

Our community and diocese

St. James' serves the community of Watkins Glen and Schuyler County, which sits on the southern end of Seneca Lake, the largest of New York's Finger Lakes. The county's economy relies heavily on tourism based on several unique attractions.

Natural Beauty/Tourism The Watkins Glen State Park and its famous gorge drew more than 800,000 visitors in 2015. After viewing its rainbow falls in the late 1800s, Mark Twain left inspired by its scenic grace and beauty. In his book "Roughing It", he wrote of the Watkins Glen gorge: "It could challenge the old world and the new to produce its peer."

Less than three miles south, is the 156-foot Shequaga Falls in Montour Falls, named for the Indian phrase "tumbling waters." In the late 1700s, several decades before he became the "citizen king" of France, Louis Philippe sketched the falls. After he became King Louis XVIII (reigning from 1830 to 1848), his drawing of the Schuyler County waterfall hung in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Emerging Winery Region In addition to its natural beauty, the county also happens to have nearly ideal conditions for growing grapes. In recent years, dozens of vineyards have sprung up along Seneca Lake, and many have added wine tasting rooms that draw limos and busloads of tourists nearly year-round.

The waves of wine tourists have encouraged the expansion of hotels, motels and Bed & Breakfast facilities in the area, including the Harbor Hotel, a four-star hotel (shown below) on the Watkins Glen shoreline. If this trend of rising tourism continues, those who project declining population in Schuyler County may be off target. The reputation of area's wine industry has improved steadily, particularly in the past decade. Once dismissed as a producer of cheap, sweet wines, the Finger Lakes region is now reeling in far more impressive reviews.

Wine Enthusiast magazine was one of the first to change its tune, writing in 2013: "Some of the most exciting Rieslings in the United States hail from the little-known Finger Lakes region in upstate New York."

While health care and education continue to lead employment categories in Schuyler County, wineries and tourism have become important additions to the mix. Area tourism has also long benefitted from the auto racing.

Auto Racing Fame Last year, Watkins Glen International, the local road course, was voted best NASCAR track by USA Today readers. A panel of motorsports experts selected their top 20 tracks as nominees from which the newspaper's readers made their picks. Watkins Glen International beat out other famed U.S. race courses, including Daytona, Indianapolis, Atlanta Motor Speedway and Texas Motor Speedway.

Recent NASCAR races in Watkins Glen have drawn more than 120,000 fans. The track was established in 1948 as a Formula 1 course, and served as home to the U.S. Grand Prix. Stars from all forms of racing — open-wheel, sportswear and stock car — have competed at The Glen. Legends of The Glen include the many of the greats of auto racing, including Graham Hill, Mario Andretti, Jeff Gordon, Jimmy Clark and Jackie Stewart. Formula 1 racing is scheduled to return to the track in 2016.

Demographic Challenges While Watkins Glen has achieved remarkable success for its size (population 1,867), the town and surrounding Schuyler County face significant demographic challenges. Schuyler, with a population of 18,479 in 2014, is the state's second least populous county. Although it had edged up from 18,343 in 2010, it was still well below its peak of 19,224 in 2000. One hundred years earlier, Schuyler County's population was 15,811.

Statistically, the county is poorer, older, whiter and more politically conservative than the state as a whole. And the percentage of residents who identify themselves as affiliated with a local church has been in steep decline.

Religious Affiliation: According to the 2010 U.S. Religion Census, a major shift in religious activity has occurred here since the year 2000. Virtually all Catholic and Protestant churches in the county showed sharp declines in residents identifying themselves as adherents, while those who said they had no religious affiliation jumped from 4,936 (25.7% of Schuyler's population) to 13,286 (72.4%).

Catholic congregations showed the largest drop during the decade, falling from 8,895 in 2000 to 2,359 in 2010, a 73% drop. Mainline Protestant affiliation fell by 27%, while Evangelical Protestants fell 56%. The survey found that adherents at the three Episcopal parishes in Schuyler County fell from 262 people in 2000 to 145 in 2010, a 47% decline. During that decade, St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Montour Falls was converted to mission status.

Income: The U.S. Census Bureau reported that Schuyler County's median per capita income was \$22,123 in 2010, which ranked 47th among the state's 62 counties. That figure jumped to \$24,529 in 2014, but it still lagged far behind the state median per capita income of \$32,829 that year.

Population: Schuyler is projected to lose population over the next few years, and the average age of the remaining residents is expected to be even higher than it is now. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 17.0% of Schuyler County residents were 65 years or older, compared with 13.5% statewide.

That gap is expected to widen over the next 15 years, according to Cornell University's Program on Applied Demographics. By 2030, residents aged 65 and older are seen making up 26.6% of the county's population, while residents in that age category will make up 18.3% of the state population.

The working age population of Schuyler (20-64) was 10,901 in 2010, about 3.5 times greater than the number aged 65 and older. By 2030, the county's working age population is projected to fall by 25% to 8,111, while the count for those aged 65 and above will grow by 36% to 4,243. The ratio of working age residents to elderly residents is expected to dip from 3.5 in 2010 to 1.9 in 2030.

Racial Diversity: Schuyler is one of the least racially diverse counties in the state. The U.S. Census for 2010 shows that Schuyler County's population is 97.1% white, compared to 65.7% statewide.

Political Affiliation: The county has more registered Republicans (52.6%) than Democrats (45.1%), in sharp contrast with state and national figures. Statewide, Republicans trail Democrats in party registration 35.2% to 63.3%. Nationally, Republicans trail 47.2% to 51.1%. Schuyler's representatives in the U.S. Congress, the New York Senate and New York Assembly are all Republicans. However, members of the St. James' congregation and its recent rectors have held a wide variety of political views — both liberal and conservative.

Health Care: The county has ample quality health care options. Schuyler County Hospital (below) is affiliated with the Cayuga Medical Center in neighboring Tompkins County. The county's Arnot Health and Guthrie Health facilities are affiliated with larger health centers in Elmira and Corning, respectively. Larger regional health facilities in Rochester and Sayre, Pa., are also options for Schuyler residents.

The Episcopal Diocese of Rochester: St. James' Episcopal Church is a part of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester. The diocese is made up of 46 parishes spread across eight counties in a region bounded by Buffalo on the west, Syracuse on the east, Lake Ontario to the north and the Pennsylvania border to the south. A majority of members attend churches in Rochester or its surrounding suburbs.

However, the diocese also contains small parishes in small towns in the northern reaches of Appalachia. Aside from Schuyler, the following counties are served by parishes within the Diocese of Rochester: Allegany, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Steuben, Wayne and Yates.

Bishop Singh: The Rt. Rev. Dr. Price G Singh (below) has served as Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of

Rochester since February 2008. Born and educated in India, Bishop Singh also holds postgraduate degrees in Practical Theology from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia (1994), from Princeton Seminary (1995), and a Ph.D. from Drew University in Religion and Society (2005). In 2011, Bishop Singh was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from General Theological Seminary in New York city. Additional information on the Diocese of Rochester can be found on its website at <http://www.episcopalrochester.org>.