diversified. Commerce, Buffalo's traditional source of wealth, gave every sign of remaining prosperous. The city's port, its railroad facilities, its grain elevators, and its livestock yards were among the largest of any in the United States. Meanwhile, the development of heavy industry, particularly of steel, pointed to still more growth and greatness. Buffalo's growth had already been remarkable and its future seemed filled with promise. It was within this atmosphere of achievement and expectation that the Pan American Exposition was held.

The Pan American Exposition reflects much of the history of the city of Buffalo. It is an appropriate metaphor and a fitting place to begin telling the story of Buffalo's rise and decline. Like the city at the beginning of the century, the Pan American Exposition, a world's fair supported largely by local subscribers, opened with the brightest hopes for success. Not only would it succeed financially, its backers believed, but more significantly it would serve to rivet the attention of the world on the city of Buffalo. Events proved otherwise, however. The large crowds never materialized and when towards the end of the exposition President McKinley was assassinated on the fairgrounds, the Pan American turned quickly into a nightmare. Likewise, Buffalo's promise of greatness in the twentieth century was also destined for disappointment. The signs had begun to appear early in the century. Soon they were unmistakable. By the 1970s and early 1980s all of the high hopes that the people of Buffalo had once had for the city

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had been dashed. Buffalo, like the exposition, faced what many people were convinced was disaster.

High Hopes is an attempt to analyze and interpret the historical phenomena that have shaped this city. In it I have examined the larger, external historical shifts that have affected the city. The book charts the evolution of Buffalo from a small frontier community through its development as a major commercial center and its emergence and eventual decline as a significant industrial metropolis. Within this larger context, the book examines the detailed patterns of local daily life and covers a wide range of subjects including work, ethnicity, family and community life, class structure, architecture and city planning, education, politics, social and cultural life, and values and beliefs. By bringing to bear on these events and developments a broad and disparate range of subjects and ideas, the book attempts to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and understand the vast array of complex forces at work in the historical development not only of Buffalo but of all American cities.

CHAPTER 1

The Pan American Exposition: World's Fair as Historical Metaphor

William McKinley liked world fairs. They were, he said, “the timekeepers of progress. They record the world’s advancement.” He had been to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta two years later. He did not want to miss the Pan American Exposition, to be held in Buffalo during the summer of 1901.

McKinley had hoped to be in Buffalo for the opening of the exposition in May. However, his wife, Ida, was ill, and because he never traveled without her, he postponed the trip. In his place he sent the vice-president, Theodore Roosevelt. Upon Roosevelt’s return to Washington, McKinley pressed him for details of the exposition. Roosevelt raved about it. He especially liked the Electric Tower.

McKinley had never been known for his decisiveness. Indeed, there was a joke current that compared the president’s mind to his bed: both, it was said, had to be made up for him before they could be used. But now McKinley displayed uncharacteristic resolve and, against the advice of both his wife and his personal secretary, George B. Cortelyou, he insisted on going to the Pan American. Mrs. McKinley did not want to leave their home in Canton, Ohio, where they were spending the summer. She had never really enjoyed her official role as the nation’s first lady and lately she found it more distasteful than ever before. For years she had suffered from phlebitis, and since the day in 1873 when her five-month-old daughter died, she had been an epileptic, subject to regular attacks of *petit mal*, brief losses of consciousness, and prolonged seizures followed by bouts of depression. Now, at age fifty-eight, she required constant sedation and medical

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attention. She would have much preferred to stay home and crochet the slippers and sew the black cravats that gave her husband so much pleasure.

Cortelyou had different reasons for opposing the president's plan to visit Buffalo. He was obsessed with the president's safety and was convinced that the crowds at the Pan American presented a danger that best should be avoided. However, the president insisted on going, and on September 4, 1901, the presidential party, planning to spend three days at the exposition, pulled into Buffalo.

As a result of America's stunning victory in the Spanish-American War and the territorial acquisitions which followed, William McKinley, the leading spokesman of a newly discovered national strength and brazen self-confidence, was extremely popular. His appeal, particularly in Buffalo, the city whose international exposition embodied and glorified the goals of the president's expansionist foreign policy, was vast. It transcended class and party lines, making him the most popular president since Lincoln. The Pan American had been planned during the heady days following the conclusion of the war against Spain, and now as hundreds and thousands of Americans descended on Buffalo to pay homage to Pan Americanism, the city became the national symbol of the country's pride and braggadocio. Never had American power been more apparent. In March 1901, Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the insurrection against American occupation of the Philippine Islands, was captured by the United States Marines. In May, the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights did not follow the American flag to the territories recently captured from Spain and were not applicable there. In June, the Cuban Senate adopted an amendment to their constitution which authorized the United States to intervene at any time in order to preserve law and order in Cuba. And in July, William Howard Taft was sent to Manila to become the first American governor of the Philippine Islands. Like most Americans, the people of Buffalo were proud of these achievements. They were proud of themselves as well, for the Pan American Exposition had tapped the same source of inspiration in Buffalo that McKinley's foreign policy had inspired in the nation at large. McKinley's visit affirmed their achievement and they waited eagerly for the opportunity to welcome their president. Their chance came on September 4, 1901.

President McKinley's arrival in Buffalo at 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, September 4, 1901, was clouded by what some would later call an ominous happening. As the presidential train pulled into the Terrace Railroad Station overlooking Lake Erie, it was greeted by a twenty-

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one-gun salute. In his eagerness to honor this most popular president, the cannoneer, a Coast Guard officer and veteran of McKinley's Civil War regiment, had placed the cannon so close to the railroad tracks that when the salvo began the presidential car shook violently. Although there were no injuries and only minimal damage was done to the train, the presidential party was worried about Mrs. McKinley, who was greatly unhinged by the incident. As the train left the station and headed north to the exposition grounds, a dozen or more people, screaming "anarchist" as if it were a swear word, pounced on a short, swarthy man who had been standing near the cannoneer.

Several minutes later the train pulled into a special platform built at one of the entrances to the exposition grounds. Wearing a black frock coat and a high, black silk hat, President McKinley, his right arm tightly around his wife's waist, disembarked. Following a short and ceremonious greeting by John Milburn, the head of the exposition's board of directors, President and Mrs. McKinley, watched by a crowd of more than sixty thousand, stepped into a low-wheeled victoria drawn by four exquisite trotters, and made a quick tour of the exposition grounds. The McKinleys were then driven to John Milburn's home on Delaware Avenue, about one mile south of the exposition. They were scheduled to return to the exposition the next day.

The Milburns were accustomed to entertaining important visitors. Earlier that summer the Roosevelts had stayed with them, as had the French ambassador and his family. But clearly the president was different, and in anticipation of the visit Milburn had completely renovated his large wooden home. The Milburns were concerned about their guests—not the president, an affable, easy-going man who liked nothing more than smoking a cigar (he smoked over twenty per day) in the company of robust men—but rather Mrs. McKinley. For in spite of the president's best efforts to hide it from the public (and even his best friends), the Milburns knew, as did the rest of the country, about the first lady's epilepsy. While no mention was ever made in the press about Mrs. McKinley's illness, there were constant references to her fortitude, her ability to withstand the rigors of being the nation's first lady, and endless paeans to the president, whose solicitude of his sickly wife embodied, it was said, the most admirable of husbandly virtues.

Because of Ida McKinley's illness the Milburns were not permitted to entertain as lavishly as they would have liked (when ambassador Cambon had stayed with them in July, the Milburns hosted an all-night costume ball that people were still talking about in September).

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There was a story circulating about Mrs. McKinley that at one luncheon given in honor of the president and his wife, the centerpiece was a large, stuffed American eagle. When the guests sat down, the thing began to bob its head and move up and down in jerky, lifelike movements. The effect on Mrs. McKinley was shocking. She had a fit on the spot. Thus, because of her unpredictable behavior and her discomfort around people (to avoid shaking hands, she always held a bouquet in her lap when in public), the Milburns planned no public receptions for their honored guests. There wasn't much time anyway, because the president wanted to see as much of the exposition as possible.

While President McKinley heard about the Electric Tower from Theodore Roosevelt, the rest of the country, in detailed descriptions printed in newspapers around the country, had been reading about it all summer long. At the base of the tower were two colonnades forming a semicircle around a huge set of fountains called "The Court of Fountains." Grouped symmetrically around the court were six buildings dedicated to "Manufactures," "Liberal Arts," "Machines," "Transportation," "Agriculture," and "Electricity." Most of the buildings at the exposition were designed in what was referred to as "Spanish Renaissance Style," yet everywhere an incongruous mixture was evident: the New York State Building was a duplicate of the Parthenon, the Midway boasted a number of Islamic minarets and Italian loggias, and Luchow's Alt Nuremburg restaurant had over two dozen medieval turrets.

Unlike the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, nicknamed the "White City," color was used everywhere at the Pan American. It was planned carefully so that buildings at the edge of the exposition were pale while those towards the center became more colorful, so that the Electric Tower at the very heart of the exposition was, as one witness noted, "a riot of color."

There was also an abundance of sculpture. Over two thousand pieces—some historical, others symbolic and allegorical—were placed all over the 350 acres of the exposition: on the ground, on balconies, at bridge heads, and at the entrances to all of the buildings.

Then there was the Midway. In a personal report from John Milburn, President McKinley had heard all about the Midway. Milburn was proudest of the educational features of the Midway, especially the "transplanted native villages with real natives in them." The most popular was "The Old Plantation." The *Buffalo Evening News* described it thus: "Genuine southern darkies, two hundred of them, ranging in years from wee, toddling pickininies to negroes, grey and

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bent with age, can be seen each day at the Exposition at their different occupations and pastimes. Lovers of negro melodies will have a feast. Many of the darkies will be selected because of their special talents as singers and banjo players and they will dance and sing to the seductive tinkling of instruments exactly as the Negroes of the South used to do in the long, long ago." The *News* reported that the "negroes were selected from the best class of southern darkies, for Skip Dandy, the concessionaire, has the reputation for not tolerating anything shiftless or degrading about him."

The Midway featured the animal show of Frank C. Bostock, "the animal king, a man of unbounded courage and resources, before whom all animals cower"—even Jumbo, Bostock's star attraction. Bostock had recently acquired this nine-ton elephant from the British Army, where it had been decorated by Queen Victoria for bravery in the Afghanistan Wars.

But above all else it was electricity and the Electric Tower that attracted the attention of the millions of people who visited the Pan American Exposition during the summer of 1901. Every building was outlined in incandescent lights, and at dusk, peak time at the exposition, when over two million light bulbs were turned on simultaneously, the effect was staggering. Walter Hines Page, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and an enthusiastic booster of the exposition, described the scene: "Here is nocturnal architecture, nocturnal landscapes, nocturnal gardens and long vistas of nocturnal beauty. At a distance the Fair presents the appearance of a whole city in illumination." But for Page, as for all the visitors to the exposition, nothing rivalled the Electric Tower itself. "The Tower is a great center of brilliancy. There are perhaps not a half million electric bulbs, but there are hundreds and thousands of them and you are willing to believe that there may be millions. It shines like diamonds, a transparent, soft structure of sunlight." Page, an ardent supporter of the imperial foreign policy that the exposition celebrated, saw the Electric Tower as an "epiphanous achievement, a masterpiece of human skill, a monument to the genius of man." "Out of the city of beauty rises a massive pillar, like an overlooking flower in a gorgeous garden, a centerpiece in a cluster of gems, a venerable fabric of jeweled lace. There it stands, glowing with the lights of many thousand bulbs flashing its image in the basin at its feet, showing its gleaming dome to the people in neighboring cities. Its beauty is transcendent." William McKinley couldn't wait until the next day, September 5, to see it, and after his wife had gone to bed, he strolled leisurely around the porch of the Milburn house staring at the Electric Tower.

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On September 5, the crowd at the exposition—over 116,000 peoples—broke all records. The great rush came after supper. "Every street-car was loaded and passengers clung to the steps. The whole city, it seemed, was travelling to the Exposition. After 6:00 about thirty thousand people were admitted through the various gates. The grounds had never looked so crowded. Buildings were visited by throngs. The shows were packed at every performance. The restaurants were overwhelmed. From every quarter a flood of humanity bore down upon the esplanade until it was difficult even to worm one's way through the crowd."

First came a concert by John Philip Sousa. Sousa had played at the Bicentennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876, the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, the mid-winter California Fair in 1894, the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition in 1895, and the Paris Exposition in 1900, and had been brought in specifically from the Boston Food Fair to play for the president. Then came Henry J. Pain, the "Fire Works King," whose name was synonymous with pyrotechnics. At the Paris Exposition, Pain had launched a three-figured display symbolizing the ideals of the French Revolution. At the St. Louis Fair he used fireworks to create an embodiment of the Louis and Clark Expedition. For Buffalo, he promised the "largest pyrotechnical display ever seen."

At sunset the exposition grounds were illuminated by fifty powerful fires in five different colors. A large number of lighted ballons were next, followed by the discharge of a hundred three-pound rockets fired simultaneously from different sections of the fairgrounds. Ten batteries of mines were then put in motion. Next came five hundred colored lights discharging electric comets in a continuous stream and a salvo of ten thirty-inch bombs with five colors each. Next came a series of ten national streamers, and ten huge shells which each detached one hundred parachutes and fifty silver umbrellas. Then came a display called "The American Empire." At one thousand feet, four large bombs exploded together. The first formed the outline of the United States, the second and third the outlines of Cuba and Puerto Rico, and the fourth splattered into a series of small shells representing the Philippine Islands. But the best was saved for last. For the finale, thousands of tiny fire balls exploded at once, creating a gigantic, sparking likeness of William McKinley. The sky filled with shining letters: "Welcome President McKinley, Chief of our Nation and our Empire."

The president, his aides noted happily, seemed to have enjoyed every minute of Pain's display, and after personally thanking the

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master of pyrotechnics, the president returned to the Milburn home. Meanwhile, there was violence on the city's East Side. A black woman shot her husband, and a Polish railroad employee stabbed his neighbor seven times in the face and forehead in a place called Pasczek's saloon on Broadway. Leon Czolgosz, who was staying at Walter Nowak's Hotel on Broadway, had seen the stabbing and was, according to later testimony, sickened by it.

On September 6, President McKinley awoke early as was his custom. At 7:15 A.M., fully dressed for the day in his habitual black frock coat and black silk hat, he eluded the small Secret Service entourage that surrounded the Milburn house and took a solitary walk down Delaware Avenue. Later that morning, accompanied by a host of city and exposition officials, the McKinleys boarded a train for Niagara Falls. They visited the falls, walked along the gorge, and toured the Niagara Falls Power Project, which the President referred to as "the marvel of the Electrical Age." After lunch the presidential party returned to Buffalo. Mrs. McKinley went to the Milburn house to rest, and the president to the exposition, where he was scheduled to meet the thousands of people who, in spite of the oppressive heat, were waiting at the Temple of Music, a large, vaguely Byzantine structure on the north side of the fairgrounds.

No one had waited longer than "Giant" Jim Parker, a six-foot six-inch Negro waiter from Atlanta who had been standing outside the temple since mid-morning. Finally, at 4:00 P.M. the doors of the Temple of Music opened and hundreds of people made an orderly, single-file procession to the front of the auditorium where President McKinley, flanked by John Milburn and his personal secretary, George Cortelyou, stood waiting. It was extremely hot in the room—over ninety degrees—and everybody was carrying handkerchiefs, either wiping their brows or waving them at the president. Leon Czolgosz, however, used his handkerchief to conceal a tiny handgun, and as the fast-moving line brought him directly in front of the president, Czolgosz shot him two times in the stomach. Parker, who was standing directly behind the assassin, smashed him to the floor. While Czolgosz was pounced on and beaten by the attending soldiers and guards, McKinley, amid the screeching pandemonium in the room, was carried out and several minutes later was being rushed in an electrical ambulance to the exposition hospital.

John Milburn took command immediately. When he learned that Roswell Park, the medical director of the exposition, was in Niagara Falls performing a lymphoma operation that Presley Richey, McKinley's

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personal physician, was touring the exposition grounds, Milburn pointed to Dr. Matthew Mann, one of the several physicians who had gathered at the hospital, and told him to take charge of the case. Mann examined the president and determined that unless his wounds were immediately sutured they would prove fatal. Thus, at 5:30 P.M. Dr. Mann, the city's leading gynecologist, but a man with limited experience in abdominal surgery, began to operate on the president of the United States. Meanwhile, Dr. Park, who had been brought back to Buffalo on a special train, entered the hospital after the operation had begun but soon enough to notice that Mann was working under the most difficult of conditions.

Like all the buildings at the exposition, the hospital was a temporary structure, ill-equipped and able to handle only the most routine medical emergencies. Most serious of all was that the lighting was totally inadequate. Indeed, there were no electric lights at all in the operating room and one of the attending physicians was forced to improvise by using a looking glass to reflect the rays of the setting sun. Only toward the end of the operation did they succeed in rigging up an electric light.

The operation itself was fairly simple. When Dr. Mann could not find the second bullet (the first one had merely grazed the skin and had caused no damage), he assumed that it was safely lodged in the lumbar muscles. Noting that it had caused no damage to the intestine or to other abdominal organs, all that remained for him to do was to close the wounds in the front and back walls of the president's stomach. This done, the operation was completed.

Meanwhile, crowds were forming everywhere. As the news spread throughout the fairgrounds that Czolgosz was being held in one of the rooms in the Temple of Music, hundreds of people tried to break through the cordon of guards surrounding the building. When this failed they tore up the rope and stanchions that supported it. Crowds blocked the electrical paddy wagon that transported Czolgosz from the Temple of Music to police headquarters downtown and the crowd that waited for him there was so large that the wagon was forced to wait while mounted policemen broke it up. As the crowds downtown grew throughout the evening, two National Guard regiments were called out to prevent the anticipated storming of headquarters. Crowds had also formed outside of the exposition hospital and along the route that the electrical ambulance took as it brought President McKinley to the Milburn house following his operation. This crowd, however, was quiet and stunned. Roswell Park wrote about it in his diary: "The passage through the crowd and down Delaware Avenue was

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one of the most dramatic incidents I have ever witnessed. The fair grounds were crowded that day and it seemed as though the entire crowd had gathered to witness this event. Every man's hat was in his hand and there were handkerchiefs at many eyes. I never saw so large a crowd so quiet."

The Milburn house, so recently renovated, was now converted into a virtual military camp. On the outside it was surrounded by armed guards. Inside special telegraph machines had been installed as the house became the center of an international communications network. Across the street press tents were set up for the more than 250 newsmen covering the story, the most that had ever covered a public event. All of them rejoiced when Dr. Mann issued the first of many medical bulletins. The doctors were "gratified," Mann reported, by the president's condition. "The results," he said, cannot yet be foretold [but] hopes for recovery are justified."

As the president and the people of Buffalo settled in for what appeared to be a long period of recuperation (John Milburn engaged rooms for his family at a downtown hotel), the rest of the world reacted to the news. Europeans, recently shocked by the murder of King Umberto of Italy and the attempted assassination of Kaiser Wilhelm, were particularly concerned. Czar Nicholas II and the Russian royal family, cruising off the Danish coast on their yacht, arranged to meet with Kaiser Wilhelm on his royal yacht, *The Hohenzollern*, in the North Sea. There they agreed to double their security measures and to avoid, at least for a while, all public appearances.

In New York City people were more concerned about the whereabouts of J. P. Morgan than they were with the medical bulletins emanating from the Milburn house in Buffalo. The shooting of the president had triggered dire predictions of a stock market collapse and many people, by now accustomed to the fiscal heroics of Morgan, wondered desperately where he was. Some reports had him closeted with advisors on his private yacht, *The Corsair*. Others said that he was in conference in his private room at Delmonico's. Still others said that he was busy on the telephone in the library of his Murray Hill mansion. As people throughout the country wondered if, how, and when the great financier would come to their rescue, Morgan, who in fact had never left his office, hired three private detectives to protect himself.

Meanwhile, in a basement room of police headquarters, Leon Czolgosz made a confession. "Not until Tuesday did the resolution to shoot the President take hold of me. It was in my heart—there

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was no escape for me. I could not have conquered it had my life depended on it." The deed, he swore, was his own doing. He had no accomplice and no connection with the notorious anarchist cell in Paterson, New Jersey which had nurtured Gaetano Bresci, the murderer of King Umberto. Over and over he swore that he had no confidants, that he was absolutely alone. But nobody—not the police, or the press, or the politicians all over the country clamoring for anti-anarchist laws—wanted to believe him and they sought desperately for any clue that hinted at conspiracy. Unwittingly, Czolgosz gave them the lead they were looking for. To the police he confessed: "I am an Anarchist—a disciple of Emma Goldman. Her words set me on fire."

The word went out from Buffalo and immediately a national dragnet tightened around the anarchist leader. When a dozen of her colleagues in Chicago were arrested for complicity in the shooting of McKinley, Goldman secretly set out from St. Louis to join them. In spite of her best efforts to disguise herself, she was arrested in Chicago the next day at the request of the Buffalo police.

Convinced that the tentacles of the anarchist conspiracy reached Buffalo, the police began a relentless scouring of the East Side for suspects. Anyone who had had any contact with Czolgosz was arrested: Nowak, whose hotel he had stayed in; Pasczek, whose tavern he had drunk in; and Paul Redlinski, a barber who had cut Czolgosz's hair a week earlier. On a tip from two Polish priests on the East Side, the police arrested Helen Petrowski, a twenty-five-year-old school teacher. The priests said that she had been teaching anarchism and free love. Her dead husband, they said, had also been an anarchist—a man who died because his "constant brooding on the subject of the ideal social fabric fatally affected his brain." Along with Mrs. Petrowski, the police arrested "a dark curly-headed man with a decidedly Polish appearance" and a Russian Jewish physician who in 1894 had led a march of the poor on Buffalo's City Hall.

But the press and the police were far more intrigued with the Goldman connection. Everything, it seemed, pointed in her direction. Not only had Czolgosz mentioned her as a source of inspiration, but also the police said he had talked about her in his sleep several times. Czolgosz's ruminations were given further substance when a local psychiatrist told the police that certain details of the assassination attempt—particularly Czolgosz's use of a white handkerchief—suggested a feminine touch.

The district attorney in Buffalo immediately initiated extradition proceedings, but the Chicago police stalled. Under intensive ques-

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tioning, Goldman, whose family lived in Rochester, admitted to having visited Buffalo and the Pan American Exposition twice during the summer, but denied ever having met with Czolgosz. She was, she said, opposed to the use of violence and even volunteered to nurse the wounded president back to health (She had studied midwifery and nursing in Vienna). Although they were convinced of her innocence and refused to comply with the district attorney's extradition request, the Chicago police detained Goldman for fifteen days, long after Mrs. Petrowski, Nowak, Pasczek, and the others had been released for lack of evidence. When finally allowed to go, she was denied the right to lecture in Chicago and her magazine *Free Society* was denied the use of the mails. Her family suffered, too. Her father was excommunicated from his synagogue in Rochester and his furniture store was boycotted for months.

Meanwhile, the optimistic medical bulletins about President McKinley continued, and as they did the shock of the assassination attempt wore off and the city began to enjoy the attention it was getting as the accidental capital of the nation. The comings and goings of the nation's political celebrities who had convened in Buffalo following the shooting were discussed in minute detail. Vice-President Roosevelt was dining at the home of Ansley Wilcox, about a half a mile south of the Milburn house on Delaware Avenue. Attorney General Philander Knox and Secretary of State John Hay were staying at the Buffalo Club, the prestigious men's club founded by Millard Fillmore, and Secretary of War, Elihu Root was addressing the Buffalo branch of the Grand Army of the Republic on how the government was coping with the emergency.

Continued progress in the president's condition was reported. On September 9, the press was told that "if the President continued to improve we may safely say that he is convalescent." Senator Mark Hanna, a close personal friend of the president, said that "any day now he will be smoking cigars again." On September 10, following a conference with the president's physicians, Roosevelt summarized the situation. "I am absolutely certain," he said, "that everything is coming out all right." Two days later, in spite of reports that McKinley had spent a restless night, Roosevelt, brimming with confidence, announced that he was leaving for his home in Oyster Bay, Long Island. That same day, William Buchanan, the director of the Pan American, announced plans for "President McKinley Day" at the exposition, a special day to celebrate the recovery of the president. The celebration was necessary, Buchanan said, to dissipate any possible

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odium that might have been cast upon the exposition, "to raise it from a landmark of doom to a symbol of happiness."

At 6:00 P.M. on September 12, McKinley's physicians reported that the president was "not so good." McKinley had just taken his first oral meal since the shooting (he had previously been fed intravenously) and was not able to digest his food. However, he was given calomel and oils and by midnight had moved his bowels, and the trouble was reported to have passed. However, by 2:00 A.M. on September 13, it became clear that the president was suffering something far more serious than indigestion. His pulse, which had been abnormally high ever since his operation, quickened still more and his heart weakened considerably. Dr. Park arrived at the Milburn house at 3:00 A.M. and at 6:00 A.M. Senator Hanna, who had just gone back home to Cleveland, once again set out for Buffalo on a special train. Stunned by the sudden activity at the Milburn house, crowds began to congregate along Delaware Avenue in front of the house. Fearing the worst, Chief of Police William Bull activated three hundred police reserves, as a threatening crowd of close to two thousand people marched down Main Street in the direction of police headquarters, where Czolgosz was being held.

However, nothing that had happened—not the summoning of McKinley's friends, family, and cabinet members; not the desperate effort to contact the vice-president, who was mountain climbing in the Adirondacks; not even the increasingly pessimistic report of the medical team—could convince some people that the end was near. Congressman Alexander of Buffalo told a crowd of still gullible reporters that "It is not true that the physicians are without hope or that those gathered in the house are despondent. Everybody about the house is hopeful. The two men who know him best, Cortelyou and Hanna, are cheerful and confident."

But Alexander could not wish away the truth, and McKinley weakened steadily throughout the day. At 4:00 P.M. on September 13, his pulsations increased again and at 5:00 P.M. he suffered a heart attack. Aware himself of the futility of further efforts to save him, at 8:00 that night McKinley asked to have a last word with his wife. At 9:00 he lost consciousness, and at 2:10 the following morning he died. That morning the Pan American Exposition was closed for the first time and Theodore Roosevelt became the twenty-sixth president of the United States at a hasty swearing-in ceremony in Wilcox's house on Delaware Avenue.

What was most upsetting about the president's death was that it was so totally unexpected. Coming after days of nothing but optimistic

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reports about the his health, the news of McKinley's death confused and angered the public more than it saddened them. For it soon became apparent that from the beginning there had been little grounds for optimism, and while nobody was accusing the medical team of lying outright, there was no question but that the public had not been told the truth. In the hours following McKinley's death, some of the truth began to emerge. Dr. Park said that once he bullet had penetrated the abdomen, the president became a doomed man. He was, he said, amazed that McKinley had lived as long as he had. Another said that there was no case record of a person the age of the president surviving a serious stomach wound. Citing the recent case of the Princeton quarterback who had been shot in the stomach by a Negro spectator, another doctor said that regardless of age or physical condition, a stomach wound was fatal more often than not.

Most shocking of all was the fact that ever since Tuesday, September 12, the president's physicians had been aware that gangrene had set in, and while they believed that they had removed the poisoned areas, there was every reason to suspect that the disease would spread. Cortelyou had urged that the doctors again search for the bullet and even had Thomas Alva Edison send his most sophisticated x-ray machine to Buffalo for that purpose. But, satisfied that the bullet could cause no harm, the doctors refused to reexamine the wound. The autopsy confirmed Cortelyou's suspicions and what the doctors must certainly have guessed on Tuesday: that the spread of gangrene along the path of the unfound bullet into the stomach, kidney, and pancreas had killed the president.

Two days after McKinley died, a grand jury, meeting for the first and only time, indicted Leon Czolgosz for murder. His trial proceeded expeditiously. It opened on September 23, and by the end of the first day, a jury had been selected. On the second day both prosecution and defense attorneys completed their cases, the judge charged the jury, and in less than half an hour a guilty verdict was returned. The case was closed twenty-four hours after it opened.

Czolgosz's trial was a sham from the very beginning—a kangaroo court. Most disturbing was the conduct of the defense. Czolgosz was defended by two court-appointed lawyers, Loran L. Lewis and Robert G. Titus, aging former judges who had not argued in court in years. On the opening day of the trial, Lewis requested of the judge that the court be in session only four hours a day: "Neither Judge Titus nor myself is a young man and neither of us is in perfect health. We have had little opportunity to consult with each other. We believe that the trial will not be injured by having short hours. We have

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concluded to ask Your Honor during this trial to sit from ten to noon in the morning and from 2 to 4 in the afternoon. I mention four P.M. because my home—my summer home—is in Lewiston and the train leaves at 4:40."

Their laziness extended into the courtroom, too. Titus and Lewis made only the most perfunctory challenges of the jury. The result was a shocking miscarriage of justice. All of the jurors admitted that they were inclined to find Czolgosz guilty and that they would consider acquittal only if presented with reasonable evidence to the contrary. Czolgosz's lawyers made no effort to communicate with their client, called no defense witnesses, and constantly apologized to the court for their client's "dastardly act," while through it all tearfully referring to the greatness of "our martyred President." But their most serious shortcoming was their failure to raise the issue of Czolgosz' sanity. While they did instruct the jury that Czolgosz must be considered sane before he could be found guilty, the lawyers made no attempt to offer any testimony or evidence dealing with their client's mental state at the time of the shooting.

There was nothing to prevent Titus and Lewis from raising the question. Indeed, the presiding judge had already done it. In his charge to the jury, Judge Truman White had said that if Czolgosz was "laboring under a defect of reasoning" at the time of the crime, he should be acquitted. The Erie County Bar Association, too, had been concerned about the sanity question; in order to be absolutely certain that they would be able to bring Czolgosz to trial, the bar had at least gone through the motions of deliberating the defendant's mental condition. On September 8, two days after the shooting, Czolgosz was examined by a team of local psychiatrists and an expert in forensics from Bellevue Hospital in New York. Their decision was that Czolgosz was indeed sane and thereby fit to stand trial. They enumerated their findings. He was, they said, not a victim of paranoia because "he has not systematized delusions reverting to self and because he is in exceptionally good condition and has an unbroken record of good health." Nor was he a "degenerate." The phrenologically oriented physicians stated that their examinations revealed none of the stigmata of degeneration: "His skull is symmetrical; his ears do not protrude, nor are they of abnormal size and his palate is not arched." Dr. MacDonald from Bellevue concurred in a separate report. "Czolgosz is," he said, "the product of anarchism. He is sane and responsible."

Yet these hastily written reports could not still the many questions that began to surface in the months after Czolgosz's execution. A

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growing number of psychiatrists were becoming convinced that a closer scrutiny of Czolgosz's personal history—the death of his mother when he was twelve, his father's subsequent remarriage to a woman he detested, his constant brooding and dreamy behavior—combined with an attempt on the part of his attorneys to introduce testimony dealing with the question of his sanity, would have raised serious doubts in the minds of the jury about the defendant's sanity at the time of the crime. But these were questions that the legal fraternity in a city desperately bent on revenge were unwilling to ask. Had McKinley lived, Czolgosz would have received a maximum of only ten years' imprisonment. But the president had died, and the law entitled the people to their revenge.

Ever since he had shot the president on September 9, Czolgosz had been hounded by crowds. First the bloodthirsty mob at the Temple of Music. Then the mass of people who had waited, not certain for what, for days outside his jail in police headquarters in Buffalo. And now, on September 26, as he arrived at Auburn Prison, a mob of over three thousand converged at the Auburn railroad station in an effort to get their hands on the man who had assassinated the president. Under heavy guard, Czolgosz walked amidst the screaming, clawing crowd, making his way slowly into the prison. Once inside, he succumbed to the stress, becoming hysterical, falling to the ground, and shrieking and writhing on the floor. He was immediately strapped into a chair and given a hypodermic. Again, as at the trial, little time was wasted in dispatching the jury's verdict of execution by electricity. Afraid that Czolgosz, like Gaetano Bresci before him, would kill himself in his cell, the execution was scheduled a month hence. On October 29, 1901, Leon Czolgosz died in the electric chair. Local newspapers reported the details:

Warden Mead of Auburn raised his hands and at 7:12:30, electrician Davis turned the switch that threw twenty-seven hundred volts of electricity into the living body. The rush of immense current threw the body so hard against the straps that they creaked perceptibly. The hands clinched up suddenly and the whole attitude was one of extreme tenseness. For forty-five seconds the full current was kept on and then slowly the electrician threw the switch back reducing the current volt by volt until it was cut off entirely. Then, just as it had reached that point, he threw the lever back again for a brief two or three seconds. The body, which had collapsed as the current reduced, stiffened up again against the straps. When it was turned off again, Dr. McCauley stepped up to the chair and put his hand over the heart. He said he felt no pulsation but

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suggested that the current be turned on for a few seconds again. At 7:18 the current was turned off for a third and final time. At 7:20 the warden announced: 'Gentlemen, the prisoner is dead.'

Cornell University had already been promised Czolgosz' skull and Syracuse University his body.

Meanwhile William Buchanan was trying to rescue the Pan American Exposition from the wreck of McKinley's assassination. All during the summer, every nation in the hemisphere and every state in the Union had been honored with a "Day" at the exposition. But after the shooting of the president, the country had lost its taste for the exposition and as the weather turned colder, the tourists stopped coming. Director Buchanan, declaring that November 1 was "Buffalo Day," had no choice but to turn to the city in a last desperate effort to at least making closing day a success. However, it didn't work. Mayor Diehl would not even consider proclaiming another civic holiday, and all but a few businessmen ignored the request of the exposition's board of directors to grant half-day holidays to their employees. Even President Ely of the International Street Railroad Company, a director of the exposition, refused to lower streetcar fares for the day.

Buffalo Day began in failure and ended in mayhem. That night the exposition was completely wrecked. People could not believe what had happened. The newspapers were aghast:

"People went mad. They were seized with the desire to destroy. Depredation and destruction were carried on in the boldest manner all along the Midway. Electric light bulbs were jerked from their posts and thousands of them were smashed on the ground. Some of the Midway restaurants were crushed into fragments under the pressure of the mob as if they were so much pasteboard. Windows were shattered and doors were kicked down. Policemen were pushed aside as if they were stuffed ornaments. The National Glass Exhibit was completely destroyed. Pabst's Cafe was demolished and Cleopatra's needle was torn to the ground."

Frank C. Bostock, "The Animal King," reported trouble, too. Earlier in the summer, Regal, one of his largest African lions, had died of heat prostration. Now, on the last day of the exposition, Jumbo the elephant, his star attraction, became unmanageable. For several days Jumbo had refused to eat. Then, on the morning of Buffalo Day, he attacked Bostock. That afternoon he knocked his keeper unconscious. Bostock decided to destroy his prized animal. He told the press that he was going to hold a public execution at the

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stadium on the exposition grounds. Tickets, at fifty cents a person, would be available at the gate. He said: "It is likely that Jumbo will be hanged, or choked to death with chains, in which case other elephants will be used."

There was immediate opposition. Mayor Diehl, John Milburn, and William Buchanan issued a joint statement condemning Bostock's plan. The method of execution, they said, was simply not in accord with the ideals of the Pan American and therefore must not be permitted to occur on the fairground. They had, however, no objection to electrocution.

On Saturday afternoon, November 3, over seven thousand people filled the Pan American stadium to witness the electrocution of Jumbo. The mammoth elephant was chained to two large wooden blocks in the center of the stadium. Long electric wires connected him to a transformer several hundred yards away. Bostock stood in front of him and made a short speech. He told the crowd about Jumbo's military career. He recalled the long voyage from the kingdoms of Africa to the Niagara Frontier and how hard it had been for Jumbo to adjust to life along the Midway. These events, Bostock said, had completely altered Jumbo's sanity. He had become a killer and death by electrocution was the only solution. With no further delay, Bostock gave a signal and Lewis Mills, the electrician, pulled a lever and eleven thousand volts of electricity were shot into the elephant.

Yet nothing happened. The electricity didn't work and Jumbo was still alive. The crowd, almost spontaneously, started to laugh and Bostock, himself incredulous, promised over the din of the laughter that he would refund the tickets. Only later did he realize that Jumbo's hide had the effect of rubber and was impossible to penetrate. Jumbo's execution was stayed.

A week later John Milburn announced that the exposition had lost over \$6 million and that the Company would have to default on over \$3.5 million in bonds. Milburn told the board of directors that he was going to Washington, where he would meet with New York's congressional delegation in an effort to convince Congress to pass a Pan American relief bill. He hoped, also to meet with President Roosevelt, who was reportedly sympathetic.

Yet Milburn's spirit was unbroken. He denied that the money lost on the exposition was "a foolish expenditure," as some had charged. The Pan American was, he said, a "masterpiece," and the city its "chosen showcase." Milburn asked the board to think of the millions of dollars that had poured into the city and to believe that the

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exposition had made Buffalo known all over the world, a city destined to rank with New York and Chicago.

Yet somehow Milburn wasn't convincing. His words didn't ring true. Nothing had turned out as Milburn had hoped it would. The exposition for which he had worked so devotedly had ended in a nightmare of violence and destruction. Once again Milburn looked ahead and, not liking what he saw, left. He was going to New York, where he had accepted a partnership in a law firm.

Jim Lee, who owned and operated a Chinese restaurant on the East Side, left Buffalo earlier, immediately after the exposition closed. Buffalo, he said, had been good to him. He was proud that his restaurant was one of the only establishments on the East Side that was frequented by the finest Delaware Avenue families. But he could no longer tolerate the rumors circulating about him. Lee was accused in the press of being the leader of a smuggling ring. From Vancouver to Buffalo, via Winnipeg, Toronto, and a midnight passage across the Niagara River, Lee, it was charged, was smuggling hundreds of Chinese into the country. Lee vehemently denied the allegations, maintaining that since his arrival in Buffalo in 1891 he had made his money honestly, and that he had never done anything illegal in his life. But now, he said, he was forced to leave and on November 2, 1901, Jim Lee left Buffalo for his brother's farm south of Canton in China.

In early December, 1901, it was reported that the exposition buildings had been sold to the Harris Wrecking Company of Chicago. A local committee was formed to buy and preserve the Electric Tower as a lasting monument to the exposition, but failed to raise the necessary funds. On January 20, 1902, the statue of the Goddess of Light was sold to the Humphrey Popcorn Company of Cleveland and the tower was finally torn down. That same day eighteen canal boats were withdrawn from services on the Erie Canal. They had been sold to the Philippines Islands where, the newspapers felt, greater opportunities for profit existed.

The Pan American Exposition and the assassination of William McKinley are best understood as a metaphor for the rise and decline of Buffalo, New York. And while it may be obvious what caused the failure of the Exposition, the causes of the cataclysm in the contemporary city are less well understood. In order to come to terms with the historical forces that led first to the rise and then to the decline of Buffalo it is necessary to go back to the beginning.

CHAPTER 2

Ups and Downs During the Early Years of the Nineteenth Century

Eight months after it was incorporated in April 1813, the village of Buffalo was burned and completely destroyed by two hundred British soldiers. Crossing the Niagara River several miles north of Buffalo, the British made their way systematically down the banks of the river routing and burning whatever settlements they found on the way. As news of the British invasion spread, the five-hundred-odd people who lived in the village of Buffalo left.

It is surprising that there was such little resistance. Buffalo was no mere frontier camp, a collapsible outpost in the wilderness, but rather a substantial community. It had newspapers, taverns, a hotel, a jail, two physicians, and two druggists, as well as a relatively thriving mercantile trade. The village was also, considering its newness (people had only been living there since the early years of the century), highly organized. There was a medical society and a Mechanics Society and the Ecclesiastical Society of Buffalo. It was, then, a village of considerable legitimacy.

The villagers too were substantial, serious, and hard-working people, not the fly-by-night transients who well might abandon rather than defend an assaulted community. While there were certainly many who did pass through Buffalo, temporary travelers who stayed on for a while before moving someplace else, there was by 1813 a group of cohesive families whose ties to the community were considerable. Most of them were young and most had come with their families. And, perhaps most important for most of these people, the decision to move to Buffalo was difficult, serious, and highly conscious. The trip alone was such that only the most committed and purposeful

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people let alone whole families, would even bother to make it. People arriving from the East made the journey partially on foot, partially on wagons, and partially on inland waterways. When William Hodge, for example, came to Buffalo in 1805 with his wife and two children, he went first by wagon from eastern New York to Utica. There he joined twenty other people, also families, and rode a flatboat up the Mohawk River, through Oneida Lake, and onto the Oswego River. This they rode, with many interruptions for portages around the rapids, until they arrived at Lake Ontario. Transferring here to a lake boat, the trip to the lower part of the Niagara River at Lewiston was relatively easy until they came to the entrance of the river and the looming presence of Niagara Falls. At the falls the Hodge's boat was taken out of the water and carried by oxteams around the falls. Then, by rowing, poling, and towing, the Hodge party made it through the Niagara River to Buffalo Creek and the village of Buffalo.

Another family, that of Samuel Fletcher Pratt, had three generations living in Buffalo by 1825. A veteran of the American Revolution, Captain Pratt made the overland trip to Buffalo with eight children in 1805. One year later, apparently pleased with his new home, he returned to Vermont to bring his aging parents to Buffalo.

While the journey, then, required devotion, commitment, and desire, village life required extraordinary adaptability, ingenuity, and hard work. For many of the settlers, it was impossible to do in Buffalo what they had done earlier in other communities. Ebenezer Johnson had been trained as a physician in New England. When he came to Buffalo with his wife and child in 1810, the existing village physician refused to allow Johnson to practice. The established pharmacist, meanwhile, denied him the right to open a pharmacy. Johnson, however, did not leave town, as well he might have, but chose to stay in what must have appeared to him to be, despite its frontierlike appearance, a rather closed community. Johnson survived by abandoning his chosen profession and entering instead the real estate business.

Juba Storrs came to Buffalo from Connecticut in 1808 eager to practice law. When opportunities proved limited in his chosen profession, he too began to buy and sell land. Granted that the lure of real estate development was very strong on the urban frontier, its popularity was due also to the fact that it was often difficult and sometimes impossible to do the work in the village for which one was prepared and trained.

In most cases, it seems, these kinds of work changes were profitable. William Hodge had been a farmer in eastern New York. But, given

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the difficulty of getting produce to market in the isolated village of Buffalo, Hodge, awed by the seemingly inexhaustible quantity of trees in the area, took up carpentry. In 1813 alone he made over three hundred coffins for the American and British soldiers killed in action along the Niagara Frontier.

And yet despite their tenacity and their will to build a community in the wilderness, the village's settlers chose not to defend the fruits of their energies and, when the British came, they simply left.

Not only the citizenry had deserted Buffalo. The United States Army too (in this case the New York State Militia) had left their posts at the first indication of a British assault on the village in late December 1813. At least half of the fighting force abandoned Buffalo before the British even arrived, while the rest deserted shortly after the first exchange of fire. Several efforts to rally the militia men failed, and despite some chronicles that hint otherwise, there is no record of any serious fighting effort to defend Buffalo.

It was, perhaps, in an effort to purge themselves of feelings of guilt over their passivity in the face of attack that the citizens of Buffalo in June 1814, after having returned to their torched community, staged the execution of five soldiers for desertion. The details of this execution, like so many in Buffalo's history, were carefully recorded:

The unfortunate victims of martial law are made to kneel upon the ground their eyes bandaged and each with his coffin in front and an open grave behind him. Twenty paces in front of them a platoon of men were drawn up as executioners. The entire army was then formed on three sides of a hollow square to witness the execution. The artillery stood by their guns with lighted matches, to suppress any possible opposing demonstration. . . . When the firing squad had poured the contents of their muskets upon the victims, four of the five men fell beside their coffins, while one, a young man of twenty-one, sprang to his feet, wrenched the cords from his arms and then tore the bandage from his eyes.

Four apparently, were a sufficient offering, and this lone survivor was strangely spared.

By the spring and summer of 1814 many of the former residents had begun to drift back to Buffalo. This time, however, the army was there and, while their protection may no longer have been necessary since the scene of the fighting had shifted away from the village, their presence stimulated the revival of the town. The soldiers had to be housed, clothed, and fed for as long as the war continued. It was no wonder then that, like General Jackson at New Orleans,

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the people of Buffalo chose not to hear about the signing in December 1814 of the peace treaty with Britain. Indeed, it was not until late January 1815 that, with mixed feelings, the villagers of Buffalo greeted the peace and the news that the several hundred soldiers stationed there would soon be leaving. Their ambivalence is understandable, for despite the buoyant return after the burning of the village, signs of revival in the years following the end of the war were few and far between. The village did acquire a government structure; in addition, a bank was formed, self-help societies and organizations became active, and local citizens vociferously supported those advocates in the state legislature of the long-discussed proposal to build a canal from the Hudson River at Albany to the Great Lakes at Buffalo. But, as one contemporary diarist put it, in writing about a scene of Buffalo in 1817, "insolvency ensued more distressing, if possible, than even after the destruction of the village."

What was most distressing to the inhabitants of Buffalo was the extent to which they were so utterly dependent on national political decisions and economic events over which they had no control. When the army was disbanded and the troops were sent home, the villagers had hoped that the federal government would compensate them—at least in part—for the damages they had suffered during the war. Despite the intense efforts of more influential local citizens, however, this never happened, and the community suffered desperately from a lack of cash. Creditors even advertised that they would cancel debts in exchange for produce. The Holland Land Company took wheat, and a printer took pine. And while local citizens were able to organize a bank in 1816, it was quickly wiped out when Congress a year later required the resumption of specie payments.

While the community had grown some since the end of the war (there were approximately two thousand people in 1820, compared with fifteen hundred people ten years earlier), Buffalo suffered because of its isolation. Contact with the outside remained extremely complex and difficult. At late as 1820 there was but twice-weekly mail service. With few settlers in the West and no direct connection with the East, trade was minimal. Only the Erie Canal, debated for years and finally a legislative reality in 1817, could save the village. The citizens knew this, and they waited.

While construction of the canal proceeded throughout the late teens and early twenties, it was not yet clear whether the western terminus of the canal would be located in Buffalo or in Black Rock, a town of similar size several miles down the Niagara River. While the water was calmer and less rapid in Buffalo, the village lacked a harbor.