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Rochester's Part in the Civil War

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To recapture the atmosphere of Rochester in the Civil War period, one should pause briefly at the west corner of Main and Front Streets. Looking north at the row of low buildings, most of them over a hundred years old, one readily pictures the line of horses and rigs hitched along the curb. It is easy to imagine the clatter of hoofs and wagons on the paving stones that covered Main Street in that day and to feel the surge of bustling pedestrians who then crowded Rochester's sidewalks from daylight to dark and long after. Flickering gas lights, turned on at dusk along Main and other principal streets, afforded a cheery welcome to travelers on late trains steaming into the city at grade level and to canal boatmen driving wearily in along the towpath.

A couple of young men in blue uniforms, leaning idly against the railing on the south side of Main Street bridge were perhaps watching a boat cross the aqueduct a short distance upstream. They remind us of the tragic reports of violence that sped silently along the wires overhead to the telegraph office in the Reynolds Arcade. There, weeping wives gathered to hear the latest news from the battle front a few hundred miles to the

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south. There, too, the reporters of three local dailies scribbled notes for the next morning's second page where most of the war news was printed in closely packed columns.

Despite its sense of suspended excitement, there was little glamor in the Rochester scene of a century ago. A small city of less than 50,000 residents, it suddenly received a call, as the 20th city in the Union, to supply an unending stream of recruits and a steady flow of shoes and other items for the army's use. Young men lately arrived from Ireland, Germany or Great Britain and the sons or grandsons of old settlers alike heard the call. In their joint response they learned a new loyalty to the flag and a new sense of kinship with each other. It was this re-birth of national unity, this rekindling of devotion to the democratic ideals of freedom and equality, that supplied the war's greatest triumphs. It was because Lincoln's faith in the Union enabled Americans, North and South, to transcend the frightful carnage of battle and the hatreds it sowed, that we pause to commemorate the Civil War today.

The Outbreak of War

Never before, warned Isaac Butts in the *Union & Advertiser*, had the citizens of Rochester faced issues of such trenchant importance as those in the election of 1860. Earlier political contests had favored or curbed local partisan ambitions, without seeming to exert any clear-cut influence on the community's normal development. Rochesterians proudly considered themselves citizens of a young democracy destined to enjoy a great future. They were exploiting some of the commercial and industrial advantages of a rich continent, but the implications of a national economy were only vaguely surmised. They shared in the cultural efflorescence of the Northeast without either comprehending the significance of new ethnic cleavages in their midst or recognizing the divergent regional trends within

the country at large. Lincoln's campaign, pledging to halt the expansion of slave territory, had stirred bitter hostility in the South which in turn threatened to secede.

Yet the election of 1860 did not differ greatly in Rochester from previous contests. Lincoln carried the city with a clear majority of 975 votes out of a total of 7893. Much relieved, Isaac Butts pronounced the margin indecisive and promised that the vote would be reversed in the next election. The gravest danger, he declared, was that Lincoln's financial program would precipitate a panic. Apparently the slave question had not been decisive, for a state amendment granting state suffrage to Negroes had attracted less than half the Republican votes and lost in the city by 1629. The Rev. James B. Shaw of Brick Church saw this reluctance to grant democratic equality in the North as a sign that the South would be permitted to solve the slave problem as it chose, with God as its sole judge. True enough, agreed the *Union*, but more positive assurance would have to be given to the people of the South, and quickly, lest they follow a few desperate men eager to effect secession.

A conciliatory spirit pervaded the community. The *Democrat*, moving slowly toward a willingness to compromise, accused the *Union* of a deliberate attempt to play up the bogey of civil war. The more radical *Express* urged courageous action in line with the results of the election and the dictates of conscience. A Day of Fasting and Prayer, January 5, 1861, was observed locally, as in many parts of the country, by fervent pleas for tolerance and forbearance in face of news that several states in the deep South were already following South Carolina into secession. All factions in Rochester were impatient for the retirement of Buchanan.

An attempt by a group of forthright abolitionists to stage a convention in Corinthian Hall precipitated a local crisis. Alert aldermen debated the propriety of banning the meeting as an

untimely affront to the South, yet took no action. When a banner calling for "No Compromise with Slaveholders" appeared across the front of the Arcade on the morning before the convention, a group of leading citizens gathered to weigh the relative merits of a free expression of opinion and considerate community restraint. The banner came down without a struggle, but the crowd of five hundred who met in Corinthian Hall the next day proved less tranquil. Neither Miss Susan B. Anthony nor her friends, Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton of Seneca Falls and the Rev. S. J. May of Syracuse, were able to command a hearing. Finally the police, by dimming the gas lights, adjourned the meeting.

Many citizens lamented the discourtesy displayed and the infringement of civil liberties, but few spoke out in support of the abolitionists or defended their attempt to hold such a meeting during a national crisis. The convention reopened the next day without disturbance in the less conspicuous quarters of the African Zion church, recalling the peaceful and poorly attended sessions of the abolitionists in earlier years. Miss Anthony continued her effort to stage conventions across the state, a propaganda stunt designed to commit the Republican party to a strong stand on slavery. A few months later this intrepid reformer returned to her father's farm near Rochester, sick at heart over the inner conflict between the Quaker and the zealot.

As the crisis deepened, local tensions mounted. A meeting of workingmen, said to be the largest yet held in Rochester, favored any compromise not specifically in violation of the Constitution. A group of prominent citizens headed by Aaron Erickson, the wool merchant, indorsed the Crittenden amendments, but a public meeting called to reinforce that action expressed so many divergent opinions that action proved impossible. Heated words, exchanged on this and other occasions, made cooperation difficult. Yet a large throng, esti-

mated by one observer at fifteen thousand, gathered on the morning of February 18, 1861, to greet the train bearing the president-elect towards Washington. The futility of compromise was now generally conceded, though hope was still placed in a resolute federal policy. Even the *Union* urged the provisioning of Fort Sumter and, frankly warning of the grave likelihood of civil war, pledged its loyal support in any effort to maintain the federal union.

News of the attack on Fort Sumter brought a surge of patriotic unity to Rochester. Mayor John Nash convened a public meeting in the City Hall on April 18, and thousands thronged the streets outside, unable to gain access to either of two packed halls. Former disagreements disappeared as the assemblies resolved "to uphold and maintain at every cost the dignity, honor and greatness of these United States." President Anderson of the university, long an advocate of forbearance, declared in a brief speech that "the Rubicon was passed" and the time for action had arrived. After reading Lincoln's call for volunteers, Mayor Nash named a committee to raise funds for their dependents. Within a period of two weeks it collected a total of \$36,280 in pledges.

Many impromptu parades of eager recruits marched through the central streets during the first enthusiastic weeks of the war. Although the local militia companies which comprised the 54th state-guard regiment held back, awaiting permission to organize as cavalry or artillery units, leading officers among them soon recruited several volunteer companies for the infantry regiment desired at the time. Adolph Nolte, editor of a German weekly, recruited a company from among his countrymen, and Irish leaders formed similar plans. By May 3, eight local companies were ready to leave for camp. A cheering multitude of about twenty thousand lined State Street as the troops marched to board the cars for Elmira, where, ten days later, the 13th

Regiment of New York State Volunteers was mustered in. Professor Isaac F. Quinby of the university, a graduate of West Point and veteran of the Mexican War, was chosen colonel. Two weeks later they resumed the journey to Washington by box car, ready to join similar contingents gathering from all parts of the North for the defense of the capital.

An outburst of miscellaneous patriotic gestures marked the first months of war. Flags were flown over many buildings, including the Central station, the high school and the Court House; soon the Liberty Pole and every telegraph pole in town was properly decorated. The Bible Society determined to supply a Testament to each volunteer; various merchants offered gifts, one promising a pair of gaiters to each wife or sweetheart left behind. Swords and pistols were presented to popular volunteers at boisterous ceremonies staged by their friends. A Volunteer Relief Committee, formed by patriotic women, appropriated the Session room in the Court House as a sewing room, and their output soon included seven hundred shirts and bed ticks, four hundred pairs of drawers, eight hundred have-locks among other items considered useful to the soldiers.

Concern for the proper equipment of the Rochester Regiment—the popular designation for the 13th—mounted as complaints came back from Elmira. The first uniforms, supplied in haste by a clothier who was apparently too eager for profits, were ill fitting and of shoddy material. In place of the expected Enfield rifles, the regiment received an issue of 1840 muskets. Discontent over the supplies was somewhat allayed by the arrival of new Springfield rifles shortly before the first engagement, and the men rushed with zest into the First Battle of Bull Run, winning the title of “Bloody Thirteenth.” Unfortunately that disastrous defeat and the disagreement over their term of service spelled trouble ahead.

Local enlistments continued almost without interruption

after the departure of the 13th. Three new companies left the city for Elmira in May, and several more followed during the first summer. The old City Dragoons and the Union Grays obtained permission to organize as cavalry and artillery units respectively; the latter, popularly known as the Reynolds Battery, joined the 1st New York Artillery in October. Many of these volunteers were dashing young men, free of dependents; but many others had responsibilities for which the \$11 monthly pay of the private, or even the \$60 promised the captain who had to provision himself, appeared insufficient. As the distribution of \$4 a week to needy wives soon strained the community's volunteer relief fund, the recruiting of heads of families was temporarily discouraged. When enlistments declined in the fall, the first \$100 bounties were advertised in the city. Camp Hillhouse was established on the County Fair grounds to accommodate the men while the roster for a new regiment was being completed.

Rochester's preparations for war released a number of energies which were not conducive to victory. The pageantry of marching troops attracted crowds of teen-age lads and older men (who should enlist, as one editor put it) to downtown corners where on warm evenings their boisterous shouts often disturbed more decorous citizens. The appearance, as the war continued, of an increasing number of deserters, fugitives from their homes as well as the army, introduced a new problem for the police, while bounty jumpers soon added an additional complication. A few residents, sympathetic to the South, influenced perhaps by a relative in the Confederate army, attracted scorn and occasional abuse from zealous neighbors.

Possibly the gravest injury to the Union cause was inflicted by well-meaning citizens who, in the spring of 1861, shouted "on to Richmond" before the army was properly trained or equipped. Both the *Express* and the *Democrat* "wanted a fight"

with such confidence in its result that the *Union* gained the privilege of reading them a lesson after the disaster at Bull Run.

Indeed, it was on the evening of July 22, 1861, that the community first began to realize the full sober implications of the war. The Arcade and the streets in the vicinity of the telegraph office were crowded with friends of the boys in the 13th and other units known to be in the fight. A rumor of Northern victory gave way to another rumor that 266 of the men in the 13th had fallen. The facts, when they arrived, were bad enough: 12 killed, 26 wounded, and 27 taken prisoner out of 600 engaged. Losses from other local units added to the weight of private sorrow. The proportions of the defeat, as they became apparent, cast a new light on the struggle and compelled the city to mobilize for a war, not a punitive expedition. Short cuts to victory were proved illusory, and Rochester together with other Northern communities began to prepare for a long drawn-out struggle.

Disheartening news continued to arrive. A few saw some amusement in the report that the local Congressman, Alfred Ely, who had driven with other civilians from Washington to watch the battle, had been taken captive during the retreat from Bull Run, but the merriment stopped when one of his companions, the popular Calvin Huson of Rochester, sickened and died in the Richmond prison.

There was no light side to the unfortunate dispute concerning the term of enlistment of the 13th Regiment. When some of the men sought release at the end of three months, despite the decision of the state and the army to hold them for two years, a bitter controversy developed at home. Apparently the strength of the army's case was not fully explained to the troops, and some had to be severely punished before discipline was restored. Only the gravity of military events restrained the expression of indignation in Rochester. The incident may have

helped to unite the conservative wing of the Republican party with their old Democratic opponents behind a Union candidate in November, thus assuring the defeat of the Radical Republicans who sought to commit the North to a war against slavery.

Civilian Contributions

The war's impact on the economic, civic, and cultural life of Rochester soon became evident. Orders for military supplies stimulated several local firms and prompted the establishment of new ones. Civic leaders assumed the heavy burden of war-time functions, often to the neglect of older responsibilities. Public-spirited citizens formed new groups to supply needed services to the troops and their dependents. A surge of patriotic zeal swept the community and, because of the long and uncertain character of the struggle, sharpened the conflict between rival political factions. Yet, despite their often bitter disagreements, Rochesterians acquired a fresh sense of the national dimensions of both their economy and their society.

The Flour City escaped the severe economic disturbance suffered by many communities at the outbreak of hostilities. Local banks, having few if any investments in the deep South, were in a stable condition. All area lines of communication remained open and stood to profit from the obstruction of routes further south. Several local merchants had acquired large stocks in New York City during the brief panic there the previous year, and prices in Rochester during the spring and summer of 1861 were somewhat below normal. When prices began to advance throughout the North that fall, the Genesee country, as a producer of wheat, pork, and other foodstuffs, shared in the rise, although the more rapid advance in the price of coal quickly erased the advantage.

Perhaps the first industry to reflect the upturn in business was the press. The increased circulation of the three dailies during the winter of 1860-61, reflecting a popular concern over the

crisis, prompted each to boast of exceeding the total of its two rivals. At critical stages during the war, such as McClellan's disastrous battles along the Potomac in June and July 1862, as many as twenty thousand papers were sold in a single day, but the normal distribution of around three thousand each was sufficiently gratifying.

Army contracts encouraged the establishment of a number of new concerns and the expansion of older firms. A tent and flag factory appeared on Exchange Street in April 1861, and a month later an order for 10,000 army belts launched another enterprise. The long established shoe industry, compelled to expand, advertised for 500 additional shoemakers. L. & H. Churchill, whose first army order for 5000 pairs at \$2.20 each was followed by a plea for all the shoes they could produce, gave a subcontract to Tarrant Brothers who immediately hired additional men. Millers again enjoyed a rushing business as the demand for flour recalled earlier boom days. An active market for horses developed, and in the summer of 1863 as many as 3000 horses were brought in from nearby counties or imported from Canada for sale as cavalry mounts at \$125 each.

Two marketing activities which had recently been established in Rochester were greatly stimulated by the war. A score of pork dealers had handled not less than 20,000 hogs during the winter of 1860-61. Three years later the county's hog output alone exceeded that by 20 per cent, while the total slaughtered at Rochester in 1863 approached 30,000, producing 2600 tons valued at \$278,783. Rochester wool merchants had likewise gained an established position, buying 1,500,000 pounds for \$675,000 in 1860. The closing of the Mississippi outlet for western sheep, coupled with the demands of the army, boosted prices at Rochester in the next two years to \$1.04 a pound at the height of the season, greatly benefiting local dealers. Aaron Erickson, the largest wool merchant in the city, and leader of

the trade in Boston as well, reported one of the fifteen highest incomes taxed in Rochester in 1863, not, however, as far up on the list as the Churchill shoe men, or Sigmund Stettheimer, an enterprising clothing merchant whose activity in the wholesale end of that extremely decentralized trade proved most profitable during war years.

Western Union men, with their headquarters in Rochester, topped the income tax list locally. Hiram Sibley, its enterprising president, spurred by a federal contract, had organized the Pacific Telegraph Company late in 1860, rushing construction with such energy that the continent was spanned within a few months of the outbreak of hostilities. The war added greatly to the value of the interior telegraph lines, all dominated by Western Union. Its rivals to the south and along the Atlantic coast were partly blocked or cut off. The increased flood of urgent messages required expanded facilities (a fifth office was opened at Rochester in 1864 to assure prompt service).

Several technological improvements speeded production. Only a few of the 42 clothing shops introduced sewing machines, but most of them adopted the team system permitting a more efficient assignment of tasks. War orders stimulated increased output in these shops, and in neighboring breweries, one of which adopted a novel method of storing ice cut from the river above the dam and stacked by a new labor-saving device. Local investors perfected the Requa rifle for heavy batteries, but when the first models made at the penitentiary shop successfully passed tests at Washington, outside capital acquired control and located production elsewhere.

Rochester's industrial activity spurred several commercial improvements. The enlargement of the Erie Canal, finally completed in 1862, permitted the launching of bigger boats and the use of steam tugs. Each war year saw an advance in tonnage or in the total value of local shipments, and the latter

approached \$6 million by 1865. Two lines of new and improved steamers on Lake Ontario scheduled regular stops at the Genesee port and prompted the federal authorities to authorize the repair of the piers at Charlotte. It was on the railroads, however, that the greatest increase of traffic occurred. Since the New York Central did not complete its installation of a double track between Rochester and Buffalo until 1863, both the Niagara Falls route west of the city and the old Auburn line to the east were operated to capacity. All trains through Rochester doubled their lengths in these years, and travelers found them crowded as never before. As traffic increased even more rapidly on the Erie Railroad than on the Central, Rochester began at last to receive a return on its investment in the Genesee Valley Railroad, now leased by the Erie.

Unfortunately, Rochester's most acute transport problem—the importation of coal—remained unsolved. Price increases had become customary each winter as soon as ice effectively blocked the canals, but the steady rise which started at \$6.40 a ton in June 1863, reaching \$10 by October and continuing its climb to \$12 a ton the next spring, was a new experience. Blamed at the start on the disruption caused by the invasion of Pennsylvania, the coal “famine” which developed throughout the Northeast was in fact a coal panic, skillfully engineered by a transport monopoly. Local dealers protested their helplessness, railroad and canal men denied responsibility, as did the Pennsylvania producers, yet suspicion of huge profits persisted. Prices declined slightly in the summer of 1864, enough to permit the election of Roswell Hart, Rochester's leading coal dealer, to Congress that fall. The rapid rise of prices in the winter of 1864-65, reaching the almost prohibitive figure of \$17 a ton by February, created a new scandal.

Soaring coal prices were not the only feature of the inflationary movement that afflicted Rochester and other com-

munities during the latter years of the war. When the *Union* published a table of current retail prices in July 1863, contrasting them with those of three years before, the increases ranged from 70 per cent on eggs to 700 per cent for sheeting, with the average well over 100 per cent. Wage earners and others on fixed incomes suffered severe hardships, even in the organized trades where ten unions had recently been formed. The Typographical Union secured some advances and a promise from the *Democrat* and the *Union* to make all payments in cash. When the *Express* persisted in issuing due bills, the union called a strike and rallied the assistance of other unions in the cause. From that battle, in February 1863, emerged the Workingmen's Assembly of Monroe County, the first of a new group of labor organizations that sprang up throughout the North and provided the foundations for a new national labor movement. The Workingmen's Assembly assumed the lead in the battle for cheaper coal in Rochester and against the use of shin-plasters; it endorsed the demands of several of its constituent unions for a ten-hour day and higher wages, but its influence was limited.

Another new organization, the Volunteer Relief Committee, proved still less effective. As the demands for aid multiplied, the committee cut the \$4 weekly benefits in half and limited its applications to the dependents of early recruits. Friends of later enlistees soon refused to redeem their pledges, and the committee shifted its responsibilities to the Common Council in 1862. A fresh effort was made that January by a newly organized Ladies Hospital Relief Association to raise funds and collect supplies for the aid of sick and wounded soldiers. Its report at the close of the year told of the shipment of 23 bales, 33 boxes, 36 barrels and 41 other packages of needed supplies. Similar donations the next year and the proceeds of a special Christmas Bazaar, which attracted thousands of visitors to the

booths set up in Corinthian Hall, netted over \$10,000. These ladies, reorganized as the Soldiers' Aid Society, raised an additional \$2800 at an encampment in the fall of 1864 and coordinated the work of comparable groups in neighboring towns.

Earlier efforts to establish two local hospitals were quickened by the wartime emergency. St. Mary's Hospital, recently established on the western outskirts of the city, enlisted chiefly Catholic support. City and county funds for the care of sick poor aided the struggling institution, and early in 1862 the army began to place small detachments of wounded soldiers under its care. The construction of the so-called City Hospital was finally completed that year at a cost of fourteen thousand dollars largely raised from Protestant sources. Rivalry between the two institutions delayed the equipment of the City Hospital, but the Female Charitable Society, which assumed control, secured the cooperation of ladies in several churches who furnished various rooms in time for the official opening in January 1864. The mounting demand for hospital beds had by this time silenced the expressions of jealousy, and all elements rallied to help St. Mary's build a second wing, increasing its facilities to four hundred beds, while accommodations for two hundred were provided at the City Hospital. By May of that year the city was caring for four hundred wounded at a time.

Getting On With the War

Disillusionment following the first battle of Bull Run stirred the community to greater effort, and later reverses suffered by the army on the Potomac gave no excuse for relaxation. The three daily papers and all other local spokesmen joined in supporting a vigorous program. Their specific proposals did not always harmonize, however, with the result that war policies became increasingly involved in local politics. The city's contribution of men kept pace with that elsewhere throughout the

North, and, when the needs of the army exceeded the rate of enlistments, the draft was formally applied without open friction, though perhaps the large sums expended in bounties and other inducements sufficiently minimized the compulsory nature of the act. As casualties continued to mount, strained nerves often found vent in violent denunciations of local rivals or national leaders, but the threatened break in morale did not occur, and after the victory at Gettysburg a measure of confidence returned.

Local recruiting continued almost without letup until the spring of 1862. The payment of bounties, ranging up to \$100 late in 1861 and rising as high as \$300 the next year, speeded enlistments. Various appeals to the Irish and Germans led to the formation of special ethnic units which held local interest throughout their service. Two regiments recruited in the summer of 1862, the 108th and the 140th—the latter composed almost entirely of Rochester men—were destined to identify the city with practically every battle in the Virginia theater during the last three years of the war. Enthusiastic public meetings supported the enlistment campaigns at this time. President Anderson, addressing one huge mass meeting, assured his hearers that “God will take care of the cause of Freedom” for the slaves if the young men of the North would do their part on the battlefield. State, county, and ward bounties helped fill the county’s quota of 3310 men, 1627 of them credited to Rochester itself, thus exceeding its requirement by 143.

The old 13th and other Rochester units tasted fire in the Seven Days’ battles, the Second Battle of Bull Run, the first debacle at Fredericksburg, and lesser engagements in the war’s second year. Despite the early blot on its record, the 13th completed two full years of heroic service, and on May 2, 1863, Rochester turned out to cheer as 190 of the regiment’s original

members marched home again. Many of the absent had re-enlisted or had been transferred to other units, but at least 85 had paid the supreme sacrifice, while 103 were never accurately accounted for. The 13th had been released just prior to the bloody battle at Chancellorsville in which other Rochester units were heavily engaged. Bulletins from the battles in which local men were known to be involved always brought crowds into the Arcade to hear the latest telegraph reports. Pope's campaign on the Rappahannock in the latter part of August 1862, the battle of Antietam a month later, and Fredericksburg that December, each cost the city more than fifty lives, not counting the missing and wounded.

But no battle was so fraught with danger, so costly to city units, and so heroically won and joyously celebrated as the battle of Gettysburg. News of the sweep of Lee's army into southern Pennsylvania brought frantic demands for a strong stand. As the battle developed, one local unit, the 140th, under command of the gallant young Colonel Patrick O'Rorke, found itself near Little Round Top and in a dramatic dash seized that strategic elevation in time to beat off an advancing Confederate force which, if it had secured that height, might have turned the tide of battle. Colonel O'Rorke and twenty-five of his men lost their lives, and fully as many fell among Rochester units engaged elsewhere in the battle, but a great victory at last crowned their efforts. When the good news reached the city an hour before midnight on July 5, the ringing of church bells brought thousands out for a clamorous celebration that made up for the somber observance of the Fourth. Ten days later crowds of Protestants and Catholics alike followed the funeral bier of Colonel O'Rorke to St. Bridget's Church, sorrowfully recalling the bright young Irish lad who had won appointment to West Point after graduating at the head of his class in School No. 9 a few years before. Future casualty reports were still to be

long and full of grief for those involved, but they could at least be received with the assurance of ultimate victory.

Meanwhile, a three-cornered battle for political dominance at home was raging fiercely. The Republican faction which had joined the Democrats in the legislative contest of 1861 broke away again when the crucial election of a governor and congressman approached the next fall. The "Radical" *Express* had already backed the renomination of Congressman Ely, recently released from Richmond prison, when the *Democrat* and the insurgent faction came out for Freeman Clarke. Much pressure was required to persuade Ely to withdraw in favor of Clarke, who won by a slight majority, although his Democratic opponent carried the city. The city likewise gave its favor to Seymour, the Democratic candidate for governor, despite charges in the *Democrat* and the *Express* that such a vote would endanger the war effort. The administration of the city had meanwhile passed to the Democrats that spring, and they won again the next year, electing Nehemiah Bradstreet, who had been roundly labeled a Copperhead by the opposition. Bradstreet, a nephew of former Mayor Gould, proved his loyalty by vigorous efforts in support of the enlistment program and in behalf of the families of those who volunteered.

Exaggerated charges thrown back and forth by the warring editors clouded their ideological differences. The community certainly was not abolitionist in sentiment, and the efforts of the *Express* to hasten that cause were coolly received. More conservative Republicans, friends of Weed, preferred to stress the practical economic value of the Union. Yet the editors of the *Democrat* and the *Union* professed to abhor slavery and to condone emancipation if it could be used as an effective war measure. They regarded the question of the employment of Negroes in the army as one of expediency, though the ability of colored troops was doubted by the *Union*. Both of these

papers clamored for a more efficient prosecution of the war and for its early termination; the *Express* alone sought a fundamental reorganization of Southern society.

Nevertheless, as the probability of a long war became evident in the summer of 1862, the policies of the *Union* and the *Democrat* diverged. Isaac Butts of the *Union*, blaming the stubborn resistance of the South on Republican efforts to enforce Negro equality upon it, attacked Lincoln as well as his Radical advisers. The *Democrat*, on the other hand, vented its disappointment over the war's progress by demanding a harsh policy against the South. Emancipation was welcomed on that count and because of the favor it would win for the North in European eyes. Dr. S. S. Cutting, professor of moral philosophy at the university, wrote some of the *Democrat's* editorials at this time, prompting the *Union* to allude scornfully to its rival as the "Sorbonne." Yet the *Union* hastened to accept the Emancipation Proclamation, when finally announced, as a "Great Fact," expressing the hope that, since the issue was settled, the country could get on with the war.

The press war likewise continued. Butts of the *Union* objected to conscription as an invasion of states' rights and joined other Democratic papers in supporting the recurrent pleas from the army in favor of General McClellan. The misfortunes of "Little Mac's" successors embarrassed the Republicans, but the *Democrat* and the *Express* sought to divert attention by attacking the *Union* for its "disloyal" efforts to discredit the President. When the army's reverses multiplied in the spring of 1863, the *Union*, forgetful of its earlier criticisms of the draft, asked why it had been delayed. All now endorsed the use of colored troops, and former neighbors of Frederick Douglass were proud to see the recognition he received in the work of enrolling such regiments. When, however, Lee's threat to the North was turned back at Gettysburg, many in Rochester began to hope that a

negotiated peace could be secured by a government willing to make reasonable concessions.

Dissatisfaction mounted when a count of Rochester enlistments, sponsored by the *Union*, reported over 4000 volunteers as against a city quota of 2900. Under these circumstances an additional draft appeared unreasonable. Many of the names included on the city list were also claimed by near-by towns, but that was not a point for city papers to stress. When the federal authorities refused to delay the draft, the council voted \$300 bounties to be paid to those draftees who accepted service or to the substitutes they secured. Less than 400 soldiers were mustered in by the draft—most of them substitutes—out of 3000 names drawn for the Congressional district, which included Monroe and Orleans counties. The federal government was forced to call for additional volunteers, with the threat of a draft if local quotas were not met. Monroe County this time provided the \$300 bounties which, together with ward and state benefits, successfully filled its quota.

Rochester thus escaped the violent outbursts against the draft that occurred in some communities. The city, however, registered its disapproval of Republican policy by giving Governor Seymour a slight majority in his unsuccessful campaign for reelection, and chose a Democratic mayor again the next March. As the summer of 1864 advanced and the desperate battles in the Wilderness Campaign exacted many casualties among almost all Rochester units, criticism of the war increased, and that August the *Union* cheered the nomination of McClellan as the Democratic candidate to replace Lincoln in the White House.

A bitter struggle was likewise raging within the Republican party. When Alvah Strong, the aged proprietor of the *Democrat and American*, sold out in March 1864, the new owner, William S. King, not only dropped the old reminder of nati-

vism from the masthead, but launched forth in a frank attack on slavery as such. The Clarke faction had permitted control of the paper to slip through its fingers, and the Radicals, with two papers in their camp, easily secured the nomination of Roswell Hart for Congress. Many conservative Republicans endorsed James L. Angle, whom the Democrats proceeded to nominate in an effort to split the Republican vote. Again the campaign brought forth extreme charges, among them a declaration that the Republicans were delaying a second draft until after election, and another, that they were prolonging the war by insisting on unconditional surrender. Hart was attacked personally as a coal monopolist, but the *Democrat* and the *Express* rose to his defense, placing entire blame for the inflated coal prices on outside controls. A procession by five thousand German Democrats, extending a mile in length, attracted ten thousand onlookers; the newly formed Loyal League staged rival demonstrations. Lincoln carried the county with a comfortable majority, though McClellan led by seventy-four in the city. Hart carried the district by a slim majority of four votes, a result made possible, the *Union* charged, by frauds in the recording of soldiers' votes.

New calls for troops were met with great difficulty that fall as a strong feeling of war weariness set in. The economic hardships born of inflation reached their peak; labor troubles mounted; and the longing for normal activities brought many community affairs back into the news. Earlier fears of an attack from Canada revived when two field guns were mounted at Charlotte to protect the harbor, yet the *Union* alleged that it was only a pre-election war scare designed to rally Irish support for the Republicans. With the election safely past, the community enjoyed a brief respite from the press squabble, for both the *Democrat* and the *Union* changed hands in January. Isaac Butts retired after twenty years as the stormy petrel of the

Rochester press, turning the *Union* over to his junior partners, while King sold control of the *Democrat* to D. D. S. Brown of Scottsville and a group of associates including a son of Freeman Clarke. Brown, a one-time Democrat, later a Know-Nothing, had early joined the conservative wing of the Republican party. It was no longer necessary to battle over emancipation, he announced, extending a cordial greeting to William Purcell and George G. Cooper, the former national and local editors of the *Union*, who continued under the new ownership, and to Francis S. Rew, the previously slighted editor of the *Express*.

The editorial truce was not long maintained, however. Indeed, several vital issues were arising which merited full debate. The status of free Negroes, both in the North and in the South, had to be worked out. If peace was to be reestablished, it was high time the terms were formulated and principles enunciated that would provide a sure basis for unity. If the war was to be pressed to an early conclusion, the army's call for additional troops should be met with courage and decision. The local press had a real part to play in rallying the community during the last stages of the war in order to assure a victory for both union and democracy. Unfortunately as the months rolled by and victory on the battlefield approached, the fissures in the community widened, and a succession of tragic occurrences so twisted the developing strands of history that the peace, when finally achieved, was a sorry substitute for the goal so valiantly fought for.

The announcement that Congress had passed a proposed thirteenth, or antislavery, amendment brought a protest from the *Union*, which declared "It is no time to amend the fundamental instrument of a Republic." The *Democrat*, on the other hand, praised the amendment, maintaining that while it was obvious that not all Negroes were fit to vote, yet "some standard other than color must be adopted." The *Express* regretted the

limited scope of the amendment and supported the organization of a Freedman's Relief Association in Rochester to gather means and leadership throughout the North with which to help set the Southern Negro on his feet. The *Union* thought the North should first relieve the suffering among its own poor folk and, reminding its opponents that Negroes could neither vote nor be sure of seats in public halls in Rochester, urged that the question be left to the states as the Constitution had provided.

Lincoln's second inaugural intensified the discussion of peace terms. The *Union* accused Republicans of an intent to subjugate the South; the *Democrat* maintained that Lincoln promised peace and the re-admission of all southern states on terms of equality as soon as they laid down their arms and ratified the Thirteenth Amendment. The *Express* likewise stressed the conciliatory aims of the President, foreseeing an early peace and the reestablishment of a Union which would guarantee democratic equality to all men.

Meanwhile the slow response of volunteers had again compelled the city to enforce the draft. The spring election had turned the local administration back to the Republicans, under whose leadership bounties of \$600 were offered to those volunteering before the draft and \$250 for those accepting their own draft call or procuring a substitute. The *Union* refused at this point to endorse the draft, claiming that the city's earlier volunteers had exceeded the quota and that Republican policy and army strategy were alike wasteful of the nation's manpower. Frightful casualties reported from the battle front helped to boost the price for substitutes as high as \$1500 in March, as the city strove to meet its quota of 651 that spring.

Fortunately the war was rushing to its final climax. When the thrilling news of Lee's surrender reached the city on Monday evening, April 10, the joyous clangor of the big fire bell in the Court House and of every other bell in the city

brought citizens flocking into the downtown streets. Bonfires were lit, rockets and guns discharged, and impromptu speeches were delivered to the milling throngs, though the words of the orators were lost in the din. The celebration continued until two in the morning when a cold rain dispersed the crowds.

For a brief period it seemed as though the great struggle had ended in triumph, vindicating the joint cause of union and democracy. All public commentators lauded the fine spirit shown by Grant and Lee. Tributes to the valor of Southern soldiers, mingled with expressions of clemency toward the defeated rebels, indicated a readiness to join hands in the necessary work of reconstruction. The draft was suspended, thus terminating the arduous task of filling the spring quota, and the city which had sent forth approximately 5000 recruits, roughly a tenth of the population, began to look forward to the return of those still at the front. A sense of relief and joy swept over the North assuaging the grief of those whose menfolk would never return. Rochester had shared this sacrifice to the extent of 650 men, an honor roll which included representatives from all elements of the community.

The hopeful prospect of a peaceful reunion of the states and a quick resumption of normal relationships and activities was suddenly shattered by the assassination of President Lincoln. News of the tragedy brought grief and consternation to Rochester as to other communities throughout the nation. The noble sentiments prompted by Lee's surrender gave way to a spirit of vindictiveness. Not only were all those in the South who had taken a leading part in the Confederacy held accountable by the *Democrat*, but Northern critics of Lincoln, such as the editors of the *Union*, were charged with complicity in the foul deed. The *Express* at first asked simply for a judicial and orderly trial of the rebel leaders, but the need for a more general retribution was soon advocated. Perhaps the *Union*

more accurately expressed the deep sense of grief which gripped the people when it urged that the great spirit of compassion so often revealed by President Lincoln be emulated and that his program for the reconciliation of the states be carried forward by Johnson with the united support of all parties.

Rochester joined in the nationwide observance of Lincoln's funeral on April 19. A solemn procession, nearly two miles in length, marched down Main and Buffalo streets to stand with bared heads in a vast throng before the Court House where Congressman Hart and Dr. Ezekiel Robinson of the Theological Seminary eulogized the martyred president. Unfortunately the expressions of genuine sorrow could not still the mounting cry for revenge, expressed even on that solemn occasion. A stern note in the voices of the orators incited bitterness in the hearts of their listeners. Not only had the nation lost a great leader at a critical moment, but the spirit necessary for the peaceful reconciliation of the states was disappearing.

This tragic turn of events became apparent in Rochester that spring. A sober crowd gathered at the station on the afternoon of April 27 as Lincoln's funeral train paused on its journey westward. Enthusiastic receptions greeted local units returning from the South, and the city outdid itself in celebrating the Fourth, but old animosities were revived by the rival dailies, and wartime controversies were resumed with a bitterness impossible during the real crisis.

The Union was preserved, but its republican procedures were seriously weakened in the political maelstrom that engulfed the nation in the postwar years. Unfortunately, this final tragedy postponed for many decades a full realization of the peaceful unity that can only be attained through democratic equality. Perhaps, in this centennial commemoration of the Civil War, Americans North and South may yet achieve that larger objective.