

THE ROCHESTER AREA  
IN  
AMERICAN HISTORY

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# The ROCHESTER AREA in AMERICAN HISTORY

by

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Materials compiled in the office of the City Historian for supplementary use in Eighth Grade Social Studies.

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

1938



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## CHAPTER I

## The Genesee Country and New France During the Age of the Puritans

{Note to Teachers:- Life anywhere in America in the 17th century was a risky adventure. But nowhere was it more glamorous or more tragic than on the French frontier in Western New York. Here it involved the ambitions not only of French soldiers, priests, and traders, but of the Red Man as well. Our object has been to tell the story of New France from the point of view of the locality of the student. An added touch of realism may thus be given to this dramatic story, setting the stage, at the same time, for the contest that is to follow between the English and French colonial empires.

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The teacher may find it desirable to supplement this material by special reports from different students on the larger phases of the history of New France. The brief bibliography at the end of this chapter may prove helpful should the teacher wish to explore some phase of this subject more fully. The list of local markers relating to this period may help to fix some of these far-off events in the experience of the students.)

A chain of forest-clad mountains bound the English Colonies on the west. This mountain wall guarded the colonists from fierce Indian tribes and encouraged them to settle in farms and villages near the coast. These colonists still considered themselves to be Englishmen. They faced the east, and their dreams were of the home-country, rather than of the vast continent beyond the mountains.

The Dutch, on the other hand, sailed up the mighty Hudson to trade with the interior tribes. But they carefully respected the lands and the customs of the Indians. During the half-century when the Dutch controlled the Hudson valley, they built very few homes. They were merchants, living chiefly in trading posts, and they maintained friendly relations with the Indians.

The French along the St. Lawrence heard the call of the west during the seventeenth century. Champlain and his successors eagerly paddled up the great rivers of Canada. They claimed all the lands drained by these rivers, and made great plans for a New France in America. They hoped to make the Indians loyal to the French king, to convert them to the way of the Cross, and to use their skill as hunters for the benefit of the fur trade. These plans might have succeeded if the French had been able to maintain peace among the warring tribes. Failing in this, their hopes depended upon the choice of the strongest tribes as allies for New France.

A - The French Challenge the Iroquois

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When Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence to found Quebec in 1608, several of the Indian tribes were already at war with each other. The Algonquin and Hurons living along the St. Lawrence and north of Lake Ontario welcomed Champlain and invited him to join in a campaign against their enemies to the south. These northern tribes called

their southern enemies the Iroquois, because these enemies, like poisonous snakes, struck quickly, killing their victims.

Champlain did not know how strong the Iroquois were. He did not know that they were really five tribes joined in a league for self defense. So he marched with his northern friends down along the shores of Lake Champlain to meet the Iroquois. That was in 1609, before either the English or the Dutch had invaded the country far beyond the coast line. The Iroquois had never before heard the guns of the white men. They fled in terror when Champlain fired his "thunder poles." But events were to prove that it would take more than thunder to defeat the Iroquois.

The League of the Iroquois lived in a string of villages that stretched across what is now central New York from the Hudson River almost to Lake Erie. The Mohawks, who lived on the Mohawk River, and the Senecas, who lived in the Genesee Valley, were the strongest of the Iroquois tribes and defended their weaker brothers. None of the Indians knew how to make metal tools or weapons; they had to travel on foot or by canoe; and their bark huts and flimsy stockades offered little protection against the guns of the French. But the Iroquois made a large number of stone, wood, and clay utensils; they raised corn, vegetables, and some fruits; and they were skilled hunters and trappers. Best of all, they knew how to hunt and fight in large parties, helping each other when help was needed. Thus the "Men of Men," as the Iroquois called themselves, were a sturdy people, and the French should have thought twice before they attacked them.

But six years after the first battle, Champlain made another bold attack on the Iroquois. The campaign was plotted at a great council fire in the Huron country, about ninety miles north of present Toronto. While the warriors feasted on stews of dog meat, the chiefs smoked their pipes and planned a surprise attack on the central villages of the League. A strong tribe living along the Susquehanna, south of the Iroquois, had heard of the plan to attack their enemies, the Iroquois. Delegates from these southern Indians came to the council to offer their aid. Étienne Brûlé, Champlain's young interpreter, agreed to return with these guides and lead their warriors north to join in the attack on the Iroquois.

It was a bold adventure that young Brûlé undertook in the fall of 1615, over three hundred years ago. With his guides he paddled down from the Huron country into Lake Ontario. He skirted along the western shore of the lake until he decided to abandon his canoes and strike through the forest. "Pioneer of pioneers", as he has been called, Brûlé carefully dodged around the western villages of the Senecas and finally reached the Indian settlements on the Susquehanna near present Waverly. But this bold adventurer, the first white man known to have crossed Western New York, covered his stealthy tracks so successfully that we cannot trace his route.

Meanwhile Champlain had crossed the eastern end of Lake Ontario and found himself in the land of the Iroquois before Brûlé and the southern Indians arrived. He was unable to hold back his eager Huron warriors, and the battle started before Champlain was ready. At the sound of the French guns, the Iroquois retreated behind the stockade of their village. A siege was attempted, but when Champlain received two arrow wounds in the leg, his allies beat a hasty retreat. Two days later, Brûlé arrived and watched from a safe distance the feast-

ing of the victorious Iroquois. The southern Indians feared the vengeance of the League, and slunk back to their lodges on the Susquehanna. Brûlé wandered for two years among both friendly and hostile Indians before he returned to Canada to tell about his adventures.

Thus the first attempt to crush the League only stirred up the hostility of the Iroquois. Probably the League was never able to muster more than five thousand warriors. The combined force of their enemies was much greater; but the Iroquois, by joining in big war parties, frequently had the advantage. The French made several attempts to secure a general peace. But the reckless younger braves would not give up the hunt for scalps. For thirty years, war parties fought back and forth. Finally the Senecas gathered their allies and set out in one big party to crush the Hurons. When they returned in 1650, not a Huron village was left standing north of Lake Ontario. Several hundred captives were brought back to the Genesee Country for adoption by the Senecas. The rest of the Hurons fled for refuge to friendly tribes.

### B - Priests and Fur Traders

The League's victory over the allies of the French was greatly aided by the guns they now secured from Dutch traders on the Hudson. At last the French realized that it would be necessary to win the strong Iroquois tribes away from the Dutch.

A group of courageous missionaries had helped in the early days to win the friendship of the Hurons. So the French determined to follow the same course with the League of the Iroquois. In 1656 several Jesuit Fathers and fifty hardy settlers ventured into the Iroquois country. A trading post, called Fort St. Marie, was established on Onondaga Lake near the site of present Syracuse. The Jesuits visited the nearby Indian villages. In the fall of 1656 Father Joseph Chaumonot came to the Seneca village on Boughton Hill near present Victor.

For two years these men lived in the midst of constant danger, trying to teach the Indians the way of the Cross. Finally the Iroquois warriors, happy over the defeat of several enemy tribes, decided to attack the French in their midst. A friendly Indian warned the missionaries to flee for their lives. But the warriors must not know of their flight. So the missionaries and traders at Fort St. Marie invited the Indians to a feast one March night in 1658. While their guests were enjoying themselves around big brush fires outside the stockade, the French escaped through the darkness and were well on their way to Canada before the Indians learned of their flight.

(These and later missionary activities in this region can easily be followed by referring to Mr. Alexander Stewart's map cited in the bibliography at the end of this chapter.)

Another decade of conflict was followed by a new effort to make peace with the Iroquois. Several Jesuit Fathers again ventured into the villages of the League early in 1668. Among them was Father Jacques Frémin, who located at Totiakton near present Rochester Junction. There a bark chapel, called La Conception, was erected for him, and thus Father Frémin was the first pastor to live in what is



now Monroe County. Father Julian Garnier and several other Jesuits came to live among the Iroquois tribes during these years, baptising their converts.

In 1669 the youthful La Salle, Father Galinée, and several companions paddled into Irondequoit Bay on a tour of exploration. They followed the Seneca Trail to Totiakton where La Salle sat for hours smoking with the Seneca chiefs. Weeks passed, but still the Senecas refused to help him explore the Genesee-Ohio trade route. La Salle could do nothing but continue his course westward along the Ontario shore. He paddled by the mouth of the Niagara River, but his reports fail to mention a visit to Niagara Falls at this time. Thus his grand scheme for the exploration of the routes to the southwest was postponed.

La Salle soon began to make new plans for trade along the Great Lakes. In 1678 an expedition was made ready at great expense and set out along the south shore of Lake Ontario for Niagara. La Salle again visited the Senecas, landing in Irondequoit Bay on his way to their villages. After presenting many gifts, he secured their official approval of his plan to build a sailing vessel on Lake Erie and to erect a fortified post at the mouth of the Niagara. When his boat, the Griffon, was finally launched upon Lake Erie in 1679, La Salle was ready to engage in the fur trade on a large scale.

But misfortune dogged La Salle's steps. The Iroquois did not wish to see the French become strong on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. The League had found a profitable market for furs at Albany. There the English had replaced the Dutch in 1664, and the new traders offered higher prices for furs than either the Dutch or the French. Some of the Iroquois chiefs thought that the Griffon would destroy this trade without bringing them any advantages. Hostilities were averted, but this was only the beginning of La Salle's difficulties. The voyage to the west proved disastrous. The Griffon was wrecked and lost in a storm; most of the supplies were either stolen or destroyed; and many of the traders deserted. Yet the brave explorer was not disheartened and soon set out on new adventures down the Mississippi River. Meanwhile, the Senecas found many opportunities to pilot rich loads of furs to Albany where they received generous supplies of powder and rum.

#### C - Expeditions to Punish the Iroquois

The Iroquois soon began to quarrel again with the French. The few Jesuits still in the Iroquois villages roused the suspicion of many of the young warriors. These young men told how they had seen French missionaries in the villages which their war parties had recently captured. The wise old chiefs defended the missionaries and tried to maintain peace with New France. But the young Iroquois warriors made new raids against the Indian allies of the French along the St. Lawrence. At last new and inexperienced leaders in New France determined to punish the Iroquois.

In 1687 a carefully planned expedition set out under Denonville. Several hundred friendly Indians of the upper lake country gathered at Niagara to join in the attack. After a toilsome journey, the French leader, Denonville, brought his troops and Indian allies from Montreal to join the western Indians at the mouth of Irondequoit Bay on July 10. His force of more than a thousand French troops, supported

by several hundred Indian allies, landed on the sandy beach where they built a palisade to protect their boats. Two days later the army and its painted allies marched south to engage the Senecas hiding in the hills on the southern border of present Monroe County.

Outnumbered by these well-equipped troops, the Senecas chose retreat. But first they decided to ambush the vanguard of the army. In the late afternoon of July 13, the Senecas took a heavy toll of lives in the swamp west of present Victor and then disappeared in the forest. The army burned four of the chief Seneca villages, cut down the green corn standing in the fields, and destroyed whatever else could be found. But, after two weeks of sleepless nights, the troops were glad to return to their boats and hurry away from the still undefeated Senecas.

Denonville led his fleet of boats and canoes west to the Niagara River where he planned to build a fort. Fort Denonville, as it was called, was to serve as a stronghold for friendly western Indians. It was to stop all rival fur trade on the lakes. So a log stockade was erected with much labor on the site of present Fort Niagara. But the problem of supplying a garrison presented many difficulties. The major portion of the army had to be transported back to Quebec before winter set in. The Indian allies quickly scattered to their homelands. A garrison of one hundred French regulars was left to face a terrible winter in this isolated post. These men soon discovered that much of their food supply had spoiled. Some of those who ventured into the forest after game were captured and killed by the Senecas. Disease and starvation carried off many more. The next spring when a rescue party arrived from the east, only thirteen men were still alive in the fort, and one of those died on the way to the boats!

The great expedition thus failed to achieve its purpose, and Fort Denonville had to be abandoned. Soon the Senecas were carrying the war down the St. Lawrence to the outskirts of Montreal and Quebec. Several large massacres more than avenged the losses suffered by the Senecas from Denonville's invasion. Not only the French troops, but their priests and most of their traders were driven from the land of the Iroquois. The Niagara gateway to the fur trade of the interior was again largely under the control of the Iroquois, among whom the Senecas were now the strongest tribe.

But the first century of European invasion had produced marked changes in the situation. European arms, traders, and priests had failed either to conquer or to pacify the tribes. Yet the ravages of war and the opportunities of the fur trade had greatly changed the lives of the Indians. Gone were the happy days when each tribe had relied on its own cornfields and hunting grounds. The Indians had become trappers and traders. They exchanged their furs and services for weapons, for tools and clothing, and, last but not least, for rum. If anything was to bring about the final defeat of the Red Man, it was likely to be this last article--rum.

But at the end of the seventeenth century the Indian was still very strong. And strongest of all was the League of the Iroquois who controlled the outlet of the fur trade. It was still an open question whether the French in Canada or the English at Albany would get the lion's share of this trade and the friendship of the Iroquois.

## HISTORIC MARKERS

Several local and state markers indicate the trails and mark the sites of Indian and French activity in this area during the seventeenth century.

1. Indian Landing Tablet, on a boulder near Irondequoit Creek in Ellison Park, stands opposite the place where the Indians beached their canoes before striking out over the Portage Trail to the Genesee River, or south along the Seneca Trail to the Seneca villages.
2. Hennepin Chapel Marker, on the Mercy High School grounds on Blossom Road overlooking the Irondequoit Valley, indicates the general location of the first chapel within the bounds of the present county. It was located here in clear view of the Indians who used the Portage Trail. The tablet commemorates the services of six missionaries active in this region during the seventeenth century.
3. Cobb's Hill Tablet, on a boulder at the base of Cobb's Hill at Monroe and Highland Avenues, marks a point where the Indians passed between two of the Pinnacle Hills as they followed the Portage Trail towards the river.
4. Red Creek Tablet, on a boulder near the river in Genesee Valley Park, marks the river end of the Portage Trail.
5. Seneca Trail Marker, on Route 15, near Pittsford, marks the point where the trail crosses Irondequoit Creek and the defile where Denonville's army expected to encounter an ambush.
6. Seneca Trail Marker, on Victor High Road at Ballentines Hall Corners, marks the site of a small Seneca settlement along the trail.
7. Seneca Trail Marker, at Bushnell's Basin on Route 15, marks a portion of the trail that led towards the Seneca town of Gannogaro, the first to be attacked by Denonville in 1687.
8. Totiakton Site, on 2 A near Honeoye Falls, marking the site of the principal Seneca town during the period before Denonville's invasion. A Jesuit mission was maintained here, 1668-1683, and the town was burned by Denonville's army in 1687.
9. Denonville Site, on Pond Road in Mendon Ponds Park, marks the location of one of the over-night camps occupied by Denonville's army in 1687.
10. Honeoye Valley, at the junction of East River Road and Rush Ridge, marks the general location of a clearing used by the Senecas for corn and other articles.

Note: Visitors to Rochester's parks can find other Indian markers. Several of these mark the sites of villages occupied by the early Algonquin Indians who lived in this region for many years before the Seneca Indians came and drove them out. Those who are interested in reading about these earlier Indians can consult Dr. Arthur C. Parker's article on "The First Human Inhabitants of the Rochester Region" in the Rochester Historical Society's Centennial History of Rochester, Vol. I, pages 19 to 24.

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## CHAPTER II

## English or French in the Genesee Country?

A - Joncaire and the French

Beaver hats for the dandies of London and Paris, furs for their ladies! Both New France and New York owed their being largely to the demands of this fashion. Most of the English colonists, hemmed between the mountains and the sea, built homes and tilled the soil. But the people of New York were traders dealing with the Indians for furs. Not for nothing had the Dutch founders of New Netherlands placed a beaver on the coat-of-arms of the colony. On the other hand, the fur trade was so important to the French that the merchants of Montreal and Quebec used beaver skins for money instead of the king's coins. Thus the fur trade made an unceasing rivalry between the French and the English-Dutch traders of New York.

The best route from the beaver lands to the coastal settlements was the waterway through the Great Lakes by way of the Niagara River. Naturally, both French and English wanted it. Since the Niagara lay through the Iroquois country and was the special charge of the Senecas along the Genesee River, the country near Rochester became the center of the struggle for the fur trade. The nation which could win over the Senecas would be the nation to control the Niagara portage and receive the bulk of the fur trade. Denonville's expedition had made the Senecas dislike the French and strengthened the friendly feeling of the Iroquois toward the English. Indeed, so friendly were the Iroquois and English that in 1701 the Five Nations gave the King of England the right to protect their lands for them against their enemies.

It was now clear to the French that the hatchet must be buried and the peace pipe smoked with the Iroquois. When the Governor of New France looked about for someone to undertake this task, he found no one so well suited for it as a young man named Louis Thomas de Joncaire. This young man was to be for many years the central figure in the struggle of the English and the French for the control of the Niagara River, the bottleneck of the fur trade.

Several years before, young Joncaire had been captured by the Senecas and carried a prisoner to the Genesee country. Here the Indians made ready to put him to torture and death to avenge the loss of their comrades killed in battle. But his bravery so impressed the Senecas that they decided he was worthy to take the place of a slain warrior, and adopted him as a member of their tribe. For several years Joncaire lived among the Senecas, hunting and fishing with them, learning their language, and endearing himself to the whole tribe. When at last he was freed with other French prisoners, the Senecas felt that they were saying farewell to one of themselves.

Now, at the Governor's command, Joncaire returned once more to his Seneca brothers and received a warm welcome. To please him, the Senecas were willing to free the remaining French prisoners in their villages. For the next few years Joncaire was busy among the Five Nations. He secured the release of prisoners and persuaded the League to make peace with the French. Helping him in this task were several

Jesuit priests who came to the old missions in the Genesee country and strove to make the Senecas the friends of France.

They were not entirely successful, however. The English traders were not idle, and Joncaire often found them at the council fires of the other tribes. English goods and prices were better than French. The Iroquois were willing to make peace with the French, but they would not promise to stop trading with the English.

So in the winter of 1719-20 Joncaire attempted to pull off a trick play. Carefully he talked with the chiefs during the long winter evenings in the long houses. He wished to dwell permanently among the Senecas, he said, but he wanted a house of his own. He asked for permission to build his house wherever he wished in the Seneca country. The Senecas saw nothing wrong in this, even when he asked for land upon the Niagara River. They had long refused both French and English the right to build a trading post on the Niagara, for they did not want the white men in their land. Moreover, they feared that such a post would cut the profits they made by carrying furs east to the white men. But if Joncaire, one of themselves, wished to build a house upon the Niagara River, that was simply granting the land to a Seneca, and they gladly gave him what he asked.

The English, however, took a different view when they heard of Joncaire's house. True, the "house", near present Lewiston, was a trading post rather than a fort, but they felt that it was dangerous to their trade. They sent a messenger at once to the Five Nations. At Seneca Castle (near present Geneva), the English reminded the chiefs of the League that the Iroquois had given their land to the King of England to protect for them. Now, against all promises, the Senecas had allowed the French to build upon that land. They warned that the French would send an army and the Iroquois would soon find their country ruled by the French. The Iroquois were alarmed, and readily agreed to send their chiefs with the English to order Joncaire to tear down the house.

When the French refused to do so, a great council was again assembled at Seneca Castle. There Joncaire rose and spoke. He accused the English of being concerned merely because they feared the loss of the Indian trade. He could not answer the claim of the English that they gave the Indians better goods and prices for their furs, but he spoke so well that the Senecas were swayed to his side. They promised, after all, not only to allow, but to protect his "house". The French were victorious, and the English left in disgust.

The English were not discouraged long. They looked about for a favorable place to locate a rival trading post, and they decided to try Irondequoit Bay. This bay was one of the principal gateways to the Senecas. From its head, trails led toward the southern hills where the Senecas had their villages. It was one end of a great portage which led to the Genesee River and a route to the Ohio River. At the foot of this bay, near present Sea Breeze, was the landing where Dononville's army had camped; but his Fort des Sablos had been burned over thirty years before. The "house" on the Niagara was scarcely a year old when a small party of traders, sent by the English Governor of New York, pushed through the wilderness and established themselves near the head of Irondequoit Bay. In Ellison Park today you may see a trading post built of logs that stands on the site of the stockade these traders built. It was called Fort Schuyler.\* They brought goods with them to trade both with the Senecas

and with the "far Indians" that came from the upper Lakes. But the expedition was not as successful as had been hoped, and after a few months the English returned to Albany. Though Irondequoit Bay was long talked of by both English and French as a good place for a fort or trading post, no further settlement was actually made. Instead, the English continued to offer better trade at Albany, and looked for a location nearer their settlements. This they found in Oswego, and there they established a trading post and fort, the first English stronghold upon Lake Ontario.

Meanwhile, on the Niagara, the French found that the better prices offered at Albany made many Indians prefer to trade with the English. Then, too, the French were always fearful that the English meant to attack Niagara, for they knew that no peace between French and English could last long. Joncaire and the French governor felt that the wooden storehouse should be replaced by a stone fort. So at the Iroquois councils, and especially those of the Senecas, Joncaire urged that the French be allowed to build a stone house that would not burn down and would be a safer place for goods and furs. Permission for this was harder to win than for the wooden storehouse, but at last presents and smooth words prevailed. An engineer from France planned a fortified stone house located at the point where the Niagara River flows into the lake. Two ships were built to carry the stone across Lake Ontario; and in 1726, the "castle" of Fort Niagara was begun. There it stands today, the oldest building in northern United States, west of the Mohawk River.

As the chiefs of the Five Nations watched the walls of the stone house rising, they began to fear its effect. The white man's power was growing, and who knew where it would stop? Even the Senecas were troubled. One of the chiefs spoke to Joncaire with prophetic words, "I perceive my death approaching. It is you and the English who come to destroy us."

During the succeeding years, many Frenchmen visited western New York. Joncaire came and went continually, soothing the fears of the Senecas regarding Fort Niagara, trading with them and constantly encouraging friendship for France. He sent two of his sons, Daniel and Chabert, to grow up among the Senecas and become members of the tribe. Lake Ontario was the great thoroughfare between the towns of the St. Lawrence and the wilderness outposts, and many a French canoe put in to camp along its shores. One of these Frenchmen visited both the lower falls of the Genesee andodus Bay. He reported the falls largely inhabited by rattlesnakes, and told how his Indian guides killed forty-two without receiving a single bite.

But while friendship grew between the Senecas and the French, the eastern tribes of the Iroquois League did not look so favorably upon the French. This was especially true of the Mohawks, who were friendly with the English. Senecas and Mohawks were the "older brothers" of the Iroquois - the most powerful two nations of the League. Now, to the west, the Senecas were friendly to the French, while to the east the Mohawks welcomed the English. Thus the League of the Iroquois was divided. The effect of the white man was seen in other ways as well. French and English goods took the

\* This should not be confused with Ft. Schuyler on the site of Utica or with Ft. Stanwix, which was renamed Fr. Schuyler by the patriots during the Revolution.



place of the old Indian articles. More and more of the Iroquois stopped their farming to become trappers of the white man's furs. Although the Five Nations had become the Six Nations by the addition of the Tuscororas, their power was declining. The western Indians, who once walked in fear of the mighty Iroquois, now ventured boldly through their territory. When the council fire was kindled, the chiefs no longer spoke of driving the white man out. Now they wondered whether French or English would make the best friends.

### B - Sir William Johnson

In the course of time Joncaire died, and his sons took over his work among the Senecas, striving always to win over the other tribes of the Five Nations. But now they found that more than English goods opposed them. William Johnson had come to the Mohawk Valley. Adventure had called this ambitious young man from Ireland to the management of his uncle's wilderness estate on the Mohawk frontier. There Johnson learned to know and like the Mohawks. He learned their language, took part in their games and sports, and even occasionally wore the Indian dress. Moreover, he conducted a just and fair trade with them. While many white traders sought to cheat the Indians, the Mohawks soon learned that they could count on the honesty of William Johnson. The fame of his fair dealing spread among the other tribes of the Iroquois and did much to increase their regard for the English. The Mohawks adopted William Johnson and made him a war chief of their tribe. Among them, he held the place that Joncaire and his sons enjoyed among the Senecas. As the years went on, he became a wealthy and influential man. His great house near Johnstown was the scene of many an Indian council where "Warraghiyagoy", as the Mohawks called him, spoke always of the chain of friendship that should bind the English and the Iroquois. After he was made Superintendent of Indian Affairs, he had the king's authority behind his words. So valuable to the English was Johnson's influence among the Iroquois that the king knighted him and made him Sir William Johnson.

Meanwhile, the French began to plant a string of forts along the Ohio River. The Governor of Virginia dispatched young George Washington to warn the French that they were trespassing on British soil. There, on the Ohio, Washington met one of Joncaire's sons who had been sent to that region to win the Indians to the French cause. The French had no intention of giving up their forts, for they wanted the Ohio-Mississippi route to connect their separated colonies of Canada and Louisiana. On the other hand, the growing English colonies would not remain shut in behind the Appalachians.

Soon the French and Indian War flamed along the frontier from Maine to Georgia. Many an Indian war party from Canada and the west aided the French and brought fire and slaughter to the frontier settlements. On New York's frontier were the Iroquois. Could William Johnson hold them to peace or would the Joncaires persuade them to follow the French, Sir William met the Five Nations at their great council fire at Onondaga and there they pledged their neutrality. The Mohawks declared their willingness to follow their white war chief, Sir William Johnson, into battle, and many a warrior from the other tribes joined them. But when the Iroquois saw the French again and again victorious, their

loyalty weakened. The Joncaires were always among the tribes, urging them to fight for France. When the English fort at Oswego fell there were five hundred warriors from the Five Nations among the Indian allies of the conquering French. Sir William was hard put to it to prevent the whole Iroquois League from going over to the French. Only the Mohawks remained faithful.

Then the tide of battle turned. The great English prime minister, Pitt, came into power, and under his leadership, the English colonies began to win. On the Ohio, the English took Fort Duquesne and re-named it Fort Pitt. On Lake Ontario, the destruction of Oswego was avenged by the capture of French Fort Frontenac across the lake, and a great expedition was planned to capture Fort Niagara. The chances of an English victory were so good that Sir William Johnson did not find it hard to enlist the Iroquois in the attack on Niagara. Even the Senecas of the Genesee Country, who had been most friendly to France, declared their willingness to help drive the French over the falls of Niagara. When the English and Americans assembled at Oswego, hundreds of the Iroquois came into camp to join them.

During the summer of 1759 laden boats toiled up the Mohawk River from Albany and Schenectady, carrying troops and provisions for the attack on Niagara. Over the portage, down winding Wood Creek to Oneida Lake, and out through the Oswego River to Lake Ontario they went. On the site of the ruined Oswego fort they built fortifications. Part of the army remained to guard against a French attack on the rear. The rest, with Johnson's Iroquois, embarked in small boats for the voyage along the Ontario shore to Niagara.

It was hard work transporting the laden boats, but between sailing and rowing, they reached Sodus Bay that night. The second night found them at Irondequoit Bay, and here the army spent the next day cooking food, for there would be little time for this when they reached Niagara. The next camp was at Braddock's Bay, which they named in honor of their commander, General Prideaux. This gentleman, in spite of his French appearing name, was an Englishman and probably pronounced his name in the English fashion, "Priddocks". At any rate, we may be sure that the frontiersmen so pronounced it, and as time went on "Priddocks' Bay" became "Braddock's Bay". So today poor General Prideaux' name can only be found upon the old maps of the region, and many of us wrongly think that our Braddock's Bay was named after the General who fell near Fort Duquesne. William Johnson was more fortunate, and the site of the next camping place, Johnson's Creek, still bears his name.

So at last the army came to Niagara. By this time there were nine hundred Iroquois among them, for the Indians had been joining Johnson at every camping place. The commander of the French fort took refuge behind his stout walls and prepared to fight it out. He knew that away to the west the French commanders on the Ohio and Lake Erie were stripping their forts of men to bring an army of French and Indians to his aid. If he could hold out until their arrival, the English might be defeated. So the siege went on. General Prideaux was killed and Sir William Johnson took over the command. Warned of the coming of the rescuing forces, he set an ambush for them on the portage road from the falls. That day, the

French Captain, anxiously looking toward the heights of Lewiston, heard firing, but so faint did it seem that he thought it merely a skirmish. When a letter came through the lines from Johnson with the news of the utter defeat of the French, he did not believe it. Not until an officer whom he had sent under a white flag to the English camp returned, would he believe that most of the French officers were prisoners in the English camp. Nothing remained but surrender.

Among the officers within Fort Niagara when it surrendered were the two sons of Joncaire. They watched the lilies of France descend forever from the fort their father had done so much to build. William Johnson had won. For as the Union Jack rose to the flagstaff, they saw the warriors of the Five Nations, even their Seneca brothers, ranged beneath it. So the French left western New York, even as they were soon to leave New France, to the English conquerors. While Johnson was busy at Niagara, English armies were occupying the Ohio Valley and marching up through Lake Champlain into the very heart of Canada; Wolfe was before Quebec. As Sir William Johnson journeyed back along Lake Ontario to Oswego, the Iroquois everywhere came to greet him and tell him of their friendship. Beneath the banner of England they hoped to find protection in the peaceful enjoyment of their lands for many years. But the day was not distant when the fertile Iroquois lands would look good to the pushing American settlers, and the British flag would no longer guard the Indians' interests.

# HISTORIC PLACES

1. Seneca Castle (or Kanadasaga). On Preemption Road, on the western outskirts of Geneva, once stood the Indian town where the great council about Joncaire's house on the Niagara River was held. You may still see an old Indian burial mound close by.
2. Fort Schuyler. This stockade, erected by the English-Dutch traders, has recently been rebuilt in Ellison Park.
3. Joncaire's "house" on the Niagara. If you ever visit Lewiston and cross the Queenston bridge to Canada, look along the road that leads down to the bridge. You will see the place where Joncaire built his wooden trading post in 1720.
4. Fort Niagara. If you drive north of Lewiston to the lake, you can visit the actual fort built by the French in 1726 to guard the fur trade. It was this fort that Johnson and the English captured in 1759.
5. Oswego. In Oswego today there is a modern fort, Fort Ontario. This is built very close to the place where the men left behind when the English marched against Niagara built a fort.
6. March against Niagara. Sodus Bay, Irondequoit Bay and Braddock's Bay are nearby places where Sir William Johnson and the English camped.

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## CHAPTER III

## Fifty Years of Change in the Genesee Country

A - The Genesee Country in the Revolution

It has been said that when England defeated France in 1763, she won a province and lost an empire. So long as there was danger from the French, the colonies clung to the mother country for protection, but once this threat was removed, Americans began to complain about many grievances and wrongs. For instance, they did not like the British protection of the Iroquois lands. Under the influence of Sir William Johnson, the great friend of the Six Nations, the British kept the Iroquois and other Indian lands for the Indians alone. A boundary line was drawn between the colonies and the Indian country from Canada to Florida; west of this line no whites were allowed to settle. Thus the colonists who had looked forward to settling in the lands they had won from France were bitterly disappointed. They did not care that the Indians were the real owners. They only thought how the English were keeping them from fertile lands. Another grievance was thus added to those which finally cost England her colonies.

The American Revolution rudely interrupted the peaceful life the Senecas had enjoyed on the Genesee during the years of English rule. The tribes of the Six Nations did not clearly understand the quarrel between King George and his American subjects. They only knew that Sir William Johnson had taught them loyalty to the king, who had sent them presents and protected their lands. Sir William was now dead, but they remembered the treaties of friendship they had made with him, and the fair dealing and just treatment he had always given them. On the other hand, there was often bad feeling between Indians and colonists. Settlers frequently pushed into the Iroquois lands in spite of the law. White border ruffians often murdered friendly Indians, including women and children. Thus it was not difficult for the English to persuade the Iroquois to take up the hatchet against the colonists.

The Genesee Country became the base for attacks on the New York frontier and raised both men and supplies for the British cause. War parties from the Seneca villages burned houses and killed settlers in the Mohawk Valley and terrified even Schenectady and Albany. In the safety of their own villages the Seneca women grew the crops which not only fed the Indians, but sent food supplies to the British army in Canada.

Therefore, in 1779, an American army was assembled at Tioga, in northern Pennsylvania, to carry the war into the very heart of the Genesee Country. Washington himself had carefully planned its march. In command he placed the able general, John Sullivan, with orders to destroy the Iroquois villages - every house, every field of corn, every orchard and fruit tree, anything that could give food or shelter to the enemy. The terror-stricken frontier must be made safe and the British weakened by the ruin of their allies.



Faithfully the army carried out these orders. The attempt of the British and Iroquois to stop the invaders failed at the Battle of Newtown (near Elmira). After that the discouraged Indians retreated slowly before the steady march of the Americans. Up along the east side of Seneca Lake, westward across the northern ends of Canandaigua, Hemlock and Honeoye, the smoke of burning towns and cornfields rose above the forest as Sullivan's army pushed through the wilderness. Indian women and children fled terror-stricken toward the safety of the British fort at Niagara.

At the head of Conesus Lake the Senecas tried to ambush the American army. But this failed when an American scouting party returning from a search for the location of an Indian town, surprised the hidden Indians. Most of the scouting expedition was killed or captured, but the alarm saved the main army. The Indians fled, and the Americans reached the village of Little Beard's Town (near Genesee) in safety. As they entered the village, they found the bodies of Lieutenant Boyd, the leader of the scouting party, and one of his men, named Parker, both slain by the maddened Indians. The tree beneath which these men were tortured and killed still stands between Leicester and Genesee. Sullivan burned this village with all its orchards and cornfields, but the inhabitants, hidden in the woods, escaped.

When the army returned to Pennsylvania, there was hardly enough food left in all the fertile Genesee Country to keep the Indians from starving. That winter was an especially hard one, and the suffering among the tribes was severe. Many of them only managed to live because of the fact that the English garrison at Niagara gave them food. Among the Senecas at this time was the white woman, Mary Jemison. Captured as a child in an Indian raid on her frontier home in Pennsylvania, she had been adopted into the Seneca tribe and had lived among them for many happy years. Now the coming of the white invaders forced her to flee from the burned villages on the Genesee, and with her children she made a scanty living at a deserted clearing on the river flats. Many of the Senecas never rebuilt their homes on the Genesee, but settled further west on Buffalo Creek. But as soon as they were able, they again raided the villages in the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys, burning cabins and scalping settlers in revenge for the suffering of the Genesee Country.

However, there were far reaching results of Sullivan's expedition, as Washington had foreseen. The march of Sullivan's army gave the new nation a claim to the Niagara when peace was finally declared. Had it not been for this expedition, the western boundary of New York State might have been the old Indian line near Rome, and we might today be living in part of Canada. Together with George Rogers Clark's march through the Northwest Territory, it prevented the possibility that the western boundary of the United States would be fixed at the Appalachians. These two expeditions helped to save the "west" for the United States.

### B - The End of Indian Ownership

After the peace with Great Britain, the question arose as to the ownership of the western lands the colonists had wanted so long. The Indians thought they owned the land, but both New York and Massachusetts claimed that the Genesee Country was included in the grants given them years before by the English kings. Finally each

state appointed commissioners who met at Hartford, Connecticut in 1786 and arranged a compromise. New York was given the right to govern the disputed territory, while Massachusetts was given the right to sell the land, once it had been secured from the Indians. This meant that the Genesee Country was part of New York State, but that the treasury of Massachusetts would get the money from the sale of land to settlers.

This question was hardly settled when land speculation began. Throughout the United States it was the practice for companies or groups of men to buy great tracts of wilderness land cheaply, with a view to selling them in small lots to settlers at a much higher price. Such were the plans of Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham who bought all of New York State from Seneca Lake to the Genesee River, together with 200,000 acres west of the river. This extra 200,000 acres had been secured by a trick, for the Senecas had refused to give up any land west of the Genesee. The story goes that Phelps then asked the Senecas to sell him enough land on the west side of the river for a mill. The Senecas, thinking it would be only a few acres agreed, only to find later that they had sold him a tract of land about twelve miles wide, and twenty-eight miles long! Whether this story is true or not, Phelps gave 100 acres of this land, at the upper falls of the Genesee, to Ebenezer Allan on condition that he build a mill at that place. This was long called the "Mill Lot". Ebenezer (nicknamed "Indian") Allan built the first mills in this region on that lot in 1789. That was the same year that George Washington became the first president of the United States. But there were so few people here that he could not keep either his saw mill or his grist mill busy. After a few years the saw mill was burned and the grist mill was washed over the falls. Today the 100 acre tract is but a small section of downtown Rochester, while the 200,000 acre tract is a large part of western Monroe County.

Phelps and Gorham soon found themselves unable to pay the state of Massachusetts. The Genesee Country was still a long way from "civilization" and settlement was slow. They were forced to sell most of it to Robert Morris, the man who had given so much money to the Revolution. He, in turn, sold it to a group of Englishmen. Because the chief of these investors was Sir William Pulteney, the land is sometimes called the Pulteney Estate. But the Phelps and Gorham Purchase is a more frequent name for this large section of the Genesee Country.

So the white man took possession of the homeland of the Senecas. The Iroquois had been gradually pushed out of their lands. Again and again, they had given up part of their land, thinking to hold the rest in peace and security, and again and again, the white man demanded more. After 1797, only a small amount remained to the once powerful Iroquois as Indian reservations, and the land companies even succeeded in cheating them of much of this in later years. The story of the Genesee Country is henceforth the story of the white settlers.

### C - Settling the Genesee Country

Scarcely had surveyors divided the land into townships and lots, than settlers began to make their way through the wilderness. Geneva, Canandaigua and Bloomfield had a few houses by 1790, and there was a tavern and store at the river crossing at Avon. On the shores of Seneca Lake a religious sect established a community. These people

were the followers of Jemima Wilkinson who claimed to be divine and called herself "The Universal Friend". To avoid their jeering, critical neighbors, they sought a home in the wilderness. The first wheat grown in the Genesee Country was that raised on their farms in 1789.

It remained, however, for an enterprising real estate agent to attract large numbers of settlers to the Genesee Country. When Charles Williamson was appointed to sell land in the Pulteney Estate, he made great plans for its development. He laid out towns and roads, built hotels and theaters, and tried by every means to bring settlers. Circulars were printed and sent throughout the East, telling of the beauty and advantages of the Genesee Country. Prominent citizens from Virginia to New England, and even in Canada, received letters urging them to buy Genesee lands.

Williamson staged fairs and horse races to attract attention to his huge subdivision. One of the most famous of these advertising stunts was held at the new town of Bath in 1796. A thousand acres of land was cleared for race course and fairgrounds, and a theater was built. Williamson invited gentlemen to bring their favorite horses to race against his "Virginia Nell", one of the most famous race horses of the time. Guides were stationed in all the principal cities to conduct the visitors through the forests to the "far-famed city.....in the lands of crystal lakes and memorial parks", as one of the circulars put it. So skillfully did Williamson paint the glories of his forest fair, that instead of the 2,000 expected visitors, over 3,000 sight-seers jolted over Indian trails and roughly built roads to crowd the little town of Bath.

Although "Virginia Nell" was beaten by "Silk Stockings" in the race, the fair was a rousing success. All the time, Williamson's salesmen moved among the crowds, selling a few acres, or a township, depending on the wealth of the buyer. The price of land rose from 25¢ an acre to \$2 and \$4. More than one citizen in the East complained of the dizzy craze for Genesee land that had seized the younger generation. One Pennsylvania farmer wrote to the newspapers that his son had been "to Bath, the celebrated Bath, and has just returned.....having spent his money, swapped away my horse, caught the fever and ague, and what is worse, that horrid disorder, which some call 'terra-phobia'" (land madness). When Williamson finished, the United States was distinctly "Genesee Country conscious".

Still there was much to be done. The great need of all newly opened country in America was roads. The first pioneers made their way over Indian trails, chopping down trees to make them wide enough for the passage of their wagons. They had no time or means to uproot the stumps, which remained in the way to upset wagons and trip horses and oxen. Brush was thrown across muddy places to enable wagons to pass, but this soon rotted and the next corner sank hub-deep in the mud. Towns made clearings in the wilderness, but between them were miles of thick, uncut forest, through which narrow, little roads wound in the shadow of the great trees. There were few bridges across the streams, and the settlers must drive their creaking wagons down the slippery bank and through the water of a fording place. If there was no place shallow enough for fording, they must float their carts across, and when the rivers were swollen after heavy rains, this was often a dangerous proceeding.



In those early days the door to the Genesee Country seemed to open to the south. So at least Charles Williamson thought when he built one of the first roads in the Genesee Country southwards toward the Susquehanna River in 1792. Many of the earliest settlers came into this region from the south and made the settlement of Bath a flourishing town. But in 1797 the Great Genesee Road was built from Utica to Canandaigua, and in the following years increasing numbers of settlers followed the old Indian route across the heart of New York State. Through the Genesee Country this road followed much the same course as does U. S. Route 20 today. That same year the first stagecoach service began over the new road. Travellers could now travel all the way from Utica to Geneva, nearly 100 miles, in the astonishingly short time of three days!

Gradually a road was pushed north from Canandaigua, as a few settlers turned off the Genesee Road toward the lake. Farms were cleared around Pittsford, and in 1796 the township (then called Northfield) had its first town meeting. About the same time ambitious plans were made for a lake port near the old Indian Landing at the head of Irondequoit Bay; no sooner had the first few buildings been erected before it was given the name of Tryon City. It was, however, short lived. Most of the lake trade chose the settlement of Charlotte at the mouth of the Genesee in preference to the long sail up Irondequoit Bay and Creek. In 1805 Charlotte became the official port of the Genesee region. Several miles up the river, near what is now the western end of Veteran's Memorial Bridge, a little group of settlers founded King's Landing, or as it was later called, Hanford's Landing. Here and there through what is now Monroe County, pioneer farmers were planting crops between the tree stumps of other small clearings.

At the falls of the Genesee, however, rattlesnakes and bullfrogs were the principal inhabitants. Genesee fever haunted its swamps and kept most settlers away. Ebenezer Allan's mills, on the west bank near the place where Broad Street now crosses the river, had fallen into ruin. His 100 acre tract had been purchased by Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, Colonel William Fitzhugh, and Major Charles Carroll in 1803. These men recognized the future value of its water power and felt they had made a good bargain when they paid \$1,750 for it. Today that would buy only a very few feet of the same land. Unlike Charles Williamson, with his eagerness to bring in settlers, those proprietors were content to let events take their natural course. The Genesee Falls had no press agent to promote their settlement, and as late as 1810 people were shocked at the waste of tax-payers' money when the state voted a bridge at the falls.

But the world was moving west. In spite of threats of war, all over the United States ox-carts were creaking and jolting - into Ohio and Illinois, into Kentucky and Tennessee, and even into the backwoods around Rochester. After eight years of ownership, the proprietors of the 100 acre tract divided their tree-covered land into village lots and offered them for sale. The first family to occupy a dwelling house in the "village" was the Scrantom family, who celebrated the Fourth of July, 1812 by moving into a cabin on the site of the present Powers Building.

The village thus begun grew slowly. War had been declared with England, and Rochester was too near the Canadian border for comfort.

Indeed, its few inhabitants were subject to scares as cruising British warships occasionally appeared at the river mouth. Little progress was made in clearing land. A few cabins huddled around both ends of the bridge. Streets that appeared so bravely on the map were actually a few muddy cart tracks, winding around tree stumps and finally disappearing in the unbroken forest. Marshy ground and swamps gave the settlement the nickname of "Mudtown" and caused the fever which so often afflicted its scanty population. Deer came to the deer-lick but a few yards away, and wolves were so numerous that a reward was offered for each one killed.

Thus, the first settlers at Rochester left the increasing comforts of the East behind and began again the struggle to build new homes on the frontier. It was the same struggle which had been started by the first colonists who landed on the American shores nearly two hundred years before. They were a part of a great westward march that was to end only when the Pacific was reached; and during those years the growth of their settlement was to be part of the growth of all America.

## HISTORIC PLACES

1. Sullivan's March. There are several markers along the highways to show where once Sullivan's soldiers passed. If you go to Elmira, you may see the monument marking the site of the Battle of Newtown, where the British and Tories were defeated. Sullivan burned Seneca Castle, near Geneva. Nearer by, there is a monument in the village of Honocoyo marking Sullivan's route around the head of Honocoyo Lake. There is also a marker on the west side of Conesus Lake. On the highway between Leicester and Genesee, you may see the site of Little Beard's Town and the tree beneath which Boyd and Parker were killed. Many years later their Bodies were brought to Mt. Hope Cemetery, and there you may see their graves.
2. Mary Jemison. In Letchworth Park stands a statue of Mary Jemison as she looked when she first came to the Genesee. Nearby is a cabin which she built for one of her daughters. Mary did not actually live at Letchworth Park, however, but about five miles north of it.
3. Phelps and Gorham Purchase. The old Preemption Road, on which the site of Seneca Castle is located, was once part of the eastern boundary of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase. It was later found that the surveyors had made a mistake and that the real boundary lay further east.
4. Tryon City. A marker at the entrance to Ellison Park shows the site of this early settlement.
5. Hanford's Landing. In Lake Avenue, across from Kodak Park, you may see a little old cemetery. In this are buried some of the settlers of the hamlet of Hanford's Landing. If you walk down Hanford Landing Road to Maplowood Park, you will be standing on the bank above the site of the old settlement.
6. "Indian" Allan. In the wall of the building of #3 Graves Street is a tablet telling that Allan's mill once stood there. The millstones from this mill may be seen in the Court House.
7. The Scrantom cabin. A tablet on the Powers Building marks the place where the first log cabin in the One Hundred Acre Tract stood.
8. Colonel Rochester's House. A tablet on the Bevier Building of Mechanics Institute, Spring and North Washington Streets, marks the site of Colonel Rochester's house.

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## CHAPTER IV

The Birth of a CityA - Flour and the Canal

The years following the War of 1812 were crowded with activity for the American people. The "Era of Good Feeling" had set in; prosperity seemed to be everywhere, and energy and self-confidence characterized the nation. The tide of westward migration was stronger than ever, and as it surged further and further inland, it pushed the frontier to the Mississippi and beyond. The old frontier lands now became settled country, raising crops of corn, wheat, and other products to send eastward in exchange for the manufactured goods of the new eastern factories. Soon carts and wagons crowded the rough roads until even the famous Cumberland Road could no longer carry the growing commerce between East and West. Great prosperity awaited the region which could provide a better and cheaper trade route than the old toilsome one across the mountains.

It was to the building of such a route - the Erie Canal - that Rochester owed her birth as a city. Even in Indian times the natural path to the West had been by the Hudson-Mohawk valleys to the Great Lakes. But the portage around Niagara Falls was much more difficult for bulky grain shipments than it had been for the light canoes of the fur brigades. For this reason far-seeing men urged that a canal should be built through the comparatively level territory south of Lake Ontario from Lake Erie to the Hudson. In a lucky hour for Rochester, it was decided to carry the canal across the Genesee River at the falls where the village stood. Almost immediately boom times set in at the muddy little town, for everyone saw that the canal promised a great future for the settlement. It meant that the wheat of the rich Genesee Country would be brought to Rochester (or Rochesterville, as it was called then) to be ground into flour by the mills at the falls and then shipped east by the canal.

However, not even the most hopeful citizen thought the canal would be completed for many years. "We will never see it, but our children may", was a favorite saying. Indeed, so great were the difficulties of building this first great American canal, that many parts of the state, including New York City, predicted that the foolish project would never be finished. A canal 300 miles long was unheard of, either in Europe or America. Those early engineers had no steam shovels or drills to break the rock, and every mile of the canal had to be dug with pick and shove. When they began they did not even have a cement that would harden under water. Yet they pushed on, often inventing means of construction and building structures that have proved of great value in later engineering. The great stone aqueduct at Rochester, carrying the canal across the Genesee River; the long series of locks, like a flight of stairs, climbing the high ridge at Lockport; and the great onbankment over Irondequoit Creek which carried the canal above the surrounding country, were some of the engineering feats of these pioneer builders.

The speed with which the canal was built hastened Rochester's growth. The plan of opening each section as soon as it was finished gave Rochester an early chance to develop the flour trade.

By 1822, although the aqueduct was not finished and the section of the canal west of the Genesee scarcely begun, Rochester could send flour by canal as far east as Little Falls. The next year some of the first boats into Albany were laden with 10,000 barrels of flour from the Genesee mills. Thus even before the Erie Canal was completed, Genesee Valley wheat had become famous for the fine flour it produced, and Rochester was busy grinding and shipping that flour to the cities of the East.

In 1825, a few months before the canal was finished, Rochester entertained a famous visitor. General Lafayette, who had helped the Americans during the Revolution, had returned to visit the United States. Of course, everyone wanted him to see the great Erie Canal. He travelled from Lockport to Rochester in a gaily decorated boat. What excitement there was as Rochester welcomed the hero! Flags waved all along the canal bank and the people cheered loud enough to drown out the saluting guns. There was a great banquet in his honor. Not until Lafayette left by coach for Canandaigua, did the town quiet down again.

A few months later there was an even more exciting event. On October 26, 1825, the villagers of Rochester heard cannon roaring the message along the towpath from Buffalo to New York that Lake Erie water had entered the last section of the canal. It was the signal for a celebration in every town and village in the state. Rochester resolved to outdo them all. The great day, of course, was when Governor DeWitt Clinton arrived, on his way over the canal from Buffalo to New York. Although it was raining, the entire population was at the banks of the canal to greet the governor. As the fleet, headed by the "Seneca Chief", approached, the town's militia companies fired a salute. Blocking the way across the aqueduct lay the boat "Young Lion of the West", a name which Rochesterians fondly hoped applied to their village as well as to their boat.

From her deck came the question, "Who goes there?"

"Your brothers from the West, on the waters of the Great Lakes", answered the "Seneca Chief".

"By what means have they been diverted so far from their natural course?"

The crowd cheered as the answer came, "By the channel of the Grand Erie Canal."

The curious "Young Lion" asked again, "By whose authority, and by whom, was a work of such magnitude accomplished?"

Proudly the "Seneca Chief" replied, "By the authority and by the enterprise of the patriotic people of the State of New York."

The crowd cheered louder than ever and waved their umbrellas wildly. The "Young Lion of the West" made way, and the "Seneca Chief" docked. Her passengers, the reception committee, and as much of the crowd as could find room proceeded to church to give thanks. A huge dinner, with many courses, followed at the leading hotel, and that evening a grand ball concluded the greatest celebration Rochester had ever seen. The longest canal in the world had been completed in a little more than eight years.



Compared to the present Barge Canal, this "Grand Canal" was a very small affair indeed. It was only four foot deep and forty feet wide. The boats that plied its waters were not larger than present day tugs. Except at the locks, there was no stone work to hold up the earthen banks, which often crumbled into the water. Along the dirt towpaths, plodded horses and mules, towing the slow canal boats. Even the fast passenger boats, or packets, averaged little more than three miles an hour. But small though it was, the importance of the Erie was enormous. Its narrow waterway bound East and West together as freight and settlers poured over it. Boats followed one another in an almost continuous procession, and there were traffic jams at the locks of the Erie long before anyone dreamed of such a thing in Rochester streets. That little canal made New York the Empire State; it made it possible for New York City, rather than Philadelphia, to become the greatest port in the United States; and it made the village of Rochester into a city.

With the Erie Canal Rochester became the commercial center of the Genesee Country. Rival settlements on the Genesee soon sank to second place and were finally absorbed by the growing city. Even the settlement of Carthage on the eastern side of the lower falls, with easy communication by river and lake with Montreal, Kingston, and Oswego, could not compete with the advantages the Erie Canal gave to Rochester. During the first two decades the canal boats constantly brought new settlers from the East to make Rochester one of the fastest growing towns in the United States. Manufactured goods from the East were brought by canal to be sold by Rochester storekeepers to the farmers of the valley. At one time nearly half the boats on the Erie were owned by Rochesterians, supplying employment for many of the citizens, and making Rochester famous as one of the principal canal towns in the state. Less than ten years after the Erie Canal was finished, Rochester received its charter as a city.

The first Rochester aqueduct was a one-way thoroughfare, and there were always long rows of boats tied up at either end waiting their turn through. Almost daily fistfights occurred between rival boat crews for the right of way. Passengers viewed the bustling town from the decks (cabin roofs) of the trim packets. In 1837 a wider aqueduct was begun which may still be seen beneath Broad Street bridge carrying subway trains instead of canal boats across the river. In those old days, Child's Basin, at the western end of the aqueduct, was always filled with boats loading or unloading. The shouting boatmen and constant coming and going on the decks made it a lively place indeed.

The chief article of this thriving commerce was flour. Indeed, it was one of the principal shipments on the entire canal. Rochester was located in the wheat raising country of the Genesee Valley. It was supplied with abundant water power from the falls, and now had the best transportation means in the country. No wonder the city soon became famous for flour mills. They were her first "factories". At the main falls, and at the rapids near the aqueduct, mills in ever increasing numbers lined the river. Mill-races - a sort of canal - led the water to the great wheels, turning several sets of millstones in each mill. Night and day the groaning and rattling of the great gears that carried the power from the wheels to the stones sounded with the roar of the river.

The millstones, huge affairs, from three to seven feet in diameter, were in sets of two. The upper one turned against the stationary lower stone, and both of them had sharp cutting edges ground in them. When these grooves became dull, the miller had to "pick" or recut his stone. The best millstones were made from buhrstone, a rock imported from France and Belgium. The task of making and setting these heavy stones in place was a very difficult one and called for a great deal of skill. The great Aqueduct Mills, at the west end of the aqueduct, had ten sets of such stones and room for six more. This mill was also famous for its elevator machinery which carried the wheat from the canal boats at its doors to every part of the mill. This was the forerunner of the machinery used years later in the great grain elevators of Buffalo and Minneapolis. Some of the old mills which made Rochester famous still stand today on Water Street and Mill Street, but their millwheels have long been silent.

In 1834, when Rochester became a city, it was the greatest flour manufacturing center in the world. Its mills were capable of producing 5,000 barrels of flour and using 25,000 bushels of wheat each day. The fertile Genesee Valley could not always supply enough wheat to feed the hungry millstones and in 1828 the first wheat had been imported from further west. The Genesee Valley Canal was built to bring more wheat down from the upper valley. But, although Genesee wheat remained the choicest grain, more and more of Rochester's wheat was brought by the Erie Canal from the upper lakes. Here it was ground and again sent on its way east to New York and all parts of the world. In 1847, Rochester millers boasted that their flour supplied the household of Queen Victoria in far-away London.

#### B - The Coming of the Railroads

During the 1830's railroads were being built in many parts of the United States to serve the needs of people who did not have the great Erie Canal. Soon even Rochester, with her advantages as a great canal port, desired to try the new form of transportation. However, the first railroads in the Genesee Country did not dream of competing with the canal and were thought of only as a means of connecting the Erie with distant points. Rochester's first railroad, the Carthage Railroad, was built to connect the Erie Canal with the commerce of Lake Ontario. For a long time flour had been shipped across the lake to Canada. Many of the lake vessels came up the river as far as Carthage Landing, near the eastern end of the present Veteran's Memorial Bridge. The railroad carried freight and passengers from the eastern end of the aqueduct around the falls to this point where the boats waited. This Carthage Railroad used horse power, not steam power. Its one-car trains, looking much like long stagecoaches, rolled merrily along the rails behind trotting horses.

A few years later the first steam engine was brought to Rochester - aboard a canal boat! It belonged to the Tonawanda Railroad, which in 1832, had been given the right to lay track between Rochester and Batavia. This steam engine was a tiny wood-burning affair, sporting a huge smokestack out of all proportion to the rest of it. What curiosity and excitement there was in Rochester when that engine was set upon its rails! And when it chugged away with the first regular passenger train to Batavia on May 3, 1837, the whole city was out to see it off and lay bets as to whether it would arrive or not! The next year the Auburn and Rochester Railroad broke ground for a railroad south-eastward, and in 1840 its



first train ran from Rochester to Canandaigua.

Soon there were railroads connecting Rochester with both Albany and Buffalo and enabling speed-loving travellers to go all the way across the state in 25 hours. Instead of one continuous railroad, however, the distance was covered by several short lines, which made necessary a constant changing of trains. One of the most annoying of these changes was in Rochester, where the stations of the two railroads were at opposite ends of the town. People had to hire cartmen to take them and their baggage from the end of the Auburn line to the beginning of the Tonawanda. Rides on the railroads were full of peril in those days. The strips of metal on the top of the wooden rails were always turning up at the ends and threatening to derail the train. Traffic over one-way tracks before the use of the telegraph presented the danger of suddenly meeting a train from the opposite direction on the same line of track. Fortunately the trains were not often capable of enough speed to make these encounters fatal. The usual extent of the damage was the necessity for one train to retrace its course to the first siding.

In spite of the growth of railroads, Rochester's chief means of transportation was still the Erie Canal. Packet boat owners might complain that they had fewer passengers, but the great business of the canal was hauling freight. No one dreamed that the railroad would replace the canal at this task. For a long time the state forbade the railroads to carry freight, but it soon became clear that it was too expensive anyway to ship very far by rail. Passengers might jump on and off trains, but freight could not be constantly loaded and unloaded. It was not until the small lines combined that the supremacy of the canal was threatened. Gradually the railroads made agreements to cooperate in running through trains over the roads from Albany to Buffalo, but the greatest step toward making the railroads a success was the formation of the New York Central in 1853.

### C - Life in a New City

Most of the cities of the United States at this time were growing so rapidly and were still so new that they hardly looked like real cities to travellers from the old towns of Europe. In the 30's and 40's, or even later, pigs and chickens wandered freely about Rochester's streets. Nearly every family kept a cow pastured in a vacant lot. The city had stern laws against allowing these animals loose in the streets, but many a careless owner found his cow calmly strolling about town. The mud of the early settlement days long remained in the streets. A particularly bad section in front of the Court House was the source of many a popular joke about travellers who had disappeared, horse and all, in its depths. Even when pavements were introduced, only a few short sections could boast them. These first pavements were mostly of cobblestone, while sidewalks were of wood or brick. As for street lights, oil lamps in the center of town gave so feeble a light that strangers wondered why the city bothered with them at all. It is said the mayor was once asked that very question, and replied it was so people would not run into the lamp posts and hurt themselves.

There was no city water system and people had to rely upon wells.

Most people had their own pumps in their yards or woods. A few had the modern convenience of a pump in the kitchen - but the public pumps in various parts of the town were popular gathering places. People who were up to date had Franklin stoves to heat their houses, while less progressive citizens were content with fireplaces. Wood was the usual fuel, for coal was unknown in Rochester homes until 1848, and even after that it was very rare.

The question of sewers and sanitary conditions did not bother people very much in those days. Epidemics were frequent but no one knew what caused them. One of the most deadly of these diseases was cholera. Nothing seemed able to check its spread, and in one summer it took 118 lives. Today cholera is unknown in Rochester.

In this period before 1860, the people of Rochester were largely New Englanders. Most of its inhabitants had followed the first settlers from Massachusetts and Connecticut. Although there was a sprinkling of English, Scotch, and Germans, together with many Irish who had come to work on the canal, the town took its character from its Yankee majority and prided itself on being New England in the west. For many years the fewest inhabitants of all were native-born Rochesterians, for the town had grown so quickly that it had almost reached the dignity of cityhood before the children born in the first log cabins were grown-up.

Although the days of wild animals and Indians were over, these settlers were still in a sense frontiersmen - pioneering in the building of a city. As such, they were chiefly concerned with the business of getting a living and rejoiced in the number of barrels of flour they produced. They were proud of the swift growth of their town and of the many canal boats docking at their wharves. Rochester was soon one of the fastest growing towns in the United States, and its inhabitants were well satisfied with themselves and inclined to boast a bit. But so were most other Americans.

Every Rochesterian worked hard and expected other people to work hard, for there was so much to be done in the busy, bustling town that it seemed as if there were not time enough to do it all. Twelve hours was not an unusual day's work, although in the 1830's clerks were beginning to ask for the ten-hour day. There was no such thing as the Saturday half-holiday, and the millers did their extra bookkeeping on Saturday nights. Holidays, when the mill wheels were still and the stores closed, were often used to take inventory. Only Sunday was a day of rest. The whole town went to church, and not even the rowdy canalers dared disturb the Sabbath morning quiet. Nevertheless even on that day the post office opened in the afternoons, and to the horror of the more godly part of the population, the businessmen collected their mail and spent the evening reading and answering it.

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Yet in the midst of all this concern with trade and business, there were other sides to life in Rochester. True to their New England heritage, citizens of Rochester were early interested in education. The first public schoolhouse of 1814 soon grew into many district schools in various parts of the city. But as in most places in the United States in the early nineteenth century, those public schools were not free schools. On the contrary, parents had to pay to send their children to these schools. There were also

many private schools which were generally thought to provide better instruction than the public schools. Most people who could afford it sent their children to these private schools. In 1841, however, Rochester was one of the first cities in the country to establish free public schools, supported by a general tax on all the inhabitants of the city. This meant that all children could attend school, regardless of their parents' ability to pay, but it did not mean that all children did so. There was still no compulsory education law and many children were sent to work instead of to school.

For a long time, the free public schools only provided a grammar school, or, as it was called, common school, education. People considered that this was enough for most children. Until 1857, when a free high school was established, those who wished to continue their education had to go to private academies in the city. In 1850, the first classes of the University of Rochester were held in an old hotel on West Main Street.

This interest in education was not limited to schools. There were no public libraries such as we have today, and so various groups of young men formed societies to buy books and establish libraries for the use of their members. As the purpose of most of the young men was the "improvement" of their minds, most of the books they bought were learned and weighty volumes - novels were not considered quite proper in those days. Many of these societies, or associations, also had lecture courses which were open to anyone who cared to buy a ticket and which usually attracted large numbers to hear some serious speaker. Young ladies were not allowed membership in these associations, but their services in raising money for them by fairs and strawberry socials were gratefully received.

Rochester also had its less serious moments, and when the town did go in for a good time, it was in no half-way measure. Elections were times for parades and feasting, as well as frequent fights with the opposite party. "Training Day", when the militia was supposed to assemble for military drill, was much like a circus. Under the old law, every able-bodied man was supposed to report once a month with musket and uniform. But the uniforms never matched and most of the guns were really wooden sticks or rakes. Bystanders lay bets as to which way the company would march at the command, "Right, wheel", and the whole town, including the "soldiers" themselves, had a day of fun making.

Once in a while a real circus came to town. For those who thought this not quite proper, there was the waxworks at the "Rochester Museum" which was both entertaining and educational. There, for the small sum of twenty-five cents, one might see the lifelike forms, in wax, of such distinguished individuals as George Washington, Joan of Arc, or Robert Bruce. Or if people would rather have their pleasures out of doors, there was Mt. Hope Cemetery which in 1844 was listed as one of the principal places of amusement. As wealth increased, disapproval of the theater lessened and people went to occasional plays and concerts. One of the most outstanding of these events was the famous Jenny Lind's song recital at the new Corinthian Hall on Corinthian Street in back of Reynold's Arcade in 1851. The hall was packed for two concerts by the the "Swedish Nightingale," and people filled the nearby streets to hear her.

But the greatest thrill came with the famous leap of Sam Patch into the Genesee Falls. Although it happened in 1829, it furnished a story that was told for years. Sam Patch was a wanderer who had made himself famous all over the country by jumping off high bridges, topmasts of ships, or any dizzy height where there was water below to land in. His motto, "some things can be done as well as others," was quoted by everyone. One successful jump into the Genesee Falls had encouraged him to repeat the feat from a platform twenty feet above the edge of the main falls. That 13th of November was one day when little work was done. All Rochester, as well as crowds from the surrounding towns, thronged to see the thrilling sight. Excursion boats came even from Canada and Oswego with eager sightseers. Breathless with excitement, the crowd watched Sam climb upon the platform. Hardly anyone could hear the speech he made, but everyone saw his body suddenly plunge forward into the deep water of the gorge. Alas! The 13th was indeed an unlucky day. No Sam appeared above the water, and as the minutes passed, it became evident that this was not one of the "things that could be done as well as others." The next spring Sam Patch's body was found near the river mouth and was buried by a few neighbors in the old cemetery at Charlotte. But for years the story of Sam Patch contributed almost as much to the fame of the Genesee Falls as the great flour mills themselves.

Indeed, with the change of a few words, Sam's motto might apply to the thriving city itself - "cities can be built as well as farms can be cleared." A flourishing, commercial city, sending her products to all the world, had been built out of the few houses of a backwoods settlement. By 1860, the fifteen inhabitants of 1812 had increased to over 48,000. The citizens of Rochester proudly noted that this increase during fifty years was greater than the growth of either New York or Philadelphia during the entire colonial period.

Rochester had been born in an age when cities grew far more rapidly than they had in colonial times. All over the United States other cities were growing up and quickly increasing in size. The frontier movement was now not only one in which farms were cleared, but one in which trade routes were opened and cities built. And Rochester was one of the most important of these new cities because it was located at a great four corners - the crossing of the Genesee River and the Erie Canal.

## HISTORIC PLACES

### 1. The Erie Canal

On the wall of the City Hall, a bronze tablet reminds us that the Erie Canal once passed through the heart of Rochester where Broad Street is today.

### 2. The Aqueduct

The second aqueduct still stands under Broad Street today.

### 3. Lafayette

A marker on the Lincoln-Alliance Bank Building on Exchange Street records Lafayette's visit to Rochester in 1825.

### 4. Carthage

A giant boulder at the east end of the Veteran's Memorial Bridge marks the site of Carthage - once Rochester's rival, and one end of the Carthage Railroad.

### 5. The First School

In front of the Education Building on Fitzhugh Street is a marker showing that the first school building in Rochester once stood there. The first public high school also occupied the site, and the Education Building itself was built and long used as a high school building.

### 6. The First Library in Monroe County

The site of the Northfield Library Company is shown by a marker on the corner of the Pittsford and Toby Roads, about one and a half miles south of the village of Pittsford (then, in 1803, called Northfield).



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