

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

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## The First Four Decades of the Chamber of Commerce

By BLAKE MCKELVEY

Like most other Rochester institutions, the Chamber of Commerce was by no means a pioneer, yet it displayed a burst of vitality at its start and has over the years attained considerable influence in the community and an enviable distinction among large-city chambers. The seventy-fifth anniversary of its establishment, late in 1887, offers an appropriate occasion for a review of its accomplishments; it also invites a consideration of the many issues raised during its first four decades that were not so effectively met. Fortunately the Chamber has welcomed a candid examination of its record by opening its files to my inspection, and I have eagerly grasped the task as an opportunity to shed new light on the history and character of Rochester.

### Origins of the Chamber of Commerce

Rochester, once the "Young Lion of the West," exhausted its youthful pioneering zeal in the 1820's. Along with several early village libraries, academies, theaters, and other institutions

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of its boom-town period, the first Board of Manufacturers, organized in November 1828, quickly dropped from view. That initial cooperative effort, headed by Jonathan Child, soon to be elected first mayor, invited local business men to assemble at the Franklin Institute every Friday evening at six o'clock "until further notice." Unfortunately, no further notices or other records have come to light, and like other overly ambitious local ventures the board probably succumbed during the recession that hit Rochester in 1829.

The men associated with that board found other methods of exercising leadership during the next two decades—generally as bankers and as civic officials—but in 1844 the editor of the *Democrat* called for the formation of a Board of Trade to safeguard Rochester's interests in the lake trade. Buffalo, Detroit, and Chicago, as well as Troy and other enterprising cities in the East, had such boards through which their merchants, manufacturers, and master mechanics exerted a unified pressure for harbor improvements and cooperated in the promotion of local advantages. But Rochester was in a transition period, with the old millers challenged by rising nurserymen and by a variety of merchant-manufacturers, none of whom had yet achieved leadership, with the result that nothing came of the proposal.

New men took up the cause a decade later. Former-Mayor Thomas Kempshall, a miller who had survived several reversals, paying all of his obligations in full, assumed the lead with Josiah W. Bissell, a promoter of real estate. The Board of Trade they organized drew business men into the Arcade Hall at nine-thirty every morning for an interchange of information and other mutual advantages. Apparently this activity lapsed after a time, for in December 1855 Thomas Kempshall assembled a few of the remaining members to learn their reaction to

a letter from Toronto inviting Rochester's participation in a railroad dedication. Arrangements to send a delegation to Toronto for the opening of the Toronto and Hamilton Railroad were soon announced, but nothing further is heard of that board.

Even some of the more active boards of trade suspended operation during the Civil War, although those of Buffalo, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, among a few others, survived. It was March 1867 before a renewed effort was made in Rochester to establish such an institution. Of the men previously identified with the movement, only Charles B. Hill, a merchant-miller popularly known for his witty letters to the editor chiefly about rival Buffalo, took part in the revival. George J. Whitney, a leading miller, a proprietor of the largest local grain elevator, and a director of the New York Central, was elected president, and with Mayor Henry L. Fish and several ex-mayors he addressed a strong protest to the state legislature against the inefficient operation of the canals, which had resulted in delays at the close of the season leaving several hundred boats laden with produce locked in a frozen canal. Apparently the cold weather discouraged many members of the board from attending their rooms adjoining the library in the Arcade, for an amusing account, in February 1868 (possibly by C. B. Hill) described them as "among the quietest in the city." Again the effort subsided.

The next attempt to form an active business men's association occurred in February 1872. Whitney attended the meetings held in the Common Council room, but he was there not as its leader but as a spokesman for the New York Central, which was under attack for its discriminatory rates. Max Brickner and Henry Michaels, two clothing manufacturers, and Edwin O. Sage, a shoe manufacturer, were outspoken in their complaints.

Nevertheless, a miller was again chosen president, James A. Hinds, and after a flurry of activity that spring the association met in September to adopt resolutions of condolence for the family of one of their deceased members before the society likewise succumbed.

Local protests against discriminatory rates continued, and the depression of the mid-seventies presented many still graver problems for which no clear solutions appeared. Sporadic efforts by the bankers to establish a clearing house for the exchange of checks were unfruitful, but in 1880 a group of commercial travelers, some thirty in number, formed a local branch of the New York Association of Commercial Travelers and launched a campaign to enroll their 200 fellows.

A surge of prosperity in the eighties gave the heads of several new Rochester industries increased self-confidence. Manufacturers of women's shoes and men's clothing vied for first place, with the nurserymen, the instrument makers, the manufacturers of furniture and carriages and tobacco products, and the processors of foods and drugs all competing for a favored position. In 1884, when the St. Louis Board of Trade called a convention of business leaders at Washington to devise a new bankruptcy law, Rochester sent Henry Michaels of the leading clothing firm and Eugene T. Curtis of the shoe industry as representatives. And three years later when Mayor Cornelius R. Parsons named a committee of business men to consider Rochester's stand on a proposed commercial union with Canada, these men with Lewis P. Ross, another shoe man, Frank S. Upton, a lamp manufacturer, Thomas B. Griffith, a stock broker, and a dozen others served with William S. Kimball, the tobacco manufacturer, as chairman.

These and other problems confronting business men spurred a renewed effort to establish a board of trade. Ross and Griffith

and George C. Buell, a wholesale grocer, were outspoken in its behalf, and on November 22 they assembled a group of twenty men at the mayor's office to further the cause. Griffith, who brought along the charter of the Buffalo association, was named temporary secretary and Buell, chairman. Among others who expressed enthusiasm, Henry C. Brewster, a leading banker, cited the Chamber of Commerce of St. Paul as a model and declared that if even such a city as Auburn could maintain a board of trade, Rochester should certainly be able to support one. Griffith reported that the dues of the members in the Buffalo association were sufficient to pay all expenses, including a salary of \$2500 for the full-time secretary. Finally, Henry Michaels moved that the chairman appoint three committees, one on by-laws, one on memberships, and one on nominations, to report at the next meeting, and it was so ordered.

Nearly sixty men assembled on December 5 to hear the committee reports and take action. With Buell again in the chair and Griffith as secretary, L. P. Ross submitted a proposed constitution that placed authority for action in a board of thirty trustees to be elected for three-year terms. All trustees as well as the president and three vice-presidents, also elective, were to be Rochester residents, but membership in the Chamber of Commerce, as the new organization was officially named, was open to all actively engaged in business at Rochester who paid \$20 annual dues. The assembly expressed its approval but deferred final action until an organization meeting to be held on December 19. Henry Michaels reported that nearly 120 firms had indicated a readiness to join and that others were awaiting a reading of the constitution. His final report and that of the nominating committee were deferred until the next meeting, but Henry B. Hathaway of the Flour City Bank was named temporary treasurer.

The organization meeting on December 19 drew an attendance of 83 men. Hathaway reported a paid-up membership of 150 and with Henry Michaels moved the formal adoption of the constitution. Chairman Buell called on Sidney B. Roby, a carriage maker, for the nominating committee report. When Roby submitted five names for president, three of them, including Buell, withdrew, leaving the contest between L. P. Ross, H. H. Warner, and Samuel Wilder, who was nominated from the floor. Hubert H. Warner, widely known as a patent-medicine king, was Rochester's most flamboyant business man, and although he had not previously displayed open interest in the movement, his willingness to serve won him 43 votes to 36 for Ross, who moved that the election be made unanimous. Kimball, Frank S. Upton, and Michaels led a field of six for the three vice-presidencies, and the official slate of trustees (including representatives of all major industries except the optical and photographic firms) was approved.

H. H. Warner proved an excellent selection as president. Possessed of a commanding presence and blissfully confident of his private promotions, he contributed much gusto to the movement. He generously invited the 300 members and a number of distinguished guests to an inaugural banquet at the Powers Hotel on January 10 at which in stirring phrases he set lofty objectives for the Chamber. The board soon leased the spacious rooms over the Rochester Savings Bank as headquarters and installed J. Y. McClintock, a young engineer from the gas works, as secretary. McClintock, an enthusiastic and imaginative organizer, made arrangements to serve lunch in the Chamber rooms and greeted all visitors with a host of ideas and challenging problems. He engaged Joseph O'Connor, *Post Express* editor, to speak on the enlargement of the Erie Canal and George W. Elliott of the *Union and Advertiser* to discuss

civic reform at successive membership meetings.

Warner and McClintock, both expansive in temperament, worked in close harmony and found Kimball equally congenial. They inaugurated a study of desirable charter changes by Elliott and John Bower, an able accountant; they named committees that authored resolutions favoring among other matters one-cent postage on all letters, and protesting discriminatory freight rates; they secured a promise of sleeping-car accommodations to New York and of a morning train to Niagara Falls. They initiated a discussion of such knotty problems as increasing the city's water supply, checking flood hazards in the Genesee, improving port facilities, and developing a newly discovered natural-gas field in the area. Although an industrial development committee failed in its negotiations to bring a typewriter factory and a watch manufacturer to the city, it did induce a perfume factory to move to Rochester and checked the migration of one local firm.

Several questions disclosed conflicting interests. The trustees refused after a heated debate to endorse a bill curbing the smoke nuisance, for some men hoped to see a million more tons of soft coal burned in Rochester to drive new industries. Advocates of a Saturday half-holiday failed to gain a majority of the trustees, and proponents of a state gas commission with regulatory powers also met defeat. Proposals for improved rail links to form a belt system met criticism from friends of the threatened parks. These and other problems carried over and many called for careful deliberation.

William S. Kimball, who succeeded Warner as president, discovered that an enterprising and imaginative president could propose, but that the trustees were often slow to act. He urged that since the Board of Supervisors was unwilling to build the new Court House Rochester needed, the city should

petition for the creation of a special commission to build it, but the trustees refused an endorsement. His suggestions that the Chamber take a firm stand on the need for an adequate sewer plan and for street improvements and that it invite labor leaders to its conferences when issues involving them were under consideration also went unheeded. His proposal that membership in the Chamber be opened to professional men and to business men in neighboring towns served by Rochester was voted down. But he did press ahead with numerous other measures and persuaded the trustees to approve membership in the National Board of Trade and to authorize him to attend that body's conference at Louisville. He became increasingly absorbed toward the close of his term in a plan for a new skyscraper to be erected at the corner of Main and South with the Chamber as its sponsor and every member a stockholder. Proud owner of the largest orchid collection in America, Kimball loaned many blooms to make a floral representation of the proposed 13-story building as the feature exhibit at the third annual banquet the next January.

L. P. Ross, the enterprising shoe manufacturer who succeeded Kimball as president, saw Rochester confronted with several unsettling questions. The Chamber's advocacy of charter reform was increasingly regarded as meddlesome by the Common Council, and the action of a committee headed by Henry G. Danforth in questioning the valuation and duration of the franchise of the reorganized transit system brought indignant protests from the new owners and from several political leaders. Secretary McClintock's part in these controversies and as a principal promoter of the natural gas venture, as well as of the proposed storage and power dams in the upper Genesee, each of which threatened the entrenched interests of some members, aroused so much criticism that his ouster was sought. Although



the industrial development committee reported the establishment of a new rolling mill, a tannery, and a vinegar factory in Rochester, it faced the loss of a lamp factory and the dubious future of three large breweries, a cider mill, and the Warner Safe Liver Cure firm, all acquired by outside capitalists. The denouement came in January when the official slate of officers and trustees, headed by George C. Buell for president, was defeated by a group of insurgents, among them George Eastman and Edward Bausch, who successfully backed Eugene T. Curtis for president.

### **Promotion Without Reform**

The independents, who professed a conservative as opposed to a liberal business man's outlook, soon replaced McClintock with George Moss as secretary and diverted the Chamber's emphasis from controversial issues to promotional ventures. Several of its early functions fell to other organizations. The establishment of a clearing house in 1890 supplied a center for the exchange of checks and for other banking transactions. Although the Chamber pressed ahead with its study of charter revision, it abandoned to the Good Government clubs of the mid-nineties the drive for reform. The formation of an active Credit Men's Association in the late nineties supplied another independent body, similar to that of the Commercial Travelers, which continued to thrive. Yet the Chamber maintained its original standing committees—on manufactures and promotion of trade, on railroads and transportation, on public improvements, on statistics and publications, on legislation, and on postal facilities, telegraphy, and insurance—until new ones were required at the end of the century.

President Curtis, a shoe manufacturer and a publisher of the *Union and Advertiser*, helped to transform the Chamber's

annual reports from informative reviews of its activities into illustrated booklets advertising the city's advantages. His successor, Max Brickner, the first Jew to serve as president of any chamber in the country, was a clothing man who had likewise become a publisher—in his case it was the *Post Express*. Brickner had built his personal success on his superior abilities as a salesman, and he helped now to sell the Chamber, enrolling 530 members, a total that exceeded that of the Buffalo Merchant's Exchange and placed the Rochester organization ahead of all city chambers in ratio of members to population.

Divisive issues did not disappear, however, and new problems arose. H. Sellers McKee of Pittsburgh, head of the group of capitalists who bought up the Rochester transit company, was praised for his offer of fifty acres on the city's western border for distribution free to new industries; he was made a member of the Chamber despite his non-residence, and the earlier opposition to his franchise disappeared, yet the depression checked the hoped-for establishment of new industries. Alarmed by an impending water shortage, the Chamber, under the presidency of Henry C. Brewster, relaxed its standards and recommended the use of river water, but the more cautious health authorities prevailed, and the city patiently awaited the opening of the second Hemlock conduit late in 1894. Quiet negotiations rather than blustering protests got modest adjustments in the freight rate controversy with the New York Central. But although construction finally commenced in 1893 on the 13-story skyscraper on which so much of the Chamber's attention had been focused, it was as a private venture by Kimball and his son-in-law, Charles A. Keeler, and its soaring steel frame, the first of its type in Rochester, failed to hide the dark clouds of the depression that swept over the city that year, making H. H. Warner its first victim.

Owner of a 250-acre brickyard capable of producing 15,000,000 bricks annually, Ira L. Otis, the Chamber's seventh president, had ample time in the quiet year of 1894 to attend all Chamber affairs. Efforts to establish a railroad bureau to obtain better freight rates had to be abandoned because of a lack of support, and a relief fund sponsored by the Chamber collected only \$11,076 to ease the hardships of the unemployed. Otis was glad to turn the gavel over to Charles P. Ford, a shoe manufacturer, whose inaugural banquet in Daniel Powers' new Hall of Mirrors occasioned such an outburst of overwrought nerves that a ministerial gibe at "the Chamber's annual drunk" captured the headlines and prompted sober second thoughts as to the place of wine at such banquets. President Ford saw the Chamber ensconced that June in its new quarters on the twelfth and thirteenth floors of the Keeler Building, which was promptly renamed the Chamber of Commerce Building. He brought out another illustrated report that maintained a bold front, yet he had few other triumphs to record.

James G. Cutler, inventor and owner of the Cutler Mail Chute, took a special interest in the legislative work of the Chamber and as president revitalized its committees. George Moss had his secretarial office next to a reading room equipped with 3000 books and magazines of interest to business men and adjoining the large assembly room on the twelfth floor where the members gathered for monthly lectures and committee meetings. With a kitchen and lunching facilities on the floor above, it seemed an ideal arrangement, with a clear view of the city spreading out on all sides, but unfortunately the scene was, if anything, too clear, with very little smoke, and not too animated that year. Charles J. Brown, a nurseryman and the second Rochester native to become president of the Chamber (Curtis was the first), served in 1897 when the economic tide

began to turn. After several years of negotiations the industrial promotions committee finally saw the Merchants' Despatch Shops safely located at Despatch (later called East Rochester), thus saving an important firm for the Rochester area if not for the city proper. A gala excursion by 500 Chamber members to Niagara Falls marked the resurgence of business spirit that year, but the published report was slender and subdued.

Under Charles E. Angle, the first miller to occupy the president's chair, the Chamber assumed a more positive role. George Eastman accepted nomination as second vice-president and served on the Executive Committee. The trustees compiled a list of twelve objectives for the year, including such matters as stop-over privileges on the railroads and all-night street cars, both of which were achieved as well as an increase in memberships. The public improvements committee pressed for street repairs, for a central market, and for home-rule in taxation. President Angle and First Vice-President Rufus A. Sibley attended the Indianapolis Monetary Convention and returned as strong advocates of currency reform. The Chamber urged the creation of a Department of Commerce and Industry with cabinet rank. Although the annual report was again omitted from the glamorous booklet, *Rochester Illustrated*, issued by the Chamber, fulsome press accounts recorded its accomplishments and its new pride in the discovery that Rochester had taken first place among cities over 100,000 in home ownership.

Both Rufus A. Sibley and Henry B. Hathaway, twelfth and thirteenth presidents, respectively, were successful merchants and helped to strengthen the Chamber's interest in commercial matters. When George Moss resigned after a decade as secretary, Sibley induced John M. Ives, formerly the manager of Warner's Safe Liver Cure interests, to accept the post and step up its promotional functions. Like Sibley and Hathaway, their

successors Alexander B. Lamberton and Henry C. Brewster had each been a Chamber founder, and Brewster was the first to serve a second term. All four were beginning to see Rochester in a new light as the commercial center of a growing region. They initiated and fostered a campaign for the construction of suburban electric lines to re-establish Rochester's connections with towns up the valley and along the lake shore. The Chamber's illustrated booklets, *Rochester, the Power City* (1901) and *Rochester in 1904*, compiled by Ives, were the first to depict the city as a budding metropolis.

Rochester's growth after the turn of the century was reflected in the Chamber's expanding horizons. President Lamberton, a devoted Park Commissioner, induced the trustees to sponsor a series of band concerts in 1901—the antecedent of the Park Band. President Brewster renewed his earlier campaign for a public library and got the Chamber to endorse a request for Carnegie aid in its behalf. Brewster also granted a hearing to Dr. George Goler, the city health officer whose illustrated lecture on the wretched housing conditions in some Rochester neighborhoods introduced another knotty problem. Although little was accomplished in these fields, the Chamber did take action on another front when it raised a fund of \$24,900 to buy the undeveloped tract known as Lincoln Park on the western edge of the city for use as free sites for prospective new firms.

Thomas B. Dunn, Brewster's successor, was the first to serve two consecutive terms. A prosperous manufacturer of Sen Sen tablets and other perfumes, he was an inveterate advertiser and backed the publication of the most elaborate display booklet yet produced. Under his leadership one committee pressed for port improvements, another for a convention hall, and still another for the electrification of three branch lines of the New York Central that served Rochester in order to speed the com-

pletion and integration of a suburban trolley network. At his request, the Chamber reversed an earlier stand and welcomed suburban business men to membership. After some debate the trustees took a firm stand against the proposed Barge Canal as too costly and another against the establishment of a parcel-post system because it would threaten the private express companies. However, when the Barge Canal won state-wide approval, the Chamber withdrew its opposition and proffered its advice on the proper location of the route around Rochester.

Clinton N. Rogers, grandson-in-law of Colonel Rochester, was the last of the original founders to serve as president. In some respect his term marked the opening of a new era. Not only did his recommendation that the city enact restraints on the smoke nuisance effect a reversal in Chamber policy, but that July, when an advertisement for workers to staff the new factories moving to Rochester brought a flood of applicants before the jobs were ready, the Chamber created an employment bureau and successfully placed 500 of them in other positions. The shortage of houses also became apparent, and Rogers appointed a committee to study the problem. Indeed, he persuaded the trustees to double the number of standing committees. The voice of J. Y. McClintock, now serving as county engineer, was again heard in the Chamber as he promoted a new belt system and backed a renewed campaign for a storage dam on the upper Genesee.

Robert A. Badger and Michael Doyle, who followed Rogers as president in 1906 and 1907, continued to grapple with some of these new problems. The "Greater Rochester" foreseen by the expansionists of the early 1900's did not materialize as rapidly as expected, but the housing shortage, at least, became more acute and prompted an effort to organize a non-profit corporation to build modest cottages for working men. When

Ives resigned as secretary in 1907, Sidney R. Clarke was brought to Rochester from New York to take his place. Experienced as a settlement-house worker in the metropolis, Clarke quickly took hold of the housing program, and when funds for construction failed to come in, he launched a contest for the best architectural plans for modest homes in order to stimulate private construction. Clarke's most lasting contribution, made shortly after his arrival, was a stirring new slogan, "Do It For Rochester," with which he injected new spirit into the Chamber programs.

Clarke contributed another even more lasting slogan in Charles F. Garfield's year, 1908. "Rochester Made Means Quality" became the keynote at the first Industrial Exposition organized by the Chamber in Convention Hall that year. It soon appeared on many badges and pennants and on scores of letterheads, for there was such substance behind the slogan, and it captured the city's imagination and set a new standard applicable in many fields. At the same time it raised questions of degree, of taste, and of judgment that could not be settled by weight of numbers or by promotional outlays, and the Chamber's next era would see a new, more analytical approach to its problems.

### **Reorganization and Expansion**

It was in 1909, its twenty-first year, that the Rochester Chamber of Commerce came of age. Under Edward G. Miner, its president that year and vice-president of the Pfaudler Co., one of the new industries brought to the city a few years before, the Chamber assumed new functions and adopted more effective measures to implement them. The resignation of Clarke as secretary and the appointment of Roland B. Woodward in his place prompted a review of the Chamber's staff needs and a

decision to create the post of assistant secretary to handle out-of-town inquiries and other details. General Secretary Woodward retained responsibility for news stories and publications and for direct relations with the trustees and committee chairmen, but he was authorized to assign one of his three assistants to each of the thirty-two permanent and temporary committees active that year. With its more adequate personnel, the Chamber was soon able to expand its publication program, and in 1912 it launched a bi-weekly "Official Bulletin," which in 1915 became *Rochester Commerce*.

One of its most important new functions was the promotion of a constructive approach to city planning. The Chamber did not initiate the study that produced the Wilgus plan for a New York Central station over the river, but it quickly assumed the lead in battling for its adoption. Even before that effort failed, the Chamber moved to create a Civic Improvement Committee, which collected a fund of \$10,000 and engaged the services of out-of-town experts in the preparation of the Brunner-Olmsted plan, which was presented to the city at a Chamber banquet in February 1911. Effective city planning was still far in the future, but meanwhile the Chamber found itself confronted by a critical housing shortage that threatened the success of its industrial expansion program. Under the presidency of George Dietrich, who succeeded Miner in 1910, the Chamber modified its new-industries campaign. The offer of free sites was withdrawn, and instead of welcoming all new firms, the Chamber became more discriminating and endeavored to attract only those that promised to add to the balanced development of the community as a quality producer.

In Dietrich's term the Chamber also made other crucial decisions. After long hesitation and in spite of an opposing stand by Wall Street bankers, it agreed to back a study of the



monetary problems by the National Board of Trade. In order to meet the competition of Buffalo and Syracuse merchants for the trade of regional towns, it gave reluctant approval of a plan to permit the large interurban trolleys to carry freight into the city on the public streets. And it increased the budget of the convention committee to enable it to attract a larger number of conventions to Rochester. To finance these activities, the Chamber raised its annual dues to \$30 and applied them to individuals rather than firms in order to increase the representation from the larger companies and thus expand its membership.

Dietrich also initiated a new program of conducted tours for the sons of Chamber members. The 75 sons enrolled in the first tour that March increased to 210 for the third tour in May, and this group, reassembled repeatedly in succeeding years, formed a nucleus for an oft-proposed Junior Chamber, which however was not established until 1941.

Albert B. Eastwood, a shoe merchant who became president in 1911, focused attention on public safety and civic improvement. Thirty-five firms contributed \$100 each to a special fund to improve the illumination on downtown streets for a demonstration period. The Chamber hired a special secretary for the Civic Improvement Committee to promote public interest in a civic center. A revised and enlarged edition of an earlier booklet on *The Prevention of Fires* and another on *The Abatement of Smoke* attracted so much favor that several thousand copies were ordered. The next year the Chamber issued another on *How Fakers Fake*. Henry W. Morgan of the Morgan Machine Co. was president that year (and destined the next year to become the first president of the Boy Scout Council of Rochester). Morgan drew the Chamber into support of the newly organized Farm Bureau of Monroe County and of the Community Council which endeavored to harmonize the interests of busi-

ness leaders in ten area counties.

Robert M. Searle, head of the Gas and Electric Co., served as Chamber president in 1913 and saw the inauguration of several new programs. He led the first trade excursion of fifty Rochester business men on a three-day automobile tour of regional towns in search of increased trade opportunities. They publicized the first Rochester-Made Week, which opened ten days later and featured rail excursions from regional towns to Rochester. One of the Chamber's monthly speakers that year was a visitor from Letchworth, England, who told of that epochal experiment in town planning and housing reform. The Chamber's annual meeting had epochal overtones, too, featuring an address by Vice-President Marshall delivered by telephone from Washington with each diner listening over a private earpiece. The assistant secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, also spoke, but in person.

Three George W's, a banker and two industrialists, occupied the Chamber rostrum during the next three years. George W. Thayer, the banker, voiced the mounting fear of many business men that President Wilson's reforms were leading to a depression, yet he supported more stringent state laws for safety regulations in factories. At his suggestion the trustees approved the establishment of a Safety Council in the Chamber and recommended the organization of a traffic bureau by the police. The battle for trade supremacy in the Genesee Country became more intense that year as invading teams from Buffalo and Cleveland countered the Rochester Chamber's efforts and relations with Oswego became somewhat ruffled. These concerns were overshadowed by the outbreak of war in Europe, which brought a flood of new orders and returning prosperity in 1915, George W. Todd's year. As the Chamber's membership climbed to 2555 that April, the need for more adequate rooms became

painfully evident. Everybody rejoiced the next month when George Eastman announced a gift of a half million for a new building, provided the Chamber raised an additional \$100,000. In its excitement the Chamber not only overtopped that figure but also organized a Manufacturers Council and deliberated the formation of an independent Convention Bureau and Junior Chamber. A committee on National Defense appointed by President Todd became increasingly active under his successor, George W. Robeson, who in 1916 saw the Manufacturers Council reorganized as a quasi-independent Industrial Management Council with A. Edwin Crockett as its secretary.

Young Harper Sibley, as president of the Chamber in 1917, had the pleasant task of presiding at the dedication of its new building on St. Paul Street that October. He gave much time to organizing home-front defense efforts and sponsored a War Inventions Council in the Chamber. Granger A. Hollister, who followed Sibley, faced graver problems of this sort as fuel and food shortages developed and involved Chamber members as citizens and producers alike. The resignation of Secretary Woodward in 1918 to engage in war work brought the temporary assignment of Crockett as acting secretary until Howard Strong was named to the post the next February. On the return of peace the Chamber, with Charles C. Beahan, president of a lumber mill, at its head, conducted numerous welcome-home ceremonies for returning service men and launched an Americanization program for newly naturalized citizens. By a vote of 516 to 13, it recorded its support of the League of Nations. The trustees renewed earlier campaigns for port improvements, for city beautification, and for traffic safety. And despite an aversion to government regulations, the Chamber led a popular drive for more effective regulation by the Public Service Commission of the city's telephone service.

Amidst the renewed activity of the postwar years, it quickly became apparent that the Chamber's new building was not adequate for its needs. Again George Eastman offered to foot the bill for the desired expansion provided the Chamber acquire the adjoining site. With great dispatch the Chamber raised the necessary funds, but difficulties in clearing the land delayed construction.

Jeremiah G. Hickey, president in 1920, boosted the membership above 4000 for the first time, enabling the Chamber to establish and maintain a Wholesale Merchant's Council, paralleling an earlier Retail Merchant's Council, and to organize a Better Business Bureau as well. These were but three of some forty active bureaus and councils that promoted varied civic as well as business interests. Possibly the most dramatic event of the year was the Homelands Exhibition, which drew 160,000 visitors in ten days and engaged over 2000 individuals of 17 nationalities in a richly rewarding festival under Chamber sponsorship.

One of the most sensational incidents involving the Chamber occurred in February 1920 when the *Democrat* published a rumor that Rochester had rebuffed an offer of Henry Ford to build a plant there. The charge came from a "Mr. Lewis" who was seeking a site for a Ford plant in Geneva since, as he declared, he had been blocked by the Chamber from entering Rochester. The incident was alleged to have occurred the year before, and the startled Chamber officials, before issuing a statement, wired the Ford Co. to learn of its accuracy. Bert J. Craig, secretary of the company, replied, asserting that the company had no plan to locate a plant in Rochester or its vicinity and denying any association with or knowledge of Lewis as an agent. Although the Chamber indignantly rejected the charge, the rumor lingered on, acquiring new details from time to time.

No doubt the Chamber's new policy, adopted in 1910, of refusing to provide free sites or other special advantages to new firms, as many cities still did, helped to perpetuate the rumor, but a careful examination of the secretary's minutes of the actions of both the Trustees and the Executive Committee in these years fails to reveal any mention of Ford before the charge appeared, or any similar rebuff to a major concern, though the decision to refuse free sites was repeatedly reaffirmed.

A trio of able industrialists presided over the Chamber in the early twenties. Following Hickey came W. Roy McCanne, who brought Roland B. Woodward back as General Secretary in January 1921 after the resignation of Strong. With his experienced help, McCanne pressed a campaign to persuade the city to acquire the bed of the old Erie Canal, now replaced by the Barge Canal, for use as a suburban trolley subway. The Chamber likewise prodded the city to purchase a tract on Scottsville Road for an aviation field and pressed the state for adequate funds for the completion of the barge-canal terminal. In response to a suggestion of George Eastman, it joined with the Central Trades Council in organizing a Community Conference Board to seek peaceful methods for promoting fuller year-round employment in the building trades. McCanne's successor, James E. Gleason of the Gleason Works, pressed effectively for the completion of the canal and port improvements and secured several minor but useful revisions in the city directories. Under his leadership the Investor's Protective Committee tightened its supervision of speculative stock promotions, and the Chamber, reversing its stand on daylight saving, came out in its favor, three to one.

Louis S. Foulkes, who succeeded Gleason, placed major emphasis on the Chamber's civic functions. Under his leadership the work of the Council for Better Citizenship was con-

siderably increased, and the New Citizen Banquets, taken over from the City Club in 1921, greeted 1000 newly naturalized citizens that year. The committee gave advice to 10,384 individuals, assisted 831 of them in bringing 1432 relations to the United States from 27 countries, and helped 473 in preparing to meet the citizenship requirements. In addition the Chamber's Foreign Trade Bureau conducted a survey of foreign trade activities in Rochester and staged a conference on the opportunities for its expansion, while a special board of arbitrators appointed by Foulkes settled a strike against the Rochester Taxicab Co. Much time was devoted to the hearings of the Rochester Switching Case before an I.C.C. examiner in the Federal Building that spring, and a decision was hopefully expected the next year.

Elmer E. Fairchild, president in 1924, officiated at the launching of both a Transportation Club and a Salesmen's Club as enduring activities of the Chamber. Founder and president of his own firm, a paper box company, he took a special interest in the work of the Industrial Development Committee and supported the Aviation Committee's efforts to make Rochester a stop on the new airmail service between Boston and Chicago. He rejoiced when the eighth annual Dollar Day conducted by the Chamber's Retail Merchant's Council proved the largest in its history, and again when a Chamber-backed bill, renaming the Genesee port as the Port of Rochester, received Congressional approval.

The high point in 1925, Herbert W. Bramley's year, was the decision of the I.C.C. in the State Street Switching Case. It was a clear victory for the Chamber, which for seven years had pressed by negotiations and finally by litigation the claims of State Street merchants for equitable switching privileges over the New York Central. That success added zest to other Cham-

ber activities, such as its promotion of harbor and airport improvements, but the most promising development was the final start of construction on its own annex.

John F. Dinkey, treasurer of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh, and Chamber president in 1926, recorded many achievements. Not only was the committee on new industries reorganized as a New Industries Bureau and a Rochester Industrial Corporation established to support its work, but the Retail Merchant's Council set up a credit bureau to supervise that vital function, and the Convention and Publicity Bureau brought 91 conventions for a record total of 66,570 delegates whose expenditures in Rochester were estimated at \$2,500,000.

Although 1927 was a year of stagnation in many communities, in Rochester it was a year of triumphant accomplishments. Even the building industry, in a slump elsewhere, showed a rise as work progressed on the new Times-Union headquarters, the new Knights of Columbus Building, and a new Rochester Savings Bank, among other structures. These, of course, were private ventures, but the Community Conference Board, now virtually an auxiliary of the Chamber and chaired by George Eastman, had so successfully stabilized the building industry, by promoting a year-round schedule of jobs, that large construction projects escaped some of the hazards faced in other cities. The successful completion and dedication of the Chamber's new annex spread an atmosphere of optimism through the community.

Edward A. Halbleib, the Chamber's fortieth president, presided at the dedication. Founder of one of the city's most vigorous young firms, the North East Electric Co., he gave hearty support to the work of the New Industries Bureau, which got off to a flying start under the able chairmanship of Herman Russell. He backed plans formulated by Woodward

and his staff for the compilation of monthly statistical charts of the city's business affairs for publication in *Rochester Commerce* and secured the cooperation of Kodak accountants, starting in July that year, in transposing these figures into monthly graphs. He authorized a "Civic and Industrial Survey of Rochester" (patterned after one in Dayton, where his chief rival, the Dayton Electrical Co., had taken the lead) and accumulated much information concerning Rochester's progress during the preceding decades. These backward glances at conditions five and even forty years before, when the Chamber had its start, were in no sense nostalgic, for they were designed to help chart a new forward stride.

And the Chamber of Commerce, ensconced in its newly enlarged building, the most admirably equipped in the country, was ready for new and larger tasks ahead. (We will endeavor to survey some of its experiences in the years after 1927 in a later issue of *Rochester History*.)