

ROCHESTER HISTORY

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ROCHESTER'S MID YEARS: CENTER OF GENESEE COUNTY LIFE: 1854-1884

By BLAKE MCKELVEY

In the course of its growth Rochester has passed through a succession of characteristic stages, each with its own particular orientation. After several false starts, during frontier days, the falls settlement permanently established in 1812, became a canal port within a decade and rapidly emerged as the first boom town of America. By the mid-thirties the canal port had become the Flour City, and the next two decades witnessed the community's attempts to shoulder increasing responsibilities. The first burst of adult cityhood was marked by an importation of new leaders, fresh institutions, strange people and customs from the East and from Europe, greatly enriching the community life. The city was not, however, turning its back upon its Genesee Country heritage; rather the Flour City was strengthening itself by outside contacts for the assumption of regional leadership.

A new leadership was fortunately at hand in the late fifties when the Genesee wheat fields began to fail and rival milling cities were booming in the West. Fruit and seed nurseries had already formed the basis for a new horticultural era in the valley, and, while fruit orchards spread along the lake, Rochester's expanding nurseries soon won for her the happy title of the Flower City. The mid years from the late fifties to the early eighties saw an increasing harvest of Genesee Country wealth, cultural as well as economic, by the city at the falls. The canal was only gradually replaced as the chief freight artery, and the river remained

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the dominant power source until cheap coal arrived in the late seventies. But it was not until after the mid-eighties that Rochester was to free itself from dependence upon water privileges and to outgrow its provincial character, developing the highly technical industries and international horizons of our day.

Prominent among the influences of Rochester's mid-years was the Civil War with the economic trends it helped to create. It is a curious fact that the war was a result, in part at least, of the tendency of communities such as Rochester in all parts of the country to cultivate their provincial characters and reject compromise or adjustment with distant communities. By the eighties the regional patterns and boundaries were to be at least partially broken down, but the immediate effect was to draw communities together for a united stand, politically and culturally, against supposed enemies.

The Antislavery Issue Backfires

Historians have long debated the causes and character of the Civil War. Some have urged that it should be re-named the War for Southern Independence, others have called it the War Between the States, and more recently it has been described as the Second American Revolution. It would be most instructive in this connection if we could examine thoroughly Rochester's part in this bloody conflict. What carried her vote for Lincoln in 1860? What prompted her to send thousands of young men to battle, and what did the young men think they were fighting for? What were the results for the Flower City? These are a few of the questions which call for an answer, and while they are too difficult for a hasty treatment, we must note some of the facts they call to mind.

In the first place, a candid study of the antislavery movement in Rochester forces the conclusion that this was not the issue which inspired Rochester boys to take up arms. For two decades local abolitionists had argued and petitioned without arousing any very wide-spread protest in Rochester against the South's peculiar institution. The city was hospitable to humanitarian appeals, and numerous homes afforded refuge to fugitive slaves, but the support given to William C. Bloss's *The Rights of Man*, to Myron Holley's *Rochester Freeman*, and to O'Reilly's *American Citizen* was so grudging that each of these antislavery publications folded up in rapid succession. A few years later Frederick Doug-

lass, the Negro editor, was more successful, and his *North Star*, soon renamed *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, enjoyed a circulation of 2,000 or more in the late forties, although it must be recalled that much of the support came from friends in England. Douglass and other abolitionists were given a courteous hearing in Corinthian Hall, Rochester's largest auditorium of that day, but when the Liberty Party and later the Free Soil Party canvassed for votes, few were found in the Flower City.

Lewis Selye, who apparently functioned as Rochester's political boss at the mid-century, considered that his learned friend, Lewis H. Morgan, had his head in the clouds when he served as co-chairman of a public meeting convened at the Court House in the summer of 1855 to protest against the Kansas and Nebraska Act. It was all right for forty-five Rochester clergymen to petition Congress against the extension of slavery, but neither Democrats nor Whigs in Rochester saw much to be gained by an agitation of that issue.

However, the appearance and local success of the Know Nothing Party in 1854 and 1855 considerably altered the situation. The national anti-Jackson alliance, known as the Whig Party, was finally crumbling, and local Whigs hastily stampeded to the newly organized Republican Party in order to wrest local control from the Know Nothings and save it from the Democrats. Under their new Republican banner the old Whigs and the abolitionists together with some Free Soil Democrats won a local plurality in 1856, but the Republican prospects for the future were threatened by the chance that the Democratic and Know Nothing forces might unite. William H. Seward, the Upstate Republican leader, sought to attract liberty-loving German and Irish voters as well as the One Hundred and One Per Cent Americans in the Know Nothing ranks by a staunch appeal to idealism, but his famous Irrepressible Conflict speech, delivered at Rochester in October, 1858, almost blasted Republican chances. Many conservative old-time Whigs hesitated to follow such leadership, and the succeeding election showed a reduced Republican plurality. Samuel G. Andrews, Rochester's Republican Congressman, stepped in at this point with a speech on "The Encouragement of American Labor by the Protection of Our Industries." Just what, if any, Rochester industries he had in mind is not clear, but the merit of shifting away from the slave issue was not to be doubted.

The predicament of the Democrats was even more serious. Northern Democrats could not surrender entirely the Free Soiler's claim to a share in the West, while the southern Democrats had been driven by self-righteous Northerners into an intransigent defense of King Cotton and his negro slaves. The great party built by Andrew Jackson was at last split asunder in the campaign of 1860.

On the Republican side, Abe Lincoln was unknown to Rochesterians before 1858 and was scarcely recalled in the summer of 1860 when he snatched the Republican nomination from the grasp of Seward, the local favorite. Nevertheless Lincoln carried Rochester as well as the three or four surrounding counties in the fall of 1860. But his victory was not of land-slide proportions, being a majority of but nine hundred in a community which had not gone Democratic in a national election since the days of President Monroe. It would not be far wrong to say that Rochesterians were still in 1860 voting against King Andrew and that Abe Lincoln just happened to be his opponent.

During the weeks following the election, Rochester gradually became aware of the rapidly approaching crisis. News of the secession of South Carolina and her sister states aroused conflicting emotions. The Democratic editor of the *Union and Advertiser* could not help remarking on the folly of electing a sectional candidate such as Lincoln and questioned whether such an inexperienced leader could cope with the situation. But this paper wisely featured reports of Unionist meetings in the border states and lauded Seward and Weed when they advocated moderation and compromise. When in January some abolitionists attempted to stage a rally in Corinthian Hall the local Republican authorities neglected to protect them from an opposing mob, and later meetings were held in the less conspicuous Zion Colored Church.

Rochesterians of both parties turned out in the early morning of February 18 to cheer Lincoln on his roundabout journey to Washington, but the next day they read in their papers of the inauguration of Jefferson Davis as president of the Southern Confederacy. No local editor or political leader, either Democrat or Republican, hastened forward with a program of action, although it was admitted even by the Democrats that Buchanan was bungling the job. More concern was shown over the local ward elections and over the demand for a reduction in canal

tolls and a speedy completion of the task of the canal's enlargement. Gradually, however, the suspense over Fort Sumter's fate drew Rochester's attention to the national crisis.

The local press followed events in the South with increasing concern during March and April. Criticism of Lincoln continued, but not on the grounds of his intransigence. Even the *Union and Advertiser* came out with demands for stern action. The attack on Fort Sumter roused a wave of indignation throughout the North, firing the blood of the young men of Rochester as of all parts of the country. When Lincoln called for 75,000 troops, the only criticism voiced in Rochester was to the effect that a larger force of at least 200,000 men would be required to meet the emergency. If war was desired by the South, it should be given a vigorous war, urged the *Union and Advertiser*, whose editor wished to see an immediate call for a special session of Congress so that the Democrats there could have their say.

The Nightmare of the Civil War

There are times when local history seems overloaded with meaningless, antiquarian detail; and then again it can bring home to the student some well known facts with vivid clarity. We all know how desperately costly the Civil War was in man power, but who has not become hardened to the impersonal message of statistics. Let us turn to the records of the 5,000 recruits who marched out of Rochester, a city of 50,000, during the war and let us follow them through the history of their various engagements, for here we will get a new slant on the Civil War. Take the so-called Rochester Regiment, built around the Rochester Light Guard, with Professor Quinby, on leave from the University, as its colonel. It was mustered in just a month after Lincoln's first call for troops, most of its 780 men having enrolled for but three months. The service was later extended to two years, and before their time was up 465, or three-fifths of the regiment, had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Their first experience was at Bull Run where thirty-eight were killed or wounded—just enough to take the humor out of the report that Rochester's Congressman, Alfred Ely, who had driven out in his carriage to see the fun, was among those captured by the Confederates.

The serious nature of the war became more and more evident as the months passed. Calls for additional troops were frequent throughout 1861 and 1862, and Rochester companies marched off to join more than a dozen different regiments. Finally in September, 1862, the 140th Regiment was mustered in, comprised largely of Rochester men. News of the frightful losses suffered by Rochester troops in the battle of Antietam had reached the city just the day before the 140th paraded to the station, and it was a tense crowd that cheered those lads off to their three years of bloody warfare.

We need not be surprised to discover that Rochester was concerned over the conduct of the war. The battle of Bull Run prompted a public meeting at the City Hall where indignation over the poor equipment of the troops was expressed. Rochester merchants were soon contending successfully for army contracts for boots, clothing, knapsacks, horses, etc., and they were not slow to protest when the frequent shifts in command held up expected orders or payments. As the number of Rochester's wounded increased, the problem of securing their transfer to the Rochester City Hospital or to St. Mary's Hospital became a constant concern of Congressman Freeman Clarke. Fortunately much of his congressional mail has been preserved, and we see that he was called upon to use his influence to secure transfers, promotions, or special leaves of absence, and to oppose or modify the draft.

Indeed it was the draft, accepted today without question, which roused the most bitter feeling during those dark years. The farming communities, formerly most hospitable to the abolitionists' appeal, now protested the depletion of their labor supply. The city complained that its boys had gone off in great numbers to enlist where high bounties were offered. Rochester itself was not slow in providing such bounties, for the city borrowed \$100,000 in 1863 to provide each man called by the draft with \$300, either as a reward for serving or as a fund to be used in hiring a substitute. By March a total of nearly \$600,000 had thus been expended by the city authorities. Fearing that the city's funds might not suffice, the prosperous Third Ward raised a separate fund for bounty purposes and was thus doubly certain that none of its sons would be forced to fight unless they were ready and willing to do so.

But if the city called upon its taxpayers and its wealthy merchants for funds for bounty purposes, it called upon the increasing number of

Irish and German residents to send their boys south to fight for their new-found liberty. The hostilities engendered by the Know Nothings of a few years back were readily forgotten, and many an Irish and German lad marched with his Yankee buddies from Rochester, or from Brockport, Geneseo, or Canandaigua, to defend a poorly understood concept of union and to maintain the authority of the central government. Their sturdy loyalty gave real encouragement to the distraught community.

The war must have frequently appeared like a frightful dream, totally unrelated to the real affairs of the Flower City, but for four years it was impossible to shake off the nightmare. What must have appeared to the frayed nerves of Rochesterians as the logical climax to their worries was the rumor that spread through the city in December, 1863, of an impending invasion from Canada. The near frenzy which broke out was probably due less to a genuine fear of destruction than to an emotional revolt against the frightful stupidity of the war. It was therefore with a genuine feeling of relief that news of Lee's surrender was received and the surviving troops were welcomed back.

One important local result of the Civil War was the development of a new political affinity between Rochester and its agricultural hinterland. Many Boys in Blue from up the Valley, unsuited by army life for quiet village ways, followed their Rochester comrades to the Flour City. The struggle together had welded a new kinship, and a new loyalty to the Republican Party, and succeeding decades were to see the Genesee Country stand almost as one man politically, long after the struggle which united them had been relegated to the history books. So staunch was the party's dominance that it required a split within its ranks or a crisis in the community's affairs to oust it from power, and that only occurred in local elections, as when the Democrats captured the Council in 1873, holding it for several years, or again when the Republican Mayor Parsons refused to rotate his office and ran as an independent—holding the office for fourteen years. But the Republicans never failed to carry the city in national elections during the period under review. Much of the strength as well as much of the stubborn conservatism of Rochester's cultural pattern can be traced to this traditional loyalty and to the fact that it was shared from the start by the city's Genesee Country hinterland.

Rochester's Economic Revival

The Rochester which welcomed its returning soldiers was scarcely a hopeful city. The war, in spite of army orders, had brought years of stagnation to the community. The population growth had slumped off, touching the lowest percentage of increase known to the city prior to our own decade. The great Genesee flood of March, 1865, the news of the assassination of Lincoln, and the crash of Western Union stock combined to make 1865 the climax of several dark years. But the return of company after company during the summer months, and the parades with which they were honored, provided a more cheerful atmosphere. Spirits revived, building ventures were undertaken, and within a decade the population had jumped from 50,000 to 81,000, the area of the city was doubled, the number of its buildings increased from 8,000 to 14,000, and their total valuation mounted from \$15,000,000 to \$53,000,000. A half dozen lines of horse-drawn street cars branched out in all directions from the Four Corners, still the undisputed center of the city.

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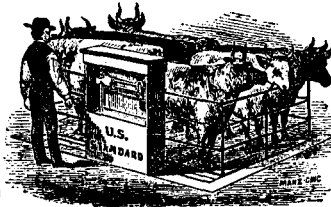
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In this remarkable revival, Rochester was profiting, together with a score of other cities, from the accelerated industrial development of the country. Indeed, several of Rochester's western rivals of earlier days—Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis—had already grown far beyond the Flower City, while Detroit, Cleveland, and especially Chicago were stepping ahead so rapidly that all Rochesterians could see were their tracks! But Rochester's growth was at a more healthy pace, and the city did not suffer so painfully from the economic breakdown in the seventies and again in the nineties.

Rochester's place on the main transport routes was now assured. The long fight for the enlargement of the canal had finally been won, admitting boats of 150 tons in 1862, and in that single year the state had collected nearly \$5,000,000 in tolls. It was a stable and cheap freight road, but more and more shippers, impatient to reach their markets, turned to the speedier railroads, which by this date had successfully captured most of the passenger traffic.

The network of the Iron Horse was expanding as never before. In the Far West great railroad giants were spanning a sparsely settled continent, but New Yorkers were content to double-track their main lines, build tributary roads, and improve weak links. Rochester emerged as a strategic railroad center during the seventies. Long freight and passenger trains, coming over its double track connection with Albany, Boston, and New York, were broken apart here; one section proceeded over the Lockport and Niagara Falls branch to Lewiston and across Upper Canada to Detroit and on to Chicago; another part headed for Buffalo, Cleveland, and possibly Cincinnati or Chicago. The connection with the upper Genesee Valley and Pennsylvania, supplied in the fifties by the Erie Railroad branch through Avon, was reenforced in the seventies by the building of a railroad in the abandoned bed of the Genesee Valley Canal, while still another road, known as the Rochester and State Line, finally tapped the Pennsylvania coal fields and reached Pittsburgh in the early eighties. Rochester as a main junction was becoming so crowded with cars and shifting engines that it was found necessary, by the close of our period, to elevate the tracks at a cost of nearly \$1,000,000 in order to make it safe to drive around the expanding city in a carriage.

The millers of Rochester were eclipsed during this period by those of St. Louis and finally by Minneapolis, the new Flour City on the falls of the Mississippi. The introduction of steel rollers in place of the old millstones produced a better grade of flour from the western spring wheat than Rochester could make from the winter wheat of the Genesee. Rochester millers introduced rollers, but discrimination in freight rates on interrupted shipments favored the western millers. The local output continued to increase slowly, due chiefly to improved machinery, but Minneapolis and St. Louis, and later Buffalo and other cities, sped far ahead.

Now and again local mills were abandoned. It was quite fitting that the great Aqueduct Mill, at the northwest end of the aqueduct, should be sold in 1865 and converted into an industrial "Bee-Hive." There a score of small manufacturers rented a room or two and installed machinery for the production of various newly-patented articles. As one venture failed and left town, or succeeded and moved into larger quarters, new ventures moved in, and the Bee-Hive continued until 1880 to symbolize the diversified industrial pattern that was becoming characteristic of Rochester.

The two second-line industries of the fifties, clothing and shoes, had been greatly stimulated by the war-time demand for ready-made supplies. Growth and specialization continued throughout this period, the shoe factories turning to women's and children's shoes after the war, and the clothing factories developing a name for quality in men's suits. The sweat shops of the sub-contractors, where perhaps twenty-or-so recent immigrants of all ages labored in crowded houses, characterized this industry, but a few large concerns, employing several hundred hands in four- and five-story factory buildings had already been established on St. Paul and Andrews streets. Such firm names as Adler Brothers and Company, Stein, Bloch and Company, Michaels, Koch and Company, had already appeared. By the eighties Rochester stood fourth among the clothing manufacturing cities and third among those making shoes.

Several other industries continued from earlier years, notably the iron foundries and tool shops, many of which now grew into stable concerns, producing a variety of patented machines, notably the Gordon

Grain Binder, the Howe Scales, the Cunningham Carriages, the Gleason gears, and not to be forgotten the \$100,000 common pin factory. Several of the nurserymen of the previous period were expanding their holdings on the outskirts and laying out attractive subdivisions amid their older plantings on the city's borders. Many of these plots were taken into the city by the annexation of 1874, thus permitting the extension of street, water, and sewer service to the new residential communities. Western Union stock-holders, at least those who were not forced out by the crisis of 1865, fattened on the expansion of succeeding years, until control passed into New York hands after Hiram Sibley retired from its presidency in 1870. The brewing industry prospered under the leadership of several skilled Germans, while in scores of small shops hundreds of cigar makers were increasing their output from 7,000,000 in 1873 to 17,000,000 a decade later.

The Kimball cigarette factory across the river from the Public Library, was opened for business in 1881, and many of Rochester's great industries of the next half-century were already modestly established. Bausch & Lomb had made their start in the late fifties and had struggled along in a small way until the development of a hard-rubber rim and a power grinder in the late sixties enabled them to erect a small factory out on St. Paul Street where their great plant stands today. Neither Taylor's instrument works nor George Eastman's factory amounted to much during this period, but like many other struggling enterprises they were looking to the future. The inventor's itch had invaded hundreds of tool shops, and many a poor mother had to take in boarders in order to eke out the family's existence while the bread winners fooled around with batteries, vats of crude Pennsylvania oil, and curious contraptions of all sorts. The technological age was already dawning, and Rochester was to see its first telephone, its first electric lamps, and its first gasoline engine before the end of the seventies, though the real development of all three of these fields lay in the future, just as the flour and canal days seemed already in the past.

Before turning from its economic developments we must not forget that the city's sixteen banks and investment houses had extended their financial control over the enterprise of the Genesee Country. At the same time a newly emerging canning industry was undertaking to

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preserve and market the increasing output of the fruit orchards and vegetable farms along the lake shore and up the valley. It was not by chance that Curtice Street, named after Rochester's Blue Label Ketchup manufacturer, dates from the end of this period. Economically Rochester was still vitally interested in cultivating the resources and the markets of the Genesee Country.

A Growing Civic Responsibility

The rapid territorial expansion and population growth of these years presented the city authorities with several new problems and with some aggravated old ones. Undoubtedly the problem which most aggravated the city authorities was the old, old one of mounting costs. The budget had long been kept below the \$1,000,000 mark, even during the war years, but by the close of the sixties it had topped that figure and could not be contracted below it again. Mayor Clarkson, elected on an economy platform in 1873, helplessly watched the city's expenses mount above \$3,000,000 during the next year. It is only fair to add that much

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of this outlay was of an extraordinary character—for the water works, the city hall, the Free Academy, and other permanent improvements which had long been postponed by earlier advocates of economy.

The city was in fact expanding and could not tolerate retrenchment. In 1877, when Mayor Parsons demanded a 25% reduction in all departments, he was only able to draw in the city's belt to \$1,100,000 a year; soon even the larger girth of 1874 was not enough, since the demand for new and better municipal services seemed unlimited. Strangely enough, the dire predictions of the advocates of economy never materialized, and the growing city easily shouldered old debts and reached forward to make new ones!

It was not that the city craved debts, but its citizens did demand increasing services. A succession of Citizens' Committees were formed during these years, sometimes to enforce economies, but more frequently

to compel the adoption of some long-delayed improvement, such as the public water system, a free high school, a non-political board of health, or an independent police department. There was, however, a strong desire to transfer these improvements and services from the hands of the Common Council, with its thirty-odd ward politicians, to the control of independent commissions. Thus, the Public Works Commission, the School Board, the Police Commission, the Board of Health and later the Executive Board served theoretically as non-political, long term, semi-expert citizen boards—a device characteristic of the seventies which aimed at the same ends as those of the city-manager system of our day: honesty, efficiency, and the removal of local functions from the arena of national politics.

These devices aimed at good government, not simply cheap services. Thus the private waterworks company which had played along with the politicians for two decades without bringing fresh water to Rochester, was suddenly thrust aside when its shoddy construction was revealed, and the Public Works Commission built a much more costly but much better system, tapping Hemlock Lake for drinking water and pumping river water into the fire hydrants in such force and abundance that the fire hazard in the city was cut in half.

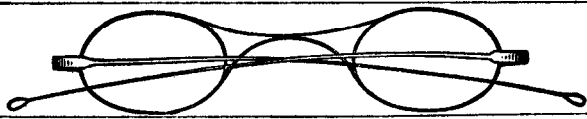
The city was in fact growing to the point where it was able to provide public services of which its citizens could be justly proud. The police department, organized under a Commission in 1865, had become something of a model by 1875 when seventy uniformed patrolmen and ten officers and detectives provided effective protection. The long period of dissatisfaction with the fire department, even after the purchase in the sixties of steam engines and horses to race them to the fire, was ended with the opening of the Holley waterworks system in 1874, and Rochester became known as the city where the fire fighting equipment could throw a five-inch vertical stream to a height of 256 feet. The combined waterworks had cost nearly \$4,000,000 by the close of the seventies, but criticism by some taxpayers was already giving place to a just pride in the high merits of the system.

No other department made such a large investment, although what appeared like huge sums were expended on the streets and the sewers. The results were scarcely satisfactory in either case, however, chiefly

because of the lack of a plan for these improvements. The flood of 1865 destroyed most of the earlier pavements and sewers within the central area, but the destruction was not sufficiently widespread to prompt the adoption of a new and scientific plan. Instead, the old unsatisfactory sewers were patched up, the old pavements were repaired, and the day of reckoning was postponed. The twenty-one miles of sewers of 1861 were increased to sixty-one miles by 1875, but, as the city's streets measured 130 miles by the latter date, the inadequacy of the sewer system could not be doubted. More serious than their absence on sparsely settled streets was the clogging and flooding of poorly constructed sewers in all parts of the city. A topographical survey, made by experts in 1876, was the basis of a scientific plan, but the estimated cost of \$30,000,000 doomed the proposal, for the assessed valuation was then but \$37,000,000—a gross underestimate, however.

In the same way the unsatisfactory nature of macadam streets and the cost of stone paving checked street improvements. In the early seventies the city did provide a sprinkling service to lay the dust on its dirt roads, and instituted garbage collection to take the place of the pigs then finally expelled from the streets. Plank road companies were organized to improve the highways leading out towards neighboring villages, and two new bridges were built, one at Clarissa near the southern border of the city and the other in the north at Vincent Street, later renamed Smith Street, where Bausch & Lomb were already building their factory. There were of course other problems too numerous to discuss here, but we must note two of them in passing—the recurring demand for additional hitching posts, and the superabundance of dogs whose constant barking was a public nuisance.

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The Cultural Veneer

The growing city enjoyed a ripening cultural heritage, largely free from new or extraneous influences. Nevertheless, there were two factors which tended to modify earlier folkways: the increasing number of poor immigrants on the one hand, and the growing economic stability of the city's institutions on the other. The freshness, emotional intensity, and idealism which had characterized many of the community's cultural expressions during earlier periods was less in evidence as Rochester's social life became institutionalized. At least one observer described it as a would-be genteel community of joiners—characteristic of America in the Gilded Age.

This was notably the case in the field of religion where the most obvious development was the increasingly substantial character of the churches. Nineteen new Protestant churches were established between 1865 and 1881, increasing their number to fifty-five. The Unitarian Society was included in this number, and its pastor as well as Rabbis Landsberg and Moll of the two Jewish synagogues, were admitted to the ministerial fellowship. Hostility to Catholicism, a real factor in the '50's, was much restrained after the war, and the right of the inmates of the various local institutions to the weekly ministry of a pastor of their own faith was at last extended to Catholics. With the creation of the Rochester Diocese in 1868 and the arrival of Bishop McQuaid, the four Irish, one French, and five German Catholic churches of Rochester likewise entered a period of growing stability, as St. Mary's Hospital, several orphan asylums, many parish schools, Nazareth Academy, and Holy Sepulchre Cemetery indicated. A tendency to prolong the pastorates of both Catholic and Protestant churches, further contributed to the stability and conservatism of Rochester's religious life. Both a Young Men's Christian Association and a Young Men's Catholic Association were organized during these years, and rooms were opened where the young men were encouraged to "improve themselves in literary, musical, aesthetic, gymnastical and social exercises," although the equipment available was less extensive than this list of activities suggests. As yet there was no hint of the institutional church, so-called, or of the social gospel, two influences which were to inaugurate new trends in many urban churches a decade or so later.

The schools likewise carried on in the tradition of the preceeding period with few vital changes. In spite of the building of the Free Academy, the ten years following the war have been described as the Apathetic Decade in public school developments. New buildings had to be opened or rooms rented to accommodate the increasing school population, but the dominating desire was to keep the costs down. The limited appropriations by the council frequently failed to equal the necessary bills, and in 1880, when the outlays reached \$186,000, it was found necessary to draw on the State's allowance for 1881. The tendency to widen the curriculum had barely started in the public schools, although several private business and technical schools now appeared, pointing a new trend in urban education. The girls' private schools still flourished, and two or three academies for boys struggled through a few seasons during this period, but the earlier dominance of the private schools had passed.

Even the University, Dr. Anderson's School, as it was sometimes called, was still struggling for the means of subsistence. Anderson and Sibley Halls were opened on the new twenty-three-acre campus on the eastern edge of the city, but the lack of an endowment and the enrollment of an average of 150 to 160 students during the seventies troubled President Anderson and his eleven fellow faculty members. The old classical tradition still held strong, although Chester Dewey and Henry A. Ward provided the nucleus of a scientific faculty which had to be content with a basement laboratory through the sixties. However, the substantial, steadfast character of President Anderson carried the institution through its trying years into a period of greater leadership. Meanwhile 440 Rochester boys attended its classes before 1883, and 181 of its 790 graduates by that date were local lads. Many continued their studies for the ministry, some of them in the Theological Seminary located in Trevor Hall on East Avenue. There was still a quaint rural and denominational character about these institutions, much as though they were located in one of the placid villages up the valley rather than in the thriving city at the falls. Indeed the University and the Theological Seminary helped to tie Rochester to the Genesee Country from whose villages these institutions drew most of their students and to which their graduates returned as pastors, lawyers, teachers, doctors, or occasionally men of affairs.

While the city forged ahead in material growth, its cultural yearnings were for the simple values of the past. When, at the end of the period we are considering, Charles E. Fitch, editor of the leading Rochester newspaper, addressed the Livingston County Historical Society at Avon, his subject was "Rural and Urban Life" and his theme was the superior values of the rustic home over the life of the city. In similar vein, George M. Pratt wrote in 1875, "Rochester is not to me the place it was—everything is so changed—nearly all my friends of the early days are slumbering in Mount Hope or have moved to other places." He found most delight in taking a train to Canandaigua and there hiring a carriage for a drive through East Bloomfield, Lima, Geneseo, and other valley towns where the old familiar scenes remained unchanged. Such were the sentiments of many older Rochesterians, some of whom still contented themselves with a quiet and mannerly existence within the shady premises of the old Third Ward.

There is little evidence that the fresh currents that were beginning to stir American thought in the late seventies had as yet reached Rochester. The lyceum lectures, in Corinthian Hall, continued through a part of this period, but an examination of their roster of speakers reveals that they presented much the same bill-of-fare as in pre-Civil War days—the only noteworthy exception being George William Curtis, the liberal New York editor, who in the early seventies had led the reform wing of the Republican Party. The popularity of these lectures as well as their vitality was declining, while the fees demanded were boosted in some cases to \$300 for a single lecture. One or two stormy nights could deplete the yearly revenue of the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Association.

The support of the Athenaeum's library was thus a precarious one. Finally in 1871 the library had to be moved from its convenient rooms in Corinthian Hall to quarters over the Rochester Savings Bank. Its stock of books, formerly kept remarkably up-to-date, had increased from 19,000 to 21,000 by 1876, but the new acquisitions did not include some of the more significant books of the period. With the disintegration of the Athenaeum lecture series, funds for the library's maintenance were hard to find, and the old library was finally closed in 1876, its books falling into the hands of Mortimer F. Reynolds, who made them

the nucleus of the Reynolds' Library, opened a decade later. Meanwhile the books of the district school libraries had been gathered into the Free Academy Building and organized as a Central Library. But the many duplicates of old children's books rarely attracted adult readers.

Indeed Rochester's facilities for the cultural enjoyment of its adult population may be said to have reached an all-time low by the end of the seventies. A man like Lewis H. Morgan must have had frequent surges of loneliness as he walked about, musing over his researches, afraid to mention the Darwinian theory to his good friend and pastor, the Rev. Dr. McIlvaine. Possibly in the exclusive gatherings of the Pundit Club the discussions maintained a high intellectual character, but even here we look in vain for evidence that Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, or the pioneer realists of Russia and other European nations were mentioned. Neither Karl Marx nor his theories appear to have been discussed prior to 1886 when Professor Morey read a paper on Scientific Socialism, but the tariff issue was argued pro and con on frequent occasions, and the doctrine of evolution was examined from various angles by three different members—two of them hostile—before the end of the period. It is most interesting in this connection to note a laudatory article on Charles Darwin in a small serial publication issued by graduates of the Free Academy in 1882—apparently the younger generation, then as now, did not share the restraints of their elders in approaching new theories!

There were of course some breaks with the dominant cultural pattern, notably that of the Powers Art Gallery. When Daniel W. Powers bought the old Eagle Hotel in 1863 for use as a business block he already had dreams of a much more elaborate structure, and within a decade the Powers Building was being constructed around and over the Eagle building so that the new building was ready for occupancy almost before the old one was demolished. Meanwhile self-made Daniel Powers, resident in the charming Pitkin house at 474 East Avenue, had developed the hobby of collecting works of art, and shortly after the completion of his Powers Building he converted the fifth and sixth stories into a sumptuous art gallery. Artists today may look back with some doubts at the taste and selection displayed by Powers and his agents as they gathered paintings and statues from all corners of the globe. But the gallery

stirred local pride in its day, and quite possibly this cosmopolitan assortment of art treasures, as they were advertised, may have helped to free many Rochesterians from some of their provincial traditions.

One of the positive forces working toward new cultural trends was the increasing wave of German and to a lesser extent Irish immigration. Over one-third of the city's population was foreign born in 1875, and thousands of American born children shared the cultural heritage of their immigrant parents. Many were already well-to-do, respected citizens, but their tastes for music, the theater, gymnastics, beer and pretzels, and out-door and fraternal activities contributed a new spirit to the city's life.

The Rochester Driving Park became the center of much of the freer social life of the community. There a grandstand seating 10,000 people accommodated Rochesterians, many of whom placed a bet on a favorite horse or baseball club. Bicycle exhibitions, agricultural fairs, traveling circuses, boating regattas, and occasional picnics at the beach or at Mount Hope contributed to the popular diversion during the summer months, while ice-skating on the canal, sleighing races on East or Lake avenues, roller skating in indoor rinks, and the gymnastic, ritualistic, or musical activities of the nearly one hundred clubs and societies of 1880 extended the amusement season through the winter months. The theater finally began to overcome deep-seated prejudices in February, 1879, when *Pinafore* with its irresistible humor was first played in Rochester. Not until this year would the street car companies delay the departure of their last cars from the Four Corners until after the last act of the play was finished.

There was something relaxing and therefore almost evil about these new social customs in the eyes of many of the older citizens, but there was nothing much that could be done about it. The immigrants were crowding the naturalization office eager to procure their citizenship papers. Thus 1,170 filed applications in 1876, an unusually high figure, probably because of the approaching elections, but the average during the late seventies was well over five hundred a year. Leading Irish and German citizens were winning their way into the City Council and eighty Germans served on that body during the period. We are not sur-

prized therefore to see that the Council directed the police to cease their efforts to keep the public squares clear of picnics on the Sabbath.

In spite of the activities of Susan B. Anthony the women of Rochester were still largely confined to their stuffy Victorian homes. The simplicity of the earlier days had given way to ornately decorated houses, where mementoes of every fleeting fancy accumulated, until the rooms became cluttered with hundreds of knickknacks, most of them trimmed with satin. A few young women escaped for a brief clerkship in store or office, while among the poor thousands found work in the sweat shops of the clothing contractors, but woman's time was still divided between the kitchen, the nursery, and the parlor. The American Woman Suffrage Association, organized in 1869, secured some important reforms in the laws affecting a woman's right to own property and control her children, but when Miss Anthony and several associates in Rochester's Eighth Ward cast ballots in the election of 1872, they were hauled into

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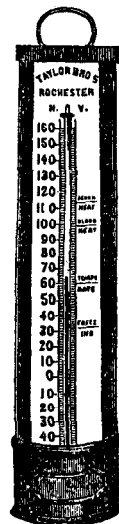
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court for a breach of the peace. There were as yet no women's clubs as we know them today, although women controlled or co-operated in the management of thirteen benevolent organizations listed in the City Directory for 1880.

The word "union" still suggested the slogan of the Northern Armies to Rochesterians of the seventies, but a few labor organizations had appeared. The movement was still chiefly of a benevolent society character, although real labor unions functioned throughout these years among the railroad men, machinists, and typographical workers, almost the only groups which had as yet won the 11-hour day. It was not until the mid-eighties that the growth of the American Federation of Labor brought an aggressive unionization movement to Rochester. Peck did not find it necessary to mention the labor movement in his semi-centennial history of the city.

Rochester's Semi-Centennial

When in 1884 Rochester celebrated the semi-centennial of its incorporation as a city, few of its citizens could recall clearly the early village and boom-town days. It was time that a history of Rochester was written, and two were soon under way. They marvelled at the great progress the city had made in a half-century and congratulated the community upon its many fine achievements. As we page through Mrs. Parker's book or William F. Peck's fat volume we cannot help marveling in our turn at the transformation that has since taken place. Very few characteristic features of that period remain with us today. Not only have we grown four times in population, more than tripled in area, and increased many fold in substance, but our tastes seem to be centuries apart, and we can only with difficulty recognize these odd folks of the 1870's as our ancestors.

It is well to observe in closing, that there was scarcely a feature about the Rochesterians of the early eighties which we would characterize as modern. Their romanticism; their rustic provincialism; their love for a sort of petticoat trim on their houses, furniture, and even their literature; their care for idle form and petty detail in art, in historical antiquarianism, and in many social and economic respects as well—all

these characteristics strike us as strangely old-fashioned today—which is a popular way of dismissing the past in a country where the worship of ancestors has but few devotees. But Rochester of the late seventies, strange as it appears to us, was typical of the America of its day, a period which has been characterized as the Gilded Age. We do not wish to be hypercritical in our judgments, nor will we wax romantic and look back with nostalgic yearning to those horse-and-buggy days when only one in five of Rochester's houses had water closets. But one feature which we must not overlook in our summary was the dynamic vitality, which, in spite of an apparently placid exterior, was constantly seeking new industrial and cultural outlets. The citizens were looking ahead with optimism, for the most part, and we can learn much of their character by a glance at some of the prophecies ventured in 1884 concerning the city of 1934.

Naturally enough most of them predicted what they as individuals desired. Daniel W. Powers saw the business center still at the Four Corners, anchored there by the Powers Building. The Superintendent of the Electric Company predicted that telephones would be in universal use. The Superintendent of Schools predicted that the High School would by 1934 have been accepted as a true and essential part of the system of public education. D. M. Dewey predicted that "most of the paintings now supposed to adorn our parlors will have been banished to the attic." Susan B. Anthony predicted that women would vote, hold office, and stand as the unquestioned "peers of men." The Rev. James B. Shaw predicted that all would worship in one temple and that there would be nothing to mar the beauty or waste the strength of that great church. Rabbi Lansberg, member of the Reynolds Library Board just being formed, predicted that "the most imposing building in our city in 1934 will be the Reynolds Library, which will not only contain a complete collection of books from all departments of knowledge, but will be used by many hundreds of laborers and their families. . . . Fine concerts and lectures will attract large audiences on Sunday afternoons and evenings." Mayor Parsons predicted that Rochester would expand to include Brighton village and would extend to Lake Ontario and Irondequoit Bay; would have outgrown Albany, Detroit, Providence, and Washington, and would equal Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Newark, and Cleveland.

These few extracts from the local prophets of 1884 are sufficient to indicate that Rochester was full of optimism, particularly in the matter of material growth. Only one man, Dr. W. H. Platt, Rector of St. Paul's, thought he saw some unfortunate consequences from this material growth. He alone saw the struggle for existence becoming intense and more and more hopeless for individuals, thus driving all into great combinations which would assume control over all activities and energies from the bankers down to the bootblacks; the trades and professions would be overcrowded, the relations of capital and labor out of equilibrium, with machinery displacing men both in shops and on farms; and after the exit of man as the social unit, all moral and religious influences would depart, since corporations could have no religion, and the state would have to govern by force. But even Dr. Platt saw a ray of hope that by 1984, another fifty years beyond, "Iconoclastic science will unmask the false god and reveal the true one" and supposedly the ills which Rochester had suffered from the corporation and the machine would then be driven from the land.

We could score these ten prophecies very quickly today and find that they averaged fairly high, but the curious fact is that even where their predictions have been realized, it has not been exactly as they imagined it. Only in the expectation of rapid and large change were they accurate, yet the very fact that they looked forward with optimism to change and growth was one of the strong features of their character.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The illustrations used in this issue are reproduced from the *Rochester Directory* for various years within the range of Rochester's Mid Years.