

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by BLAKE MCKELVEY, *City Historian*

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## Errata and Addenda

### Plus Some Thoughts on the Nature of History and the Rochester Story

By BLAKE MCKELVEY

The publication of my recent book, completing a four-volume study of the history of Rochester and bringing its story up to date, has prompted several calls pointing out omissions. As every author must, if he sincerely wishes to master all aspects of a richly varied subject, I have welcomed these criticisms as well as corrections of factual errors. Indeed I have invited a number of friends and interested citizens generally to jot down critical comments as they read *Rochester: An Emerging Metropolis: 1925-1961*. For if "history is an unending dialogue between the present and the past," as Edward H. Carr maintains in his recent book, *What Is History*, the more voices we can get into the discussion, the better.

This is especially true in the case of contemporary history. Here, as Carl Becker has pointed out, 'Every man is his own historian.' Thus, if my version of the community's recent past is to have significance (other than to the author or as a factual record, which is not the chief function of history), it must

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stimulate a lively exchange between the reader and the text concerning the nature of his experience. I hope that this process may be promoted by bringing a part of that discussion into the open.

Perhaps as good a way as any to begin is to make a list of errata and then to consider some proper addenda. The first task will remind the author and his readers that he is not infallible. The second and more difficult exercise will pose such searching questions as: What is history, how do we recount it, and why? Only by reaching some agreement on our objectives can we determine what facts to include and how much emphasis to give them.

### **Errata**

First to the errata. No author can list even minor slips without a pang. I must, nevertheless, apologize for the following:

p. 9—In place of Harry J. Bareham, insert Harry P. Wareham.

p. 95—The final event in the annual soap box derby takes place at Akron, of course, not Dayton.

p. 166—Jascha Heifetz and Yehudi Menuhin are accomplished violinists, not pianists, and Lily Pons is a soprano, not a contralto.

p. 209—Robert C. Tait, when appointed president of Stromberg-Carlson in 1949, was no longer vice-president of the Genesee Valley Trust Co., having moved to Pittsburgh in 1945 to fill similar posts there.

p. 222—Councilman Robert Corris has B. for a middle initial, not R.

p. 230—The Rev. George Hetenyi was one of the 50-odd per-

sons tried *at* Rochester for murder, not for murder *in* Rochester.

p. 257—The Oak Hill Country Club was host to the U. S. Golf Association open championship in 1956, not the U. S. Amateur Golf Tournament which, however, was held there in 1949.

p. 276—The first name of my friend Dr. “Jerry” Glaser is Jerome, not Gerald.

p. 337—Mrs. Constance Mitchell was elected ward chairman, not ward leader.

p. 347—Frans Wildenhain spells his first name with an *s*, not a *z*.

Five errors crept into the captions for the Illustrations:

A-9—Dr. Jacobstein was publisher, not editor, of the *Journal*.

C-9—Again it is Frans Wildenhain.

C-11—Councilman Norman A. Kreckman’s name was inadvertently omitted and Miss Hilda Atterberg should appear in place of Miss Mary Cashman who now occupies her post as head of Sully Branch.

C-12—Councilman Horton’s name is, of course, Frank J. (and to my disconcertion the J. stands for Jefferson!), not John.

A last-minute shift of Illustrations B-21 and B-22 resulted in a number of errors in the Index references to the persons shown, but fortunately the two photographs appear on the same page.

Other errors may be detected in time, but the list is sufficiently embarrassing as it stands. Fortunately none of them distorts the meaning of the passage in which it appears, and this no doubt

explains how they slipped by the watchful eyes of my readers, to whom I am sincerely grateful for catching and correcting other slips.

### **The What, How and Why of History**

Any author who ventures to write about the recent past courts criticism. Two or more eye-witness accounts, even of important events, seldom agree on the details or on the order of their occurrence, and they frequently differ sharply in emphasis. This is, of course, true of all periods, but in contemporary history numerous eye witnesses are still about. Yet if the sifting of evidence on specific events is difficult, it is overshadowed in this respect by the task of deciding which of the many thousand "wonderfully elusive facts of history," as Becker describes them, to include. Still more difficult and more important is the search for the causal factors behind each action and imbedded in every movement.

The standards of the press will not suffice here. Although the local reporters have served as my chief aides, their documentation is so richly voluminous that it greatly compounds the problem of selection. Local columnists and editorial writers highlight certain facets of community life, but they are frankly opinionated and, although valuable for that very quality, do not provide the synthesis an historian seeks.

In order to reconstruct a unified story, he must somehow find a meaningful structure in space and time to which a large number of significant events can be related. Several thematic hypotheses may appear, but the historian must continue his search until he uncovers the dynamic process that gave vitality and meaning to the changes that dominated and differentiated the period. Only with such a theme will he be able to identify

the significant events and weave them into an account of community development that will enable readers to fit their own remembered experiences into place and gain a refreshing sense of recognition and understanding.

That is a large order, and its accomplishment no doubt lies beyond the grasp of many historians. Yet all must reach for it, whether their subjects be broad and general in character or local and restricted. To be more than a chronicler, one must offer a synthesizing interpretation with the hope that it is sufficiently inclusive and causally meaningful to prove evocative to most readers and not too disappointing to the rest. Some social scientists not only offer but labor their interpretations, treating them as theories which they seek to establish as laws; most historians, however, are content to embody their themes in the narrative, permitting the facts they choose and emphasize to tell their story.

Many developments will be neglected and left dangling on the periphery by almost any theme, and some of these omissions may prove so important that the historian's interpretation is discredited. Later events, too, may take a direction that prompts a restudy of the entire period. The historian can never feel sure that his account will stand the test of time, but if his insights provide a measure of self-awareness and understanding to his generation, they will, no doubt, raise up successors who will take care of the future.

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A glance at my three earlier volumes will illustrate some of these points. In my study of the history of Rochester, I have found a number of alternating, sometimes conflicting, trends. Some aspects of its development were internal and local in inspiration and orientation; others were external and dom-

inated by national or world-wide forces. To keep this dual character of the city's growth in mind, I have sometimes likened my work to that of an urban biographer, but I hope this term conveys no teleological or animistic allusions. I have tried in each volume to relate the varied developments of the period to a dominant theme that seemed to offer the most inclusive and meaningful interpretation of the multiplicity of facts that diligent research has brought to light. I have briefly stated my chosen theme in the preface to each volume, but I have not belabored it in the text.

Thus in volume one, which dealt with the settlement and early development of the city, I found the key to Rochester's history down to 1854 in the progressive exploitation of its water power. First the river and the lake supplied a unifying trade artery for scattered pioneers throughout the Genesee country. That artery increasingly focused their activities at the upper falls, which both halted all rafts coming down stream and supplied power to convert their produce for local consumption or convenient transshipment. The building by the state of the Erie Canal, with its Genesee crossing a stone's throw below the upper falls, gave a great boost to urban developments at that site. Mushrooming as America's first boom town in the 1820's, Rochester quickly harvested its most obvious "external economies" (as modern economists would describe the industrial and trade potentials of its location), and took advantage of the respite that followed to consolidate its position.

Rochester emerged from the hectic fluctuations of its boom-town period as a prosperous flour-milling center. For two decades it produced and shipped more flour than any other port and was widely known as the Flour City. I might have taken that nickname for the title and theme of my first volume, but it did not seem as meaningful and inclusive as the caption I

chose: the Water-Power City. It was water power, not flour, that carved out the Genesee gorge and prepared the site for a great city. And the water power that later ground the flour also sawed logs into lumber for houses and shops and for canal boats and ships to carry the town's produce by rival water routes to distant markets. And, moreover, it was not the score or more of flour millers alone, but these men with a numerous community of merchants, craftsmen, canallers, and pioneers in the professional fields who built a dozen churches, organized a thriving athenaeum, and established several other institutions, including a small denominational college. As the Water-Power City, Rochester stood 20th in size among American cities in the mid-fifties.

But the rapid course of America's expansion westward had already swept far beyond the Genesee and threatened to convert its mill town and canal port into a stagnant backwater community. Many sons of the pioneers pulled up stakes and struck out for more promising locations in Kansas, California, or elsewhere. Other milling centers surpassed Rochester's output of flour; even the canal boats built in local yards hastened through the city on repeated trips without stopping. Some ingenious men, however, fascinated by the opportunity to attach a turning lathe or some other machine to a water wheel, hung on and began to explore new fields of production. At the same time, a host of newcomers from abroad, eager to practice their skills in an established community, stopped off at Rochester and helped to renew its vitality. Together they transformed the old milling city into a thriving manufacturing center, noted for its women's shoes, its men's clothing, its furniture and carriage factories, its metal-working, optical, and instrument shops.

Yet Rochester, in that second period, became something more

than a factory town, offspring of its water power. None of these activities proved as representative as those of a number of talented horticulturalists, who transformed Rochester into the Flower City. Arriving in the forties, as several of them did, they soon discovered that the great lake to the north served as a temperature stabilizer that safeguarded the propagation of seedlings. Within a decade, and for half a century thereafter, the lush output of their nurseries exceeded that of any rival center in America and became Rochester's proudest boast. Yet more important than the commercial value of their young trees and shrubs was the flowering of a cosmopolitan mixture of human resources—from Ireland, Germany, Scandinavia, Britain, and other foreign sources, as well as those of native origin. It is in this symbolic sense that the title "Flower City" provides a meaningful theme for my second volume. Even the upsurge of the woman's suffrage and the labor movements, as well as the new interest in science and the new excitement over sports, found ready inclusion in this coordinating interpretation.

Unfortunately the tumultuous character of the city's growth in the 1880's created many difficulties. The profusion of new ventures threatened to choke out many struggling firms. That circumstance was not peculiar to Rochester, however, and in the hard times of the mid-nineties, numerous enterprises throughout the country collapsed. Yet a few local companies prospered, even in the depths of the depression, when, for example, Eastman Kodak took advantage of the favorable labor market to launch a new construction program. Looking about in the late nineties, alert citizens discovered that the weeding-out process had left standing many plants that specialized in patented or quality products. The better men's clothing and women's shoes, the finer instruments and optical products, the unmatched cameras and film manufactured at Rochester con-



tinued to find a market while cheaper products glutted the warehouses.

It thus became evident that the city, lacking the advantages of ports on the upper lakes or in the great valley of the Mississippi—not to mention those on the ocean—could not compete in heavy industry or as a major shipping center. Its only hope was as a producer of quality products based on the skills of its workers and the ingenuity of its entrepreneurs. But this would require better schools to assure high standards of training, and better cultural facilities to hold the most talented. As the community awoke to this realization, leaders in every field took up “the quest for quality,” making it a meaningful theme for my third volume. Advocates of good government, of social Christianity, of high standards in music and art vied with the industrialists in an all-absorbing effort “to make Rochester the best city in the world in which to live and raise a family.”

That, of course, was George Eastman’s phrase and serves to remind us of the increasingly effective leadership he supplied in Rochester’s quest for quality. It reminds us, too, that each of the synthesizing themes of my first three volumes was a generalized statement of the programs and activities widely shared in each period by most leaders and many citizens. Indeed their great number at all times, particularly in the second and third periods, defied individual characterization, and in these volumes I practiced restraint even in the mention of names. I generally included only those who stood out so frequently that present-day readers could gain a sense of their character from their repeated appearances.

Yet the movements described there were by no means either inanimate or anonymous. Vital personalities made the decisions, perfected the instruments, preached the sermons, played the tunes, and dreamed the dreams in each generation of Roch-

ester's development. If not always deliberately or wisely, they made their choices daily between many possible responses to the economic, civic, and social opportunities currently present in the city's setting and development. And joining in an ever increasing number of formal and informal groups, they progressively transformed its character.

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In my fourth volume, which carries the account of Rochester's development into the contemporary period, I have relaxed that earlier restraint and named the responsible leaders and chief participants in many community affairs. Most of them are fellow citizens, and for local readers their names will provide sufficient identification. This procedure has its advantage, but it also poses a hazard for the author, since many leading citizens must remain unmentioned because of limitations of space. Some who do appear will readily think of more important personal accomplishments than those recalled here. Yet observant readers will quickly discover that this is not a Who's Who of Rochester, as one commentator mistakenly described it; nor is it a compendium of all major community events. Instead, I have endeavored to continue in narrative form my account of the city's history. And in this recent period, I have found a unifying theme in Rochester's emergence as a metropolis.

Let us examine the book more closely in that light. A few readers may be disappointed to discover that I do not start with a definition of a metropolis, and, in fact, never explicitly spell out the meaning of that term or list its attributes. Such an approach did not seem appropriate in a volume on the history of a city which was only gradually, in the course of these years, becoming aware of its metropolitan potentialities.

Indeed, other matters absorbed attention during most of the period. Rochester was still, in the late twenties, preening itself as a quality city in George Eastman's image. The onset of the great depression presented a challenge which many citizens hastened to accept. Individually and collectively they endeavored to fight off its paralyzing grip, and in the process they plunged the city deeply into debt. Local leaders welcomed state and federal assistance, when it finally arrived, and quickly surrendered one and another burdensome responsibility. They had discovered that the local economy, as an integral part of the national economy, depended for its recovery on the restoration of national prosperity. When the dark clouds began to lift, however, many Rochesterians became restive under federal controls.

A sharp division of opinion developed. The New Deal retained popular support and continued to win indorsement at the polls, but the most outspoken voices became increasingly critical. After a brief interlude of Democratic control, the Republicans recaptured both the county and the city and pledged themselves to a program of strict economy. Ambitious plans for civic improvements were shelved and forgotten as Rochester determined not only to balance its budget but also to pay off its entire debt. With resolute frugality and the continued support of federal relief funds, the city progressively reduced its debt during the late thirties. That policy continued after the outbreak of war when shortages further delayed the provision of urgent municipal improvements.

Rochester responded with enthusiasm to the challenge of war, as did most communities, and again enjoyed a surge of prosperity as military orders boosted local industrial production to an all-time high by 1943. Convinced at last that its economy was linked inseparably with national and world for-

tunes, many citizens took a determined stand at the close of the war in favor of strong international commitments. A Postwar Problems Council surveyed many aspects of the city's affairs and sounded again the call for high standards in all fields. As the business community vaulted the reconversion hurdle without difficulty, city officials discovered that some urgent improvements could not safely be put off until the debt was eradicated. Instead, in a dramatic policy shift, the city determined to meet its needs, even, if necessary, by expanding its debt.

This shift marked Rochester's awakening to its metropolitan status. Resurgent energies in the community had been overflowing its borders for some time, giving new life to the suburban towns that ringed it. While numerous residents, even prominent civic leaders, had fled the city for more salubrious locations on its periphery, many of them began now to realize that they could not safely abandon the central city. With the more alert civic officials, they came to recognize that they were all residents of a larger metropolitan community whose well-being depended on the good health of all its parts, but especially on the vitality of its life-giving core.

Thus, as residents of an emerging metropolis, citizens of Rochester and its suburbs commenced during the last decade a united attack on many pressing problems. They consolidated several functions, placing health, welfare, and the parks under the jurisdiction of the county, and they organized joint city-county boards to manage other programs, such as the construction of the long awaited civic center. They welcomed state and federal aid in the planning and construction of a new expressway system. Designed to relieve the central district of mounting traffic congestion, it also sought to safeguard the vital circulation between the suburbs and downtown.

Reassured by this evidence of renewed civic vitality, industrial and commercial leaders launched vast plans of their own for expansion. Several firms acquired and developed industrial parks on the outskirts; others seized the opportunity to build new factories at or near their old sites. Several merchants and banks rebuilt or remodeled their downtown properties, prompting the city to provide more adequate parking facilities, at first on metered lots and finally, in order to conserve taxable property, in large public ramps. This action spurred two large department stores to link forces and persuade the city to construct the parking facilities scheduled for their area underground on property they had acquired for a proposed Mid-Town Plaza. The approval and rapid development of that project has not only added a new high point to the city's skyline, but also supplies a dramatic symbol of Rochester's emerging metropolitanism.

As a theme, Rochester's metropolitan emergence also enables us to understand many of its cultural trends. Thus the new and more imaginative approach to art, the increased interest in science, even in its theoretical aspects, the continued enthusiasm for music—all manifest expanding horizons. The vigorous activity of the Rochester Association for the United Nations and the programs of other bodies interested in similar causes mark the triumph of broad international views over parochial and isolationist attitudes. Of course a metropolis, in contrast with a city, faces increased internal complexities, too, and on this front Rochester has tackled problems of integration, of housing decay, of juvenile delinquency, and in the care of its elder citizens—problems of which it was largely unaware in earlier years. Moreover, facilities for commercial entertainment began to flourish again as full employment assured adequate revenues, although in this field the mushrooming suburban growth

tended to strengthen the community's predilection for the pleasures of single-family homes and back yards.

### **Addenda**

With our developmental theme in mind, we can at last consider specific omissions. Some that would throw additional light on the city's emerging metropolitanism should, obviously, be included, as well as any that tend to qualify or refute that interpretation, for we are not seeking only supporting evidence. Other facts that simply add illustrations of points already made can, however, be excluded, as well as the many events, like the annual transfer of office in many societies, that represent no significant change in policy or program. History deals with change, with development, and we can exclude the great host of facts that simply mark time. But lest I, too, be accused of marking time, I had better proceed to sift the possible addenda.

Howard Hosmer, Assistant Managing Editor of the *Times-Union*, has compiled a list of omissions that merit attention. He mentions a number of boxers and prize fighters who should have been included, and since that aspect of Rochester's commercial entertainment has, in fact, been neglected, this criticism is well taken. He also recalls some Memorial Day parades, with Henry Lilly as grand marshal, but here his complaint is less persuasive. Such parades were a traditional feature of the Rochester scene and received attention in two earlier volumes. A bare mention might have been proper to indicate their continued presence, but for a parade marshal of a new type I might better have included a few lines on the performances of Ira Sapozink in this capacity. He surely will make the next volume.

Mr. Hosmer calls attention to my neglect of several eating places and social halls operated by King Mahoney and others.

While I have mentioned some restaurants and noted the increased practice of dining out, that point might have been elaborated to advantage, and the names of one or two Maitre D's might have been included, such as Angelo Frati of the Powers Hotel. Yet this certainly is not as prominent a feature of life in Rochester as in many places, even some with lesser claims to metropolitan status. We must not, because of a rankling charge that we lack night life, argue the point unduly.

Mr. Hosmer laments my failure to mention the controversy over the TV tower on Pinnacle Hill. More could perhaps have been said concerning the conflicting interests of suburban or city residents on the one hand, and on the other those of the managers and planners of highway, utility, and other essential metropolitan improvements. But again the historian must not clutter his narrative with controversies, even exciting ones, unless they help to move the story along. Most of these impede it, which is, of course, a point worth noting, but I should have illustrated it with a discussion of the battle in the town of Greece over the Haloid Company's application for a zoning variance. The company's defeat not only illustrated the general resistance of suburban residents to industrial intrusion, but effectively turned an important aspect of metropolitan expansion into other portions of Rochester's environment.

Many of Hosmer's other points seem to belong in a reminiscent rather than an historical volume. History usually dismisses failures quickly, and since neither Willkie nor Dewey could carry Rochester, their visits commanded little if any space. The same holds for Gannett's pathetic try for the nomination. These events would, of course, supply delightful passages in a nostalgic review of Rochester in the good old days. I am not disparaging such books; they have, in fact, a very useful place in the literature of cities, and I enjoy reading many

of them—Arch Merrill's, for example. They are not history, however, but historical lore, as Merrill has frequently pointed out, and as such they are often more entertaining and therefore more popular than history can hope to be.

Although most of Hosmer's list of distinguished visitors would also find their place in such a volume, as well as the hometown lads who made good elsewhere, some of these would have fitted well into my book, too. But others of at least equal merit, whom I did mention, would have had to be omitted or the city historian would have been accused of name dropping. I should, however, have included Congressman Ostertag whose bill for the appointment of an Urban Affairs Commission, though unsuccessful in 1959, reflected a widening concern over the problems cities such as Rochester face. Alan Valentine's offhand washroom reference to "hoodlums" seems, on the other hand, to have no bearing on Rochester's metropolitan emergence, but the passing of Humphrey's bookstore might well have been noted.

In a friendly letter, Hosmer mentions a few other omissions. One that should have been included was the experimental food-surplus stamp program initiated at Rochester in the late 1930's. It clearly had significance as evidence of Rochester's continued creativity in the welfare field even after the federal authorities had taken over. That letter also amplifies the protest in his published review against my tendency to emphasize organizations and to neglect "exciting characters who never were elected to a board or never headed a committee." Again such characters are proper subjects for a reminiscent volume, while organizational vitality is crucial to a metropolis. An excellent Thanksgiving Day editorial by Mr. Hosmer in the *Times-Union* for Nov. 26, 1952, eulogizes Rochester's organizational genius.

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A few other friends have called my attention to unfortunate omissions. One notes the absence of any mention of the rapid growth in recent years of consumer credit as a major aspect of our economy. Although this was by no means peculiar to Rochester, or even to metropolitan communities, I might have given more attention than I did to efforts to control it in Rochester, for local merchants did help to develop techniques for checking credit ratings, and the Credit Bureau of Rochester received a national award on this count in 1952. A critical reader, who apparently hoped to see more of Rochester's defects highlighted, described my book as incredibly optimistic. Yet an historian hopefully seeks in his subject, as for himself, not perfection but meaning. Another critic deplors the lack of any reference to *The Voice*, a struggling weekly of which I did take note in an article on local Negro history where its significance lies rather than in the city's story.

Another friend has called attention to the absence of any mention of the Western New York Psychoanalytic Group formed at Rochester in 1956. The growth of this profession since the arrival of Dr. Sandor S. Feldman in 1941 was, of course, stimulated by the opening of the Psychiatric Clinic in Wing R at the Medical School, which I have noted, but the broader services of these men, who now number eleven, are clear indications of Rochester's new metropolitan complexity. In a closely related field I also failed to mention the launching of a local Counselling Service for Alcoholics in 1940 and the opening six years later of an Information Center to promote the work. This program, a sophisticated metropolitan response to the problem so inadequately handled during the prohibition era, which I discussed, should have been included on its merits as well as a development from that earlier movement.

Among those whose names should have been included at some point were the following: Henry E. Gillette, who has since been elected mayor of Rochester but whose increasingly effective activity in politics had enabled him to carry the north-west councilmanic district for the Democrats for the first time since the adoption of the City Manager Charter; and Lawrence Bernard Casey, who in May, 1953, was consecrated as the first auxiliary bishop in the 85-year-old Rochester Catholic Diocese. As the first of its native sons to serve the community in this capacity, the latter has his major responsibility in the outlying portions of Rochester's expanding metropolitan environment. Although the Kodak Company is reticent in singling out its research scientists, three who have received distinguished awards outside should have been mentioned—John Capstaff for his contributions in the development of home movies, Dr. George C. Higgins, and Dr. Max Herzberger in applied and theoretical physics; each of these, with others, has helped to broaden Rochester's horizon. The services of Dr. John J. Morton, Jr., as head of the medical team sent to Japan to treat a group of fishermen seared by a hydrogen-bomb blast in 1954, an appointment which recognized the University Medical School's specialized research in that field, also deserved mention.

Indeed, in the several months that have elapsed since July, 1961, when I officially concluded my narrative (only the election results in November were slipped in at the last reading of page proof), I have frequently encountered citizens and read or heard mention of others whose activities, I reflected, might easily have been woven into my account. Certainly the number who contributed to Rochester's emergence as a metropolis is legion, and for many who would have been pleased to see their names included, my selection will appear seriously defective.

Yet if the book stimulates them to place their careers and those of their friends into its context, it will have performed one of history's major functions, which is, in Becker's words, "the enrichment of our experience by bringing into our minds memories of the experience of the community."

Thus, rather than feeling oppressed because of the number of omissions that have been called to my attention, I have rejoiced over this evidence of the book's vitality. (Possibly my biggest error was not to omit all names from the index!) My reaction would be different if there were no such protests or if the omissions tended to refute or qualify my interpretation; fortunately that has not so far been the case.

Moreover, while a glance through a stack of my unused notes reveals some that might have amplified my theme, as well as many that again seem pointless, none appears to raise serious doubts. Let us consider a few. I note that Bruce Mann reported in the *Times-Union* of Dec. 1, 1952, that the annual income of Monroe County residents had passed the billion dollar mark for the first time that year. Even if we do not attach major significance to statistics or to size, that ten-digit figure does have metropolitan connotations! Or again, from the *Democrat* of that year, I have a note which reports that the number of parakeets in the Rochester area had practically doubled in a year, soaring above 15,000 and prompting one resident to specialize in the manufacture of toys for their entertainment and the amusement of their owners. Perhaps this, too, was a manifestation of metropolitan life. To explore the possibility, I have called the merchant in question, only to learn that he abandoned the business five years ago when the interest in parakeets slumped. His parting remark was: "Canaries are now the rage, if you want to know it." That, of course, is one key to my problem: "If you want to know it." But it is not the master key.

A more significant note from my files, and one that I am glad to recall, reports that Rochester won the American Heritage Foundation's first prize for the "most intensive non-partisan effort" of any city its size to get out the vote in November, 1952. That fact may, at first glance, seem to have little bearing on the city's development into a metropolis, but a moment's thought reveals it as having major significance in determining the character of the metropolis produced.

In rereading, in the preparation of this article, several philosophical studies of the meaning of history, I have come across an account in one of them of a significant convention held at Rochester in 1926. It was the only meeting of the American Historical Association ever held here, and I did not mention it. I recalled a note to it in my files, however, and on checking I discover that it was generously covered in the press of the day. It may have helped to bring young Dr. Dexter Perkins, chairman of the committee on arrangements, into greater prominence locally, but beyond that it had little apparent effect on the community's development. Yet it was there, I now learn, that American historians first devoted a full session to "the conflict between the orthodox scientific view of history and the pragmatic or relativist view," with distinguished spokesmen for each side on the platform. Clearly this was a significant historical event, but its significance belonged properly to the history of the profession, not to that of Rochester where the press noted but failed, quite understandably, to grasp the crucial nature of the issues debated. Nevertheless, since it had an indirect influence on the training, and therefore the outlook, of the city's present historian, it has perhaps had its effect on the volume we are discussing.

This lengthy illustration throws light on an important aspect of urban or community history. Many developments occurring

within a town's borders have closer ties to the histories of broader movements—economic, civic, social, or cultural—than with that of the locality. Events at Rochester, significant in wider spheres, may have little apparent relevance to the city, and the same holds for the individuals involved; however, as Rochester has expanded its horizon and advanced its status to that of a metropolis, more of these somewhat separate historical strands, each with its own evolutionary momentum, have intersected in and contributed to the variety and enrichment of the community's development and consequently to its history.

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I have said enough, perhaps, both to demonstrate the complexity of my task in the selection of historical facts, and to suggest the tentative character but hopeful purpose of my interpretations. Not trained as a philosopher, I hesitate to venture further into the still active debate between the empirical or positivistic and the pragmatic or relativistic schools of social scientists. Nevertheless I must confess that if there was a hidden destiny, a pervasive and inescapable urban pattern, an all-controlling societal process determining Rochester's course, it has somehow escaped me.

The existence of such deterministic controls also escaped, to take one example, the probing eyes of the newly self-conscious civic leaders of Rochester in the early 1900's when they tried for the first time to plan for the city's future improvement. And the interesting fact that Rochester's new civic consciousness paralleled a similar development in some other cities resulted, as the records disclose, from inter-city contacts between alert men earnestly seeking solutions for common problems. And again, in the case of the men concerned with local welfare in the early 1930's, or the members of the Postwar Problems Coun-

cil over a decade later, the sense of personal and group responsibility for the planning and implementation of appropriate action displayed an independence of spirit that belied either cynicism or fatalism. Although they did not fully agree with leaders of similar movements in other cities, they were eager to learn their views and sometimes to work cooperatively with them. Indeed, it was by these inter-city contacts on urban problems and opportunities, social and cultural as well as economic, that a new and richer America was brought into being.

And although the historian can seldom pause to identify them all, each movement forward or backward was, in my judgment, the work of individual citizens whether many or few. Their ability to plan and act together is a widely shared human quality manifested in formal and informal aspects of the democratic society of which we are a part and which we can help to reshape, if not exactly in accordance with our ideals, at least in our own image. The activity of such a dynamic society is the substance of history, and its continued existence is the historian's faith. The latter's search for underlying and motivating themes serves, when successful, to identify cooperative purposes and social goals that will liberate readers from a frustrating sense of chaos or the needless repetition of out-moded custom. I hope that my volumes on Rochester will partially serve this purpose.

### **Books on the Meaning of History**

- Carl L. Becker, *New Liberties for Old* (New Haven, 1941).
- Edward H. Carr, *What is History* (New York, 1962).
- R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946).
- Committee on Historiography, *The Social Sciences in Historical Study*  
(Social Science Research Council, Bulletin 64, 1954).
- Robert Heilbroner, *The Future as History* (New York, 1960).
- Emery Neff, *The Poetry of History* (New York, 1947).
- Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Paths to the Present* (New York, 1949).
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