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Rochester's Near Northeast

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Rochester's Demonstration Cities area, which we will call the city's Near Northeast District, has from the beginning had a very distinctive character. Originally a part of the Town of Brighton, it was annexed to the city in 1834 and designated as the Fifth Ward. Later that ward was divided into the Fifth, Seventh, Eighth, and Fourteenth wards. The fortunes of the area have been determined in large part by the successive waves of newcomers who have settled there. Each has brought its distinctive developments and all have contributed, sometimes in dramatic fashion, to the city's changing character.

The Old Fifth and Seventh Wards

It was just 150 years ago that James Dowling, Rochester's first Irish-born resident, purchased an acre of land on the east bank between present St. Paul Street and the river gorge. His plot, situated on the high bluffs north of the falls, lacked water rights and was too distant from the central Four Corners for easy development. Nevertheless several of Dowling's Irish friends soon bought lots nearby and developed a settlement that became known in the 1820's as Dublin. In the next decade, when newcomers from Germany began to arrive, several of

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them located on the eastern edge of Dublin where Baden Street was later laid out north of Kelly Street, and Holland and Rhine Streets east from St. Joseph Street.

Although these outlying settlements grew but slowly in the thirties, they were included within the expanded borders of Rochester when it was incorporated as a city in 1834. Most of the residents in this district built their own modest frame cottages facing on St. Paul, Clinton, St. Joseph, and North Streets, or on one of the widely spaced side roads. Many of them kept a garden in the rear or worked on one of the several large truck patches that separated the main highways. A few found jobs in the eastside mills at the main and upper falls, but since the hike over to the major westside mills was too long for most people to make twice a day, the sale of northeastern lots was slow.

Some of these residents helped to build the Rochester and Auburn railroad in the late thirties. When it was completed in 1841, the railroad, swinging in a wide arc northeastward from the brink of the main falls, divided this sparsely settled northeastern district into three parts. Old Dublin, north of the tracks along St. Paul and Clinton Streets, continued to enjoy a modest growth, for the trains were either stopping or starting as they crossed these highways. St. Bridget's Church, established on Hand Street in 1854, became the focal center of this Irish community. Farther east the crossings were more dangerous, and very few new houses appeared along the roads laid out in that district. Some early settlers, in fact, moved south across the tracks to occupy the smaller district around Weld and Ontario Streets where other newcomers were building houses on narrow lots in the forties and fifties. Many of these were recent arrivals from Germany, some of Jewish faith, and these neighbors helped to support the nearby German Catholic St. Joseph's Church on Franklin Street, the German Lutheran Zion Church on Grove Street, or the B'rith Kodesh Temple on St. Paul Street.

By far the most interesting portion of the Near Northeast, as far as Rochester as a whole was concerned, was old Falls Field. This undeveloped tract between St. Paul and the gorge, just north of the tracks, afforded the best view of the Genesee Falls. Visitors to Rochester from the earliest days had invariably strolled over to enjoy this view, which was of course most dramatic during the spring floods or after a rainstorm up the valley. Since it was a pleasant spot on any day, visiting circuses and other traveling amusements generally pitched their tents there. An enterprising German opened a beer garden there in the 1840's, and similar facilities reappeared every spring and summer for several decades.

As Rochester's population continued to grow in the fifties and sixties, many newcomers built homes in the district within the arc of the railroad until most of its lots were occupied. Some of these people found jobs in the rapidly expanding clothing industry, which was developing in lofts and small shops throughout this part of town. Others worked in small shoe factories and similar establishments along Water Street or, after the mid-sixties, rode the horse cars over to the more thriving factories on the west side. Few families moved northeast of the tracks, for the increased number of trains, after the Rochester and Auburn became a part of the New York Central in 1854, made the grade crossings too dangerous.

By the 1870's, however, the pressure of Rochester's expansion began to overcome that barrier. The undeveloped land along the gorge made it an attractive location for industries that did not require water power. A number of brewers saw the opportunity to dig pits into the bank for underground vats and used water pumped from the river below to keep them cool. Soon Henry Bartholomew and two other German brewers were competing for sites along the gorge and also for the labor of skilled workmen who were thus encouraged to build homes along Hanover

and other new streets laid out north of the tracks in the late seventies. When in 1874 Bausch and Lomb opened the first building of its new factory on North St. Paul Street the prosperity of the district was assured.

Bausch and Lomb, makers of hard-rubber spectacle frames and other optical instruments, had located their factory on the eastern bank at the point where the city was constructing the 925-foot iron-rivited Vincent Place Bridge across the gorge. It's opening in 1873 further stimulated developments on the east bank. Modest frame houses occupied most of the narrow but deep lots that lined the highways and side streets of the district. A few corner lots attracted blocks of stores, some built of brick. Six public schools, at least two parochial schools, and eleven churches served the residents of this area by the mid-seventies. The churches, which provided the chief focus of community life, included two Irish and one German Catholic, three Lutheran, one Presbyterian, one Holland, and two German Methodist churches and one synagogue, all within the district, plus several more on its borders. These people also supported a Turner's Hall on Clinton Avenue near Kelly Street and LeRoy Satterlee's Collegiate Institute at the corner of Atwater and Oregon Streets. The horse car company extended its tracks north in the mid-seventies across the New York Central on St. Paul to Ward, to Clinton, and finally to Hand Street.

While the Fifth and adjoining wards to the east thus appeared on the threshold of new beginnings in the middle and late seventies, the old Second Ward, west of the river, was suffering a decline. The cramped quarters around the depot on Mill Street and the limited size of the nearby freight yard prompted a campaign to persuade the railroad to build a larger station east of the river and to elevate its tracks. Many in the Second Ward opposed the move, but the eastsiders, backed by business men eager for more adequate facilities, carried the day, and the big

job was commenced in the late seventies. The construction and opening of a bridge over the gorge at Platt Street in 1893 provided a valuable new link with the west side and brought the two industrial districts into closer collaboration.

Prosperity and Depression

The new bridges of 1873 and 1893 benefited all portions of the Near Northeast District. The removal of the station and the freight yard to the east side brought new prosperity there, while the elevation of the tracks and the construction of underpasses at North, Hudson, St. Joseph and Clinton as well as St. Paul Streets opened the entire district to rapid settlement. By 1891, when the transit company was electrified, trolley lines pushed north on these streets to new residential tracts beyond Clifford Avenue. The principal sources of newcomers in these years were southern and eastern Europe, and by 1900 many Italians as well as Jews from Poland and Russia were moving into the district. They were not only crowding the earlier residents and prompting some to sell out and move into new homes further north; they were also building additional structures in the yards behind their cottages and greatly adding to the congestion of the entire northeast district.

By 1900 most portions of the Near Northeast District had been developed. Many of the formerly deep lots had been subdivided, and modest frame houses and cottages lined the alleys and narrow streets extended through the once spacious truck patches. In addition to upwards of three thousand dwellings, the area boasted a plentiful supply of stores and shops, chiefly on St. Joseph and Clinton Streets, a dozen churches and three synagogues, five public and four parochial schools. The old Falls Field amusement center had now disappeared, giving way to industrial activity along St. Paul Street and the Genesee gorge. The construction of a railroad spur from the New York Central

speeded this development. Among the plants constructed there, in addition to Bausch and Lomb, were the Bartholomew Brewing Company, the Genesee Brewing Company, the Rochester Gas Works, Curtice Brothers, Yawman and Erb, Stecher Lithographic Company, Voght Manufacturers. Scattered throughout the district were numerous subcontracting shops of the clothing firms still located a few blocks south of the tracks. Three additional institutions, the Wagner Memorial Lutheran College on Oregon Street, the Jewish Orphan Asylum on St. Paul Street, and the Germania Hall on Clinton Street performed characteristic functions.

With the population approaching the saturation point, about 50,000, the steady arrival of newcomers prompted many old residents to move to more spacious homes on the outskirts. Streets that had been predominately Irish or German were taken over by more recent newcomers. Thus a group of families from Sicily found lodgement in old Dublin, displacing the Irish along Gorham and Cole Streets. They shared the district with other newcomers, many of them orthodox Jews from eastern Europe, and they found only one bond in common—a feeling of alienation from the older community leaders—the Sicilians from the Irish priests at St. Bridget's and St. Michael's churches, and the Polish and Russian Jews from the German Reform leaders at B'rith Kodesh Temple, which had moved in 1894 into a beautiful new edifice at Grove and Gibbs Streets.

Although neither group of newcomers achieved full autonomy, the Sicilians, among themselves, renamed the old Dublin district Mount Allegro, while the Jews persuaded the City Council in 1900 to rename St. Joseph Street Joseph Avenue. Eastern European Jews established orthodox synagogues on Chatham and Leopold Streets. Too poor to attend parochial or other special schools, their children mingled in the primary grades of old Number 9, 14, 15, 18, and 20 schools and at a new one, No.

26 on Clifford Street. There they acquired a sufficient knowledge of English and familiarity with American ways to assist their parents in making necessary adjustments to the larger city.

With the return of prosperity by the late nineties and in the early 1900's, Rochester's growing population filled in the last remaining gaps of undeveloped land on the Near Northeast. Even the far eastern plots bordering on Goodman Street finally attracted buyers though not on the ambitious scale originally plotted by the 14th Ward Association, which had laid out Central Park as a broad parkway with a mall down the center that exceeded in width the mall of famed Oxford Street on the Southeast side. The sale of Moulson's Nursery to the city for a Public Market, developed there in 1905, finally blasted the Association's hopes, and it disposed of its remaining lots to more modest purchasers, some for commercial and even industrial uses. Yet the construction of a fine new school, No. 25, on North Goodman Street and the building of a modern new factory by Fashion Park on Portland Avenue helped to assure the prosperity of this easternmost portion of the Near Northeast.

Many changes were meanwhile occurring in the older districts. The population, for example, was becoming more diversified, and each new group hastened to establish a church or a social hall to fit its needs. The Italians finally in 1909 opened Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Ontario Street and five years later converted a former German Baptist Mission at the corner of Dake and Niagara Streets into Our Lady of Sorrows Church. The eastern Jews formed several additional Orthodox Synagogues; one on Hanover Street, named Beth Hamedrash Hagodol (The Great Synagogue), was said to have cost \$75,000. In a further effort to free themselves from dependence on the Reformed Jews, they built a joint Hebrew Religious School and Associated Jewish Charities Building on Baden Street, as well as a Sheltering Home on Gorham Street. A number of Ukranian

families founded the St. Josephat's Greek Catholic Church on Hudson Avenue in 1910; a group of Lithuanians established St. George's Roman Catholic Church also on Hudson Avenue that year; and several Swedish families opened the Swedish Emanuel Church on North Goodman Street.

In view of the active interest of the Near Northeast residents in community activities, it was not surprising that the Board of Education's new Social Center program, launched in 1907 at Schools No. 9 and 14, proved an immediate success. This program, which opened the school buildings for community use every evening by adults as well as children, scheduled weekly forums and other meetings and provided a significant new focus for community growth. Among the many distinguished persons who visited Rochester to observe the activities of the Social Centers, Governor Hughes, Lincoln Steffins, and Clarence Perry each wrote enthusiastic reports. Yet these public forums frequently proved explosive, and Boss Aldridge seized the first opportunity to terminate the program. A costume dance, staged by a group of teenage Jewish girls at No. 9 School on a Sunday afternoon in January 1909, supplied a convenient pretext for a drastic cut in its budget.

Yet the closing of the Social Centers did not shut off the mounting protests from this district, for the Labor Lyceum, expelled from City Hall for its emphasis on Socialism, opened its new Labor Temple on North St. Paul Street in 1912 and made it a continuing center for left-wing agitation. The closing of the Social Centers also placed greater emphasis on the social programs developing at Baden Street Settlement, which had been opened in 1901 in a commodious house in that crowded Jewish district by members of the B'rith Kodesh Temple. Its classes, including sewing, cooking, "kitchen gardening," and gymnastics, provided opportunities to give instructions in English to eager newcomers from eastern Europe. A similar pro-

gram won favor among the Italians who settled south of the tracks where Lewis Street Settlement House made its appearance a decade later.

Another center of vitality in the area was No. 26 School of which Col. Samuel P. Moulthrop became principal in 1889. Because of the high birth rate and because of the city's expansion north of Clifford Avenue, the school's attendance mounted rapidly and new wings were added until No. 26, or the Washington Grammer School as it was called, became the largest in the city. In 1900 Col. Moulthrop introduced an evening school program, the first in any neighborhood school, and a year later he persuaded Dr. Goler to open a free milk station there too. To meet increased demands, the city rebuilt the school in sections in 1907, equipped it with a manual training department and a swimming pool, and in 1901 engaged the first public school swimming instructor in America. Five years later, as pressure for more advanced courses developed in the area, Washington Grammer School was transformed into Washington Junior High School, and the city developed its new Junior High program of studies in this building.

West of the river old Brown's Square, adjoining No. 5 School, was remodeled in 1905 as Rochester's first public playground and supplied a convenient model in 1911 when the city determined to promote playgrounds as a substitute for the more troublesome Social Centers. Soon the Board of Education acquired lots near Nos. 9, 14, and 26 Schools and equipped them with shelters and wading pools as at Brown's Square. Col. Moulthrop secured a leave of absence as principal of the latter school to serve in 1912 as the first playground superintendent; with characteristic energy he developed a program of activities for these and for three additional school playgrounds as well as for six located at other scattered sites, one on North Street.

If the needs of the Near Northeast District were thus provid-

ing an incentive for developments throughout Rochester, its residents of this period were also supplying actual and potential leaders for the city as a whole. Meyer Jacobstein, reared in a clothing worker's family on Nash Street, had completed his studies at the University of Rochester and at Columbia and was back after scholarly work elsewhere as a professor at the University and ready to embark on a political career that would lead to Congress. Several of his neighbors of the 1890's were now serving their wards as aldermen and supervisors and Louis Lazarus became a State Assemblyman in 1910. Many achieved prominence in the city's business life, and young Philip Bernstein, son of a pants maker, was preparing for admittance to Syracuse University, the first step in a career that would bring him back to Rochester as Rabbi of B'rith Kodesh Temple in 1925. Jerre Mangione, another product of the Near Northeast and its schools, was preparing to enter East High, from which he too would go on to Syracuse and eventually return to write a delightful account of his early years in the Sicilian settlement of *Mount Allegro* on Cole Street.

The most noteworthy architectural structure erected in the Near Northeast District was the third passenger depot of the New York Central. Designed by Claude Bragdon and built in 1914 a long block east of the earlier and now inadequate east-side station at St. Paul and Central Avenue, it occupied a full block on the north side of Central Avenue between Clinton and Joseph Avenues. Its three large arched windows symbolized the driving wheels of a great locomotive, and other ornamentation in its brick exterior and tile interior revealed the architect's skill in rendering functional details of railroad technology in the medium of architecture. Unfortunately its spacious waiting room, for four decades a busy focus of streams of incoming and outgoing Rochester travelers, lost its usefulness as the railroad surrendered most of its passenger traffic to the airlines, the

buses, and private cars. Finally the railroad, seeking to cut its operating expenses, sold the station to a private investor, who, failing to find a suitable function, ordered it demolished for a parking lot in the spring of 1965. Its sad fate symbolized the declining fortunes of the entire district.

The Ravages of Time

Residents of the Near Northeast, long an area of restricted prospects and limited resources, had nevertheless maintained a wholesome society of modest standards by virtue of its high community morale. Successive waves of newcomers had vied in establishing and supporting churches and associations that provided congenial centers of neighborhood activity and often extended assistance and encouragement to those in need. The wide differences between the various groups of newcomers had frequently produced friction, but this diversity had also stimulated each group to make renewed efforts in behalf of its members and in support of their advancement in the larger city. This last goal had however hastened the final step of removal to a more desirable part of town, a movement that at least temporarily weakened the Near Northeast.

But as this outward migration—first of the more successful Irish from Dublin, then of the more successful Germans from the Seventh and Eighth Wards, and later of the more successful German and Eastern European Jews—left room for other needy newcomers, the ravages of time progressively depressed the area. Except for the construction of expanded factories overlooking the gorge and along the route of the Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad, which pushed in from the north to serve industries on both banks of the Genesee, little new investment occurred in the northeast districts after 1910. Most of the lots were occupied—overloaded in fact—with one or more frame houses on most of the narrow lots that lined the confusing

pattern of narrow streets and alleys. Even on the principal highways leading north, where commercial opportunities had prompted many owners to attach brick and glass store fronts to their houses, the development appeared shoddy. Only where a fire cleared a desirable property had new construction appeared, and the frequent turnover in ownership, occupancy, and usage contributed to the widespread deterioration.

Yet Rochester was slow to recognize the problems of its Near Northeast District. When in the early years of the century Dr. George Goler as chief health officer investigated and condemned a number of wretched tenements as health hazards, most of them were in old warehouses and lofts in other parts of town. The poorer districts north of the tracks generally escaped attention until 1912 when George Eastman, in an endeavor to improve the conditions in some of the blocks in the vicinity of his expanding factories on State Street, proposed the development of model tenements there. Unfortunately the project, conceived as a private investment, called for a density that exceeded the city's newly adopted housing code, and Dr. Goler successfully blocked it. Continued industrial growth and the expanding demand for parking space in the area soon eliminated the wretched housing there, but not without increasing the pressure for dwelling space elsewhere.

When Rochester faced a housing shortage during the First World War and a more acute one in World War II, attention was focussed on home building in the suburbs. So many were moving out, in fact, that the population density was at times relieved in some of the older districts, including the Near Northeast. Yet, with each recurring crisis, the influx of newcomers brought renewed congestion in this area. The long duration of the depression, with its retarding effect on home construction, finally revealed some of the inner-city problems. Social workers, responsible for finding suitable rentals for welfare clients and

for helping poor families meet other dilemmas, were the first to respond. Led by Miss Mildred Ford, a teacher at No. 9 School, they formed a Northeast Neighborhood Conference in 1935 to investigate the housing situation there. They soon discovered that, while many residents were paying high rents for unsatisfactory quarters, those available to Negroes were invariably the most wretched and the most over-priced.

Alerted by this discovery, Mrs. Helen Jones of the League of Women Voters and Oscar Kuolt of the Council of Social Agencies prodded City Manager Baker to name a committee to undertake a housing inventory with the aid of WPA funds. The committee, when duly formed, engaged Harold Rand of the Bureau of Municipal Research to direct the survey, and he chose four census tracts in the Near Northeast with two in other districts for intensive analysis against a wider study of the entire city. His findings and those of other independent surveys in the late thirties disclosed the development, particularly in the Seventh and Eight Wards, of conditions characteristic of urban slums in other metropolises. Political opposition and the outbreak of World War II delayed action for a full decade, but when President Truman carried the city in 1948, with strong support in the Near Northeast, the city's Republican administration determined at last to tackle its housing problems.

Unfortunately the situation had in the interim become both more critical and more complicated. World War II had brought an influx of Negroes, the first of any size for many decades, and most of these newcomers, like immigrants before them, had found lodgement in the poorer sections of the Near Northeast. As the number of the city's non-whites more than doubled in the forties, their number quadrupled in this district, reaching 50 per cent in the Seventh Ward. Their density was greatest in the census tracts previously indentified as structurally deteriorated. And when the City Council, acting as a Housing Authority,

determined in 1949 to apply for state funds to erect a public housing project to relieve this situation, the fact that it would involve the rehousing of many poor Negroes was fully recognized. The first plan to locate it on public owned land near the northern border of the city brought an outspoken protest from residents in that area and prompted the city, instead, to clear a site in the heart of the Seventh Ward slum area where the cluster of 7-story blocks containing 390 dwelling units was opened in 1953.

The seven new blocks set in an open space and towering over the surrounding buildings made a striking appearance. Unfortunately the grass lawn planted around the project never had a chance, for the number of families accommodated almost trebled those displaced. And, despite inadequate provisions for them, large families soon found admittance, introducing a host of children to overtax the accommodations of nearby No. 9 School and of Baden Street Settlement as well.

Other developments also had an impact on the area. The prohibition movement had closed down the breweries in 1920, prompting the Bartholomay Company to switch from beer to milk and other dairy products; its neighbors and former competitors moved into other diversified fields. Bausch and Lomb had greatly expanded its plants during and after World War I, and new clothing and other factories appeared along the Rochester branch of the old Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad now absorbed by the New York Central. More than a score of minor plants—bakeries, machine-tool shops, steam fitters, wood-working factories, food processors, and the like—found sites in nooks scattered throughout this district. Some represented local enterprises, others were attracted by the abundant supply of labor. In response to these industrial developments, the labor movement made increasing advances in this area.

One of the most dramatic events in the history of the Near

Northeast District occurred in 1913 as a result of the long conflict between labor and management in the clothing industry. A state investigation two years before had revealed unsanitary and other deplorable conditions in many of the sweatshops and workrooms maintained by more than a hundred subcontractors in the Near Northeast District. Several of the major firms were drawing an increasing portion of the work into modern factories where better conditions prevailed, but many protests against wages and conditions provided by the subcontractors developed into a strike that halted all clothing work in January 1913. To maintain their spirits and check defections, the strikers organized daily parades marching through the clothing district past the sweatshops that lined portions of Clinton Avenue North and intersecting side streets.

As the strike dragged on into its third week, some subcontractors reopened their establishments and welcomed workers who were in desperate need of money. Those remaining on strike became as a result more boisterous in their attack on strikebreakers. As tension mounted, a subcontractor whose shop on Clifford Avenue was threatened by a straggling band of strikers on a dreary afternoon in February, fired into the crowd killing seventeen-year old Ida Berman one of the marching strikers. The violence came so unexpectedly that the police, who had accompanied the marchers, were able to arrest the proprietor and hustle him off to jail before any further violence occurred. Stunned by the tragedy, over 5000 strikers and sympathetic citizens joined in the funeral procession two days later and contributions poured in to help maintain the soup kitchen the strikers had opened on Hanover Street. Rallied by these events, the strikers were able to stage still larger parades, even in front of the model Stein-Bloch factory on St. Paul Street. Finally the Clothiers Exchange, comprised of the leading manufacturers, negotiated a settlement that promised a speedy elimination of

the subcontracting sweatshops.

By far the most important union in the Near Northeast District was that of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, which progressively established itself between 1915 and 1925 as the collective bargaining agent for the major clothing firms. Representing some 15,000 workers, most of them residents of this and neighboring districts to the north, the Rochester Joint Board of the Amalgamated acquired the old Germania Hall for its offices and scheduled meetings in its halls almost every evening for one or another of its numerous divisions, which in the early years included Italian, Yiddish, and English speaking locals. These early distinctions had largely disappeared by the fifties, and the newly enrolled Negro and Puerto Rican members were integrated into existing locals on the basis of their employment status.

Although the period of religious ferment, particularly among the Jews, had ended by the early twenties, several of their synagogues maintained services long after most of their members had moved to other districts. The older Catholic churches likewise carried on, and two added new parish halls; the Bishop did in 1938 consolidate two eastside churches when the German members of the large St. Francis Xavier's Church dwindled and their Italian neighbors outgrew the facilities at Our Lady of Sorrows chapel; he then remodeled the latter structure, formerly a Baptist mission, for use as Genesee Settlement House. The Lutherans also opened an Inner-Mission and Community Center on Clinton Avenue, but they saw the Wagner Memorial Lutheran College removed in 1918 from Oregon Street to Staten Island.

A New Migration

But again, as some departed others arrived. The Wagner College plot on Oregon Street became the site two years later for the first Negro church in the area, St. Simon's Episcopal. A

congregation of Negro Baptists also opened a church on that street a decade later, and within the next twenty years a half dozen other Southern Baptist congregations made their appearance in the area. Some of these and a half dozen other small religious bodies were content at the start to hold their meetings in a loft or an empty store, but several eventually acquired more adequate halls and other facilities. As in the case of the Jews before them, a trained clergy was not as important as a dedicated membership, and many of the newcomers from the South had an emotional attachment to their churches and their pastors that assured their success.

Among other institutions in the area, the settlement houses were perhaps the most alert. Old Baden Street Settlement had experienced a rebirth after the arrival of Irving Kriegsfeld as director in 1948; under his administration and that of his two successors its program expanded to involve a wide selection of neighborhood residents in its activities. Its leaders early adopted the goal of an integrated community and proceeded to practice what they preached with such success that they were able to retain the participation of former white members after the attendance of their club meetings and other programs had become predominately colored. Situated in the heart of the Seventh Ward, it was the first to feel the impact of the new migration and set the pattern for integrated programs later followed at Lewis Street and Genesee Settlements. Even the Hockstein Music School, founded in 1920 to supply instruction on musical instruments to poor children in the area, now began to include non-whites in its programs.

The influx of Negroes did not become noticeable until the late 1940's. With less than a thousand living in the Seventh Ward at the start of that decade, they constituted barely a tenth of the total, but by 1950, when the non-whites numbered 3315, they exceeded a third of its residents and their poverty assured them

an even larger representation in Hanover Houses when opened two years later. Almost as striking as the changing ethnic composition of the ward was the sharp decline in the age of its new inhabitants. Thus, whereas most of the families that were moving out were oldsters whose children had long since grown up and departed, most of the newcomers were young couples, many with large families of children. The median age of the city's Negroes dropped from 28.1 to 22 during the fifties, and since most of the newcomers located in the Seventh and neighboring wards its median age declined even more sharply.

The needs of the Near Northeast District for schools and playgrounds as well as housing commanded increased attention in the fifties. Baden Street and other social agencies pressed the city to undertake a recreation survey which, when finally completed in 1958, disclosed the need for extensive improvements in this as in several other parts of Rochester. Fortunately the city had already embarked on a large urban renewal project which included provisions for a new playground as well as a new school and a modest addition of 284 low priced housing units in the Baden-Ormond district adjoining Hanover Houses. Yet even as the new project approached completion in the early sixties, the proportions of the migration threatened to overwhelm it and to defeat the hope of developing an integrated community.

As the influx continued in the early sixties, the search for satisfactory jobs as well as for adequate housing became more difficult. Although Rochester's unemployment ratio, already the lowest in the nation, was dropping steadily, the number of unemployed Negroes was increasing. This was not surprising, since with the Puerto Ricans they comprised the majority of the city's newcomers and unlike many of the others they came without knowledge of available jobs. They also lacked training in the job skills most constantly in demand. Frustrated by their

handicaps, some resorted to violence, and the police, in attempting to check the mounting incidence of crime, made frequent inspections and aroused expressions of hostility.

Concern over the increased friction in the Near Northeast mounted when the police, endeavoring to investigate a report of the presence of firearms at a Black Muslim meeting in the loft over Buddy's Casina on North Street, encountered resistance and proceeded to arrest nineteen men on charges of disorderly conduct. The defendants, protesting police interference with their religious observances, rallied support from other religious and civil-rights groups and prompted a demonstration at the City Hall which spurred the City Manager to name a Police Advisory Board to hear complaints against the police.

Although the increased disorder gave warning of mounting tension, most observers were confident that constructive forces within the Near Northeast would, as in the past, achieve a new equilibrium. Several of Rochester's leading clergymen were ready to give Malcom X and the Black Muslims a respectful hearing as proponents of a strange but sincere gospel, and the Federation of Churches endeavored to contact and communicate with the leaders of a dozen new pentecostal bodies that were taking over some of the abandoned churches and halls and opening new store-front headquarters in the old Seventh Ward. These indigenous groups, like many strange ethnic societies that had preceded them, gave promise of a vital new growth; social agencies active in the area lent encouragement and made their facilities available for meetings and other purposes.

Of course the problems and fortunes of the Near Northeast District were not exclusively local and internal. They were tied, as in the past, with far reaching developments in the larger society. Then the coming of railroads and the influx of successive waves of immigrants had played dominant roles in its history, making this district the principal training ground for

Rochester's new citizens throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. And in the fifties and sixties as a new wave of newcomers, native American from the South and from Puerto Rico, swept over this district, it not only brought their new social and cultural traditions but also highlighted their frustrations and dilemmas. The civil-rights crusade and the Negro revolution that seemed far distant to most Rochesterians in the early 1960's suddenly erupted in their own back yard.

The city's surprise was heightened because the earnest efforts of its many agencies appeared to have all problems under control. Not only were the new Chatham Garden apartments providing attractive new residential facilities, but the Board of Education's plan to bus inner-city school children on a volunteer basis to less crowded buildings on the outskirts had completed its first year of successful operation on a modest scale and was about to be expanded. The local office of the State Employment Service had launched a Manpower Development Training program and was actively seeking 600 additional recruits for its classes. The State Youth Board had increased its outlays in support of settlement house programs and other activities in the Near Northeast; the joint City-County Human Relations Commission as well as the local SCAD office and the Police Advisory Board were endeavoring to process all complaints of discrimination or brutality. The police hastened to grant the application of the Mothers Improvement Association for a street dance permit on the evening of July 24, 1964, when temperatures in the upper 80's for several days assured a good turnout from the congested homes in the Joseph Avenue district.

The incident that precipitated the riot that broke out that night was a commonplace one, and the police who responded to a call to remove a drunken man from the street-dance at 11:30 anticipated no trouble. When a number of youths intervened to prevent the arrest, the police radioed for reinforcements and

several cars soon converged on the area, sufficient to effect the arrest of the six Negro youths who appeared to be leading the disturbance. Unfortunately the reinforcements included one or more K-9 Cops teams, and when the crowd saw one of the police dogs leap from its cage, indignation flared. A rumor that the police dog bit a Negro child (later denied) spread rapidly and transformed the crowd of youths into a mob of rioters.

Joseph Avenue, the principal scene of the disturbance on the first night, was a shambles the next day. Practically all the shops and other establishments from the railroad underpass north to and beyond Clifford, lost their windows and large portions of their inventories to the rioters and looters who surged through the streets for the rest of that night and most of the next. The owners and proprietors who suffered most were Jews who had launched these ventures in an earlier day and had continued to serve old and new customers and in some cases still resided in the area. Yet if the prices in these specialty shops, some offering Kosher foods, were high, the presence of empty stores nearby weakened charges of monopoly rates and suggested still deeper causes for the outbreak.

When quiet was finally restored, with the aid of a contingent of 1500 state militiamen, many citizens soberly debated the causes and earnestly sought new remedies. The first suggestion, that it was an outburst of pentup juvenile spirits triggered by an unfortunate incident on a hot night, failed to account for the two successive nights of rioting and the pillaging of some 200 stores over half of them in the Near Northeast District. Few candid observers could deny the presence of serious grievances—the congestion of thousands of poor Negroes within the borders of this district, with escape only to similarly congested areas in the old Third Ward, was sufficient evidence of segregation. Although this segregation was neither complete nor legally enforced and although active church groups were endeavoring to

break down the barriers of prejudice and open opportunities for Negro residence in all parts of the city, their concentration was in practice becoming more intensified.

Some observers blamed the apparent failure of the community's social program on the inadequate leadership within the Negro neighborhood. None of the established leaders had been able to calm the furor during the riots and few spoke with assurance after quiet was restored. Most of the youthful newcomers, some directly from the Deep South, felt little identity with the old Negro leaders in Rochester; many indeed had no ties either with the established institutions or with the store-front churches, and all efforts to involve them in continuing programs proved discouraging. Some appeared in fact to resent the efforts of the social agencies to assist them and responded with indifference when several middle-class Negroes made an attempt to establish a Big Brothers movement in Rochester. Others seemed scornful of the decision of a number of business leaders to back the formation of a Rochester branch of the Urban League to spur the enrollment of Negroes in the newly formed Action for a Better Community programs organized under the national anti-poverty campaign.

Baffled by these repeated reverses, the Rochester Council of Churches determined early in 1965 to enlist the help of Saul Alinsky of Chicago in a move to form a militant organization to represent and supply leadership to the poor inner-city Negroes. Outspoken criticism of this move in the press and on the radio helped to assure its success. Over 100 block associations and other neighborhood groups sent delegates to the convention at which the new grass-roots organization known as FIGHT (for Freedom, Integration, God, Honor, and Today) was formed. Although most of its leaders came from the Third Ward rather than the Seventh Ward, the Near Northeast had a potential new spokesman.

The militant leaders it raised up were not interested in supporting the "welfare colonialism" they deplored, nor were they eager to enlist recruits for the anti-poverty programs unless they could achieve full control over their management. Repeated battles for the control of the ABC programs, for a preferential contract over the recruitment of industrial trainees for Eastman Kodak, and against the School Board's plans for inner city schools enabled FIGHT to flex its muscles, but whether it also brought a new sense of identity and power to the alienated and unemployed Negroes in the Seventh Ward remained undetermined. Its failure in two years to achieve economic self-sufficiency prompted the Rochester Area Council of Churches to continue its support with the hope that another year would enable it to win sufficient confidence to supply a new base of stable community life.

These historic developments have set the stage for the city's application for a Demonstration City project in the Near Northeast District. The congestion and blight that have long afflicted the area demonstrate the need for remedial action, while the traditional diversity of economic functions and institutional activity gives assurance of its continued usefulness. Despite the high percentage of non-whites in two or three of its census tracts, their internal diversity, coupled with the mixture of ethnic strands in the adjoining tracts, maintains the cosmopolitan character of the Near Northeast. And again, as in the past, the multiple sources of its leadership have engendered a high degree of tension which, if democratically directed, can contribute a resurgent vitality to this important urban district.