

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by BLAKE MCKELVEY, *City Historian*

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## **His Honor, The Mayor of Rochester 1900 - 1928**

By BLAKE MCKELVEY

The adoption by the New York State Legislature in 1898 of a uniform charter for cities of the second class drastically revised Rochester's governmental structure. Drafted by a legislative commission headed by Horace White of Syracuse and popularly known as the White Charter, it abolished Rochester's old Executive Board and "lifted the mayor," as Earl Weller later put it, "to the very pinnacle of power and importance." Before the new charter became effective on January 1, 1900, Rochester secured an amendment safeguarding the independence of its Board of Education and postponing for two years the abolition of its Park Commission. But except for these limitations the Rochester mayor possessed for a quarter of a century full executive authority. Although in fiscal matters he was checked somewhat by an independently elected comptroller and treasurer, and in legislative matters by a Common Council comprised of aldermen elected from the city's twenty wards, the mayor's appointive powers assured his control over all departments and gave him a leadership role in civic developments.

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## The First Two "Strong" Mayors

As the drafting of the White Charter progressed in the late nineties, George Aldridge, Rochester's Republican boss, saw the need to reach an accord with Joseph T. Alling, leader of the Good Government forces. On his part, Alling, discouraged by the incessant bickering between the Common Council and Mayor George E. Warner, the Democrat he had successfully backed in 1895 and 1897, was ready for a new strategy. He accordingly accepted the Boss's offer to endorse Good Government candidates for the Board of Education and to consult on the selection of a candidate for Mayor. Despite frequent rifts as the years advanced this informal alliance held fairly constant and greatly influenced the nominations and subsequent fortunes of the next half dozen Mayors of Rochester. Their first selection after some debate was George A. Carnahan, a respected judge who successfully carried the election with 16,345 votes as against 13,403 for Warner. Although his plurality was less than 3000, the Good Government forces could claim credit for eradicating the 6700 plurality Warner had enjoyed in the previous election. Carnahan in fact captured 47 of the 70 election districts formerly carried by Warner and thus more than doubled the Boss's total.

Born at Ravenna, Ohio, in 1862 and a graduate of Wesleyan University in Connecticut, young Carnahan had come to Rochester to study law in the mid-eighties. After gaining admission to the bar he was elected a judge of the Municipal Court in 1894. He soon won appointment as a special County Judge and served in that capacity until elected Mayor. Although lacking in administrative experience, the new Mayor displayed considerable ability in organizing the new government. His first appointments gave reassurance—James G. Cutler a successful businessman as Commissioner of Public Safety, Joseph A. Crane another industrialist as Commissioner of Charities, Edwin A.

Fisher as City Engineer, and Dr. George W. Goler as Chief Health Officer. Several other early appointments were well-received, but it was not long before dissention within the administration and disagreements between Aldridge and Alling brought difficulties.

Because of some ambiguities in the charter Mayor Carnahan, immediately after assuming charge, invited the State Civil Service authorities to clarify uncertainties about the status of some appointed offices. Once his responsibility was established Carnahan experienced difficulty in delegating authority. Thus in the case of Safety Commissioner Cutler, the Mayor's insistence that he be advised in advance of projected programs and be permitted to determine and announce actions from his office so galled the forthright Cutler that he tendered his resignation. Carnahan replaced him with an able attorney, James D. Casey; he soon had to replace Commissioner of Charities Crane for similar reasons and named John U. Schroth to that post. By sponsoring several proposed reforms of Dr. Goler he was able to work in harmony with his able health officer, and he occasionally accompanied Engineer Fisher on inspection tours to observe municipal improvements in New York and other cities thus assuring his loyalty. Carnahan likewise reached an agreement with Dr. Edward Mott Moore, president of the Park Commission, and endorsed an amendment to the charter forestalling the dissolution of that commission.

The Mayor's most substantive accomplishment in the first year was the reorganization of the city's fiscal structure. His first action was to raise the municipal budget to an unprecedented \$2,286,000 and to boost the tax rate in his first year when he could blame it on the deficiencies left by his predecessors. He was able as a result to submit an economy budget in his second year claiming that it reflected the efficiency of the newly formed Board of Contract and Supply, the central purchasing agency

he set up with the cooperation of Engineer Fisher and other mayorial appointees plus Comptroller James Johnston and the President of the Common Council Hiram H. Edgerton as independently elected members.

These and other reform achievements enabled Mayor Carnahan to welcome the 9th National Conference for Good City Government, which met for the first time at Rochester in May 1901. The Rev. Clarence A. Barbour, second only to Alling in the Rochester Good Government League, took occasion as toastmaster at the convention's principal banquet to laud the Carnahan administration and to pledge his continued support.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately a fight was already brewing between the Mayor and Boss Aldridge. Aldridge had accepted a lucrative post as council to the newly formed Citizens Light & Power Company which was seeking a franchise to lay a second conduit in Mill Street ostensibly in order to provide more effective competition with the Rochester Gas & Electric which had built the existing conduit. When Carnahan vetoed the ordinance granting that franchise, friends of Aldridge, led by Alderman J. Miller Kelly, rallied in July to pass it over his veto. Rumors began to spread a month later of the Boss's search for a more suitable candidate for the next election.

The Mayor's friends were not inactive, and the *Post Express* vigorously championed him for renomination. Several independent Republicans endorsed his bid, but Aldridge retained a secure control over the party which, however, gave the Mayor's supporters 5,215 votes to 6,575 for the Boss's slate in the primary that September. The Democratic *Herald*, long a backer of Warner and a frequent critic of Carnahan, saw an opportunity to split the Republicans by encouraging the Mayor to run as an independent. But Alling, on learning that Aldridge would

<sup>1</sup>*Proceedings of the 7th Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League and 9th National Conference for Good City Government* (Rochester, 1901), pp. 1-5, 315-332, *CC Proceedings* (1900), pp. 723-724.

again back Johnston as Comptroller and would support the League's candidates for the school board provided it did not oppose his nominee, Assemblyman Rodenbeck for Mayor, refused to commit the Good Government forces to a third party effort.

Adolph J. Rodenbeck was, in fact, quite an acceptable candidate. Born at Rochester in September 1862 of German immigrant parents, he attended the Rochester schools and graduated from the University of Rochester in 1885. After studying law in Brooklyn he returned to Rochester to enter the office of the Corporation Council in 1892. After advancing from second assistant to the top post there he won election as assemblyman in 1899 and served the city faithfully in the legislature. Despite the defection of some Republican friends of Carnahan, Rodenbeck carried the election with 15,165 votes as against 15,089 for Warner and 946 for Gad Martindale the Socialist candidate. The approximately 2000 Carnahan supporters who returned to Warner carried a total of 12 widely scattered election districts to his side but not quite enough to give him the victory.

Mayor Rodenbeck retained several of his predecessor's principal assistants—Dr. Goler and Engineer Fisher for example; he also appointed other able men, J. Y. McClintock as Commissioner of Public Works and William A. Sutherland as Corporation Council, and brought Joseph A. Crane back as Commissioner of Charities. Unfortunately the larger pluralities received by Sam B. Williams as Treasurer and James Johnston as Comptroller increased their sense of independence and made it difficult for the Mayor to achieve full administrative leadership. Like Carnahan before him he soon had to request the resignation of some of his appointees, notably McClintock for his failure to work with Johnston whose official collaboration as Comptroller the Mayor could not dispense with.

The removal of McClintock brought only a brief lull in the

administrative turmoil. Johnston was soon feuding both with Williams as Treasurer and with Sutherland as Corporation Council. Provoked by the incessant squabbling over the proper forms and procedures, Mayor Rodenbeck recommended the employment of a firm of accountants from New York to devise an appropriate system for keeping the public records. Price, Waterhouse & Company were accordingly engaged to set up a standardized accounting system.

Long before the fiscal disputes were stilled Mayor Rodenbeck suffered an attack from the temperance forces. Back from a state temperance convention, Clinton Howard took the lead in organizing a series of meetings to press for the closing of all saloons on the Sabbath as required by state law. At the Mayor's direction Commissioner of Public Safety George A. Gilman ordered the police to enforce the law, and for a few Sundays in September 1902 all saloons were tightly closed, yet a protest from 350 "Liberal Knights," as the saloon keepers called their association, soon brought a relaxation.

Mayor Rodenbeck was more actively concerned with the city's water problems. A flood in the Genesee prompted him to propose the erection of a storage dam on the upper river thus commencing a debate that was not finally settled for another five decades. Rochester's more immediate problem was a shortage of water. The city's growth to 165,000 in 1900 seemed to be approaching the limit of Hemlock lake's capacity and confronted the community with a threatened shortage in the near future. Mayor Rodenbeck rejected a proposal that all users be metered in order to check wastage, and proposed instead that the city lay pipes to Lake Ontario to supply its industrial users. That project had already been launched by a private water company, and the Mayor was determined to halt its construction crews at the city line in order to safeguard Rochester's investment in its public water works. Rodenbeck, however, could not

prevent the company from acquiring a tract for a private storage reservoir on Cobbs Hill, near a larger tract purchased by the city for its second reservoir. When the Mayor's term came to an end late in 1903, his capacity to block the private company was likewise terminated.

Mayor Rodenbeck initiated several other measures but his term was too short to enable him to carry many of them out. He proposed a deepening of the channel into Irondequoit Bay—a plan only now approaching action; he initiated improvements in the fire department and an expansion of the police department, and he supported Dr. Goler in his plea for the provision of a new and more adequate municipal hospital on Waring Road and secured an appropriation of \$125,000 for its construction. He carried on the battle commenced by his predecessor for reduced gas and electric rates and for the removal of overhead wires into an underground conduit system that would serve all competing users. His rigid stand on that point, as with Carnahan before him, brought a cooling of his relations with the Boss. But Aldridge, while again unwilling to back the Mayor for a second term, could not afford to add another leader to the growing list of disgruntled Republicans. Instead, the Boss nominated Rodenbeck as Judge of the State Court of Claims where he served until 1916 when he was elected to the Supreme Court for the 7th Judicial District. After retiring from that post at the mandatory age of 70 in 1932 Judge Rodenbeck practiced law and maintained his civic interest until his death at the ripe age of 98 in 1960.

### **Rochester's Most Successful Mayor**

Boss Aldridge faced a serious threat to his leadership in 1903. James Johnston the cantankerous comptroller had finally broken openly with the party and, backed by Carnahan and others, was heading a Citizen's slate in the Mayorial election that fall. The

Democrats again nominated former Mayor Warner who still had a strong appeal to some reformers. To counter these challenges, the Boss had to find a man whose candidacy would hold his own henchmen in line and draw some support from the Good Government forces. Much to the surprise of the Citizen's



JOS. T. ALLING

Party leaders, he found such a candidate in James G. Cutler who was currently traveling in Europe but hastened home to lead the party in a dramatic contest, winning 13,021 votes to 12,104 for Warner and 6498 for Johnston. Both Warner and Johnston received enough Good Government votes to carry swing districts in the northeast and northwest wards, but Cutler



picked up new support on the outer fringes of the city and with a firm grip on the southeast section won a slim victory.

Cutler was not only the ideal candidate to save the party in a tight squeeze; he soon became Rochester's most successful mayor. Born at Albany in April 1843 and educated at its schools and in one of its leading architectural offices, young Cutler had



JAS. G. CUTLER

come to Rochester in 1872 to become a draftsman for A. J. Warner, the city's busiest architect. He soon established an office of his own and secured commissions to design numerous mansions, some on East Avenue, and several office buildings. His most significant contract was for the Elwood Building at the Four Corners, a six-story block for which he devised a mail

chute to facilitate the dispatch of letters from every floor. Convinced of the practicality of that device for other tall structures, he secured a patent in 1883 and began to manufacture mail chutes for the new skyscrapers which were appearing in cities throughout the land. His numerous trips in search of orders and to supervise the installation of mail chutes took him to many cities large and small and kindled his interest in civic improvements. He served as the Rochester member of the charter commission that drafted the White Charter in the late nineties and became as we have seen the first Commissioner of Public Safety under Carnhan in 1900.

A successful businessman at 60 and the only Rochester mayor who had previously served as president of its Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Cutler developed a reputation for forthright efficiency and for his vigorous promotion of civic enterprise. News of the appalling fire at the Iroquois theater in Chicago, in which 600 lost their lives, prompted him to issue an order on his fourth day in office stationing a fireman in every theater in Rochester. After further investigation he ordered one local theater closed until precautionary repairs could be made and recommended improvements in the fire department. Before his reforms could be adopted the outbreak of the disastrous Sibley fire on February 26 demonstrated the urgent need for improved fire fighting equipment. Under the Mayor's vigorous lead the council provided funds and the department expended them so effectively that the city met the exacting demands of the Fire Underwriters without suffering the rate increases applied in these years to Buffalo and several other metropolises.

One of Cutler's first actions as Mayor was to ask for a complete inventory of city property. This businesslike approach produced a sum of \$13,776,432, which considerably exceeded the debt of \$10,474,291 and in the Mayor's view justified other civic investments. Indeed he moved so rapidly in improving

the fire fighting equipment, in acquiring police precinct houses and equipped their dormitories, in equipping the Waring Road hospital and upgrading the garbage collection facilities, and in launching numerous other improvements that the editor of the *Herald* was astonished to discover in May that the new administration had expended almost a million dollars on new programs in four short months. The Mayor who defended his outlays as for urgent improvements, including the final purchase of a site for the long debated new market, canily reduced the heavy impact on the tax burden by selling the city's Genesee Valley Railway bonds and using the proceeds for capital improvements.

Cutler also took a more forthright stand than any of his predecessors on social issues. He protested with indignation when a local clergyman charged in a letter in the *New York Tribune* that Rochester kept its theaters open on Sunday nights; the laws, the Mayor declared, did not empower him to close them. Cutler did enforce the Sunday closing law against saloons, but he protested, in an address before the Ministerial Union, that the law only applied to the poor man's saloon and did not curb the activities of social clubs or of those who served liquor at home on that day. This inequality made it difficult to secure convictions for Sabbath violations, but Cutler won praise even from Clinton Howard for making a persistent effort to enforce the Sunday closing law. By constant pressure and frequent outspoken attacks he finally secured the revocation by the State Excise Commission of the licenses of some of the most flagrant offenders. But Cutler was more gratified by the praise he received for admitting a number of tubercular children to the new hospital when its isolation facilities became available before the appearance of the smallpox cases for which they were intended.

Ironically, Mayor Cutler was more fortunate in one respect

than any of his predecessors because of the consolidation in the first months of his term of the city's three major utilities by out of town investors. The merging of the Rochester Gas & Electric with the Rochester Light & Power Company by E. W. Clark of Philadelphia paid off and eliminated the Aldridge interest, while the absorption of that combine and the Rochester Railroad Company into the Rochester Railroad & Light Company under the control of the Andrews syndicate affiliated with the New York Central liquidated all other local investments and made it possible for the Mayor to rally full support for his demands in behalf of the public interest. With the skillful assistance of William W. Webb, the corporation council, he pressed successfully before the appropriate State Commissions in 1907 both for modest reductions in gas and electric rates and for the increased assessments on the properties of these companies. The consolidation of the city's utilities into one vast combine had been hastened by the desire of the gas and electric companies to merge their distribution facilities in one conduit system. Mayor Cutler continued to press for the extension of underground conduits along all streets and the elimination of overhead wires. He was finally able to boast that Rochester led all cities in the world in the proportionate extent of its underground system.

Other improvements launched by Mayor Cutler included the development of playfields in the public parks, the improvement and extension of the street lighting system, the repaving of several streets with asphalt, and finally the successful battle for a new city charter granting Rochester first class city status and power. Cutler had no difficulty in winning the nomination and election to succeed himself in November 1905. Indeed the only time that result appeared in doubt was in September when for a brief period it seemed possible that the Rochester Mayor might be nominated for Governor. Charles E. Hughes

of New York easily captured that position, however, and Cutler was content to roll up a total of 19,404 votes against Johnston's 15,007 for Mayor. He retained his firm grip on the southeastern and peripheral wards and captured several election districts on the outer fringe of the immigrant wards. But a year later after Governor Hughes had ousted Aldridge from his post as State Commissioner of Railroads, merging that function in the new Public Service Commission, Mayor Cutler's readiness to press his claim before the commission and his vigorous drive for a new city charter not only assuring more power to the Mayor but extending the city's control over its franchises indefinitely into the future, cast a chill over their friendship. The Mayor had to combat the opposition of an Aldridge lieutenant to win Chamber and Common Council support of his new charter, and the price he had to pay was the nomination for Mayor in 1907, which went instead to Hiram H. Edgerton, a more reliable Aldridge supporter.

Mayor Cutler was probably not too disappointed. In four years he had achieved an unmatched record of civic improvements. He even won the commendation of the critical editor of the *Herald* who now at last praised his vigorous programs, which had extended street pavements 50 miles, the sewers 22 miles, and the sidewalks 70 miles for a total cost of \$3,280,000 in four years. He had in addition launched construction of a reservoir on Cobbs Hill, extended the water mains 9 miles, built a new armory and a new public market, increased the number of street lights but at reduced rates, expanded the public parks and the area of the city as well, and made Rochester in fact as well as in charter a first class city. Perhaps the *Herald* was generous in its praise because of its desire to indict Aldridge for not renominating such a successful Mayor. Cutler was not drawn into the opposition, however, yet he must have chuckled over that editorial. He must have been even

more genuinely pleased to read an article by James B. Reynolds, a philanthropic advisor of President Roosevelt, praising his accomplishments and declaring that he should be brought to New York City or possibly to Washington, D. C. and given a chance to apply his skills in a metropolitan setting. Cutler, however, remained in Rochester where he served as a trustee of the University, a director of the Chamber and of several charitable associations, and president of his own firm until its reorganization in 1915 when he was ready to enjoy a comfortable retirement in his mansion on East Avenue where he resided until his death at the age of 84 in 1927.

### **Rochester's Most Surprising Mayor**

With the exception of Cutler, no Rochester mayor has had a better training for the job than Hiram H. Edgerton. Born in Allegany County in April 1847, he had come to Rochester as a lad and inherited his father's lumber business at the age of 21. He sold that firm in 1880 and became a general contractor and in that capacity had charge of the construction of several of Rochester's largest buildings, including its first skyscraper the Wilder Building, the old Post Office, and the Sibley, Lindsay & Curr store. His first venture into politics was as a school commissioner in 1871, where he served for four years, two as president. He ran unsuccessfully for Mayor against Warner in 1895 but won as the Republican candidate for President of the Common Council in 1899 and at each succeeding election until 1907 when he led the ticket as Mayor with 19,027 votes to 17,888 for the Democrat William Ward and 890 for Martindale the Socialist. Although he lost 16 districts once carried by Cutler, he picked up 7 additional ones and achieved almost a clean sweep of all the outer wards.

But Edgerton's extensive training for the job did not include the wide experience with civic developments in other cities

enjoyed by Cutler. His failure to grasp the potentialities of his new post came out in his first message to the Common Council. "Great public improvements have been inaugurated in recent years. . . . The needs of the city in this respect have been nearly supplied, and when the improvements . . . now in progress, and others which have been contemplated, shall have been completed, there will be little required except a continuance of good government to keep us in the van of progress as a city of the first class." The editor of the *Herald*, who during the campaign had warned that Edgerton possessed "little of the fiber of energetic independence," must have felt confirmed in his judgment on reading this bland statement. And yet Edgerton would demonstrate, as the years advanced, a surprising ability to meet new challenges as they arose and with sufficient energy to keep Rochester "in the van of progress" as he put it.

The new Mayor soon advanced a few fresh ideas. As President of the Council he had tabled a proposal by Cutler that Rochester establish a public library, but now in his inaugural as Mayor he included this among other projects under consideration. Two months later, in response to pressure for jobs because of the hard times, Edgerton proposed the construction of a boulevard around the city. That suggestion stirred considerable interest, including the effective opposition of those who held that it would only serve the carriage crowd. As the threat of widespread unemployment declined, the Mayor turned his energies to improvements in the parks where, following Cutler's lead, he supplied funds for a park band that gave a total of 68 concerts during the summer months.

Mayor Edgerton repeated his library proposal at the start of his second year, but his chief interest that year was in the promotion of improved hospital services. He recommended the establishment of a city hospital for tubercular patients adjoin-

ing the municipal hospital on Waring Road, and he launched a drive in August for \$10,000 to help the city maintain the Infant's Summer Hospital opened that July in Charlotte. He responded with sympathy when a group of ladies presented a petition in behalf of enforcement of the antispitting ordinance, and he found sufficient sums to open four comfort stations in the downtown area. An increasingly critical problem there was the congestion of traffic especially in Main Street, and by repeated complaints to the State Public Service Commission the Mayor prompted it to send its traffic expert, Charles R. Barnes, to Rochester to investigate the movement of trolley cars through the "neck of the bottle" as Barnes described Main Street Bridge. The need to correct the situation there prompted Edgerton to propose a parallel street north of Main to cross at Andrews Street or on a new bridge connecting Church and Pleasant streets.

Despite some rumors that Edgerton would be dropped in favor of George Dietrich, then vice-president of the Chamber and on a tour of European cities, Aldridge was apparently quite satisfied with his Mayor and backed him in November 1909 in a campaign which rolled up a plurality of 6400 votes over Nelson E. Spencer his Democratic opponent, the highest since the Warner triumph in 1897. Among those who rallied to his support were a group of Young Business Men and the leaders of the building trades unions with whom he had long had friendly dealings. Bolstered by that endorsement, Edgerton renewed his recommendation for a public library and a north side parallel street and added requests for a new city hall and for the purchase of additional park lands. With the release early in February 1911 of the Brunner, Olmsted plan for the city, prepared at the request of the Civic Improvement Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor was pleased to note the inclusion of several of his proposals among its more



numerous recommendations which, though somewhat overwhelming in extent, won his approval. Unfortunately the vast scope of the plan, coupled with its specialized recommendations of some controversial sites for improvements, divided its supporters and effectively blocked action. Edgerton directed City Engineer Fisher to investigate the cost for a north-side parallel street, but the prospect for action was dimmed by the newly aroused demands of property owners south of Main for the prior opening of a parallel street on that side.

In 1910 on the removal of the State Industrial School from its old site in the northwest portion of the city to a rural setting south of Rochester, the Mayor received an unexpected opportunity to press ahead with his library proposal. A rumor that the Governor planned to convert the old Industrial School building into a penitentiary branch spurred the Mayor to demand that it be sold instead to the city for use as a library headquarters, a museum, a winter zoo, and a site for Rochester's industrial exposition. The city's desire to forestall the location of a penitentiary in its midst hastened Council action on the Mayor's plans, and by the next spring he had a Library Board ready to supervise the development of a branch library system with a branch and the central office located in one of the old Industrial School buildings at what was now renamed Exposition Park. He was also ready with plans for a City Museum to be located in a wing of the same building. Elmer Adler chairman of the museum committee of the Rochester Historical Society had broached the idea and, on receiving the Mayor's consent, moved the Society's large collection of Indian and pioneer relics into the assigned rooms where he had them on display in time to inaugurate the opening of the City Museum on September 14, 1912, the official Centennial Day. Much in evidence was the official flag of the City of Rochester formally designated by Mayor Edgerton on that day two

years before.

Not all of the Mayor's programs developed so satisfactorily. One that he had inherited from Mayor Cutler, the Social Center Movement, was proving quite troublesome. This significant experiment in the use of several school buildings for adult community activities every night had attracted nation-wide interest and brought Governor Hughes to Rochester on April 8, 1909, to dine with the Mayor and the leaders of the Social Center program and to address a Social Center Convocation in Convention Hall. Unfortunately the discussions at the adult forums held under Social Center auspices frequently turned to controversial subjects. Numerous attacks on boss rule and the occasional appearance of socialist speakers received full coverage in the press and precipitated a flood of letters both praising and protesting the Social Centers. Boss Aldridge was not pleased by the spectacle, and when a group of teenage Jewish girls held a dance in No. 14 School on their assigned evening, which happened to be Sunday but not their Sabbath, the widespread indignation of Protestant and Catholic citizens against the use of a school building for such a purpose on their Sabbath gave the Mayor an excuse to cut the program from his budget. By diverting the funds thus saved to the playgrounds and redoubling his efforts there, he mollified many Good Government men who had backed the Social Centers, but he deprived Rochester of leadership in a significant nation-wide movement.

The Mayor responded to the urging of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union and other bodies and invited the Rev. Caroline B. Crane to come to Rochester in 1911 to make a survey of its social conditions. He chaired the mass meeting that heard her report on May 12 but was not too happy with its findings, which were sharply critical on many points though little of the indictment was specifically directed at city officials.

Edgerton was more incensed by the outspoken socialism voiced by Prof. Kendrick P. Shedd before the Labor Lyceum, which had met for many years on Sunday evening in the Common Council room at City Hall. A press report, quoting the Professor as stating that "the red flag of Socialism merited greater loyalty than the stars and stripes or any other badge of nationalism," prompted the Mayor to ban further speeches by Shedd on public property. And when the Lyceum invited him to address it at City Hall in a test of free speech, the Mayor closed the building, forcing the Lyceum to find a new headquarters on St. Paul Street.

These conflicts dampened the spirits of some Good Government men and reduced their support for the Mayor. His margin of victory, 5400 over Spencer and Kitchelt in 1909, dropped slightly in the quiet election of 1911 to 3880 over Howard T. Mosher and George Weber, and turned it into a minus 387 in 1913 when the Socialist Weber boosted his vote to 2877, but Edgerton still retained a plurality of 2490 over George C. Staud the Fusionist candidate. Yet the Mayor had resiliency; a day after that election he toured the city's playgrounds with Rowland Haynes of the National Playground Association and basked in his praise for Rochester's initial efforts in that relatively new field. The completion of a new water conduit to Hemlock Lake, the extension of the sewer system and of street pavements, and the construction of a flood wall along the western bank of the Genesee to safeguard the central business district represented real accomplishments and may have helped to boost his vote in 1915 to 25,252, more than 8000 above the combined vote of Prof. Mosher and two minor contestants.

The outbreak of war in Europe diverted attention from many civic events and so increasingly absorbed the Mayor's energies in home defense and other programs that he delayed

the delivery of his annual address in 1917 until April and forgot it completely in subsequent years. He appointed and chaired several defense and war-relief committees and maintained the city services without interruption. Edgerton won two additional elections, boosting his final tally to an unprecedented 35,103 in November 1919 when, however, his three rivals totaled 40,961 in a heavy turnout swelled by the first inclusion of women voters. The election launched his seventh term, equalling the record set by Mayor Cornelius R. Parsons in the late seventies and eighties. Edgerton saved himself the embarrassment Parsons suffered when he lost his eighth try, for Hi, as he was popularly known, tendered his resignation at the end of his fourteenth year as Mayor.

Almost everybody paused to laud the aging Mayor. Each of the editors of Rochester's five dailies hastened to summarize his accomplishments. The lists were long and included improvements ranging from the reforestation of the Hemlock Lake watershed to the removal of the main sewage outlets from the river and the development of improved reduction plants at the lake as well as the opening of park lands and beaches in territory newly annexed to the city, which had increased during his regime 70 per cent in both area and population. If the dramatic activity and controversies that surrounded the Mayor in his early terms became less evident in later years, it was not only because of the distraction of the war but also because of the bureaucratization of the administration over which he presided. Edgerton gave a freer reign to several of his department heads than they had known before, and Dr. Goler, Chief of Police Joseph Quigley, City Engineer Fisher, and Park Commissioners Lamberton and Riley received some of the publicity that a more jealous mayor might have garnered. He did finally in 1915 abolish the independent Park Commission and place these expanding facilities under a

Commissioner responsible to the Mayor, and two years later on the creation of an Art Commission he established a city planning bureau under Fisher to keep the practical direction under his administrative control.

One significant change was occurring, however, over which the Mayor had no control. George Eastman had taken the lead in the establishment in 1915 of a Bureau of Municipal Research in Rochester, suggested by and patterned after the pioneer bureau founded in New York a decade before. An information gathering agency maintained by private contributions, it was designed to collect objective data on civic functions and thus to assist department administrators and aldermen in determining priorities, measuring performance, and reaching decisions. Mayor Edgerton had welcomed the proposed research bureau when it was first suggested in 1914 and had expected to name directors to run it. But Eastman had determined to establish it as an independent agency, which would contract its services to city departments and other institutional bodies. Since Eastman was paying the bill, Edgerton accepted the arrangement and made good use of its findings during his last seven years in office.

The Research Bureau gave the Kodak King and other large taxpayers in Rochester assurance that the city's mounting budgets, which soared from \$5 to \$10 million in five years after its establishment and reached \$14 million by the close of Edgerton's regime, were efficiently and wisely administered. Some of the Mayor's department heads, however, found their responsibilities challenged. Fisher, for example, resigned as City Engineer and returned as Consulting Engineer in order to safeguard his independent status. When he also accepted appointment as Director of the Planning Division under the Mayor, former Mayor Cutler who was chairman of the Art Commission and a director of the Research Bureau, questioned

the need for an official Bureau of Planning, but the issue was sidetracked and the showdown between the Research Bureau and the strong mayor system was deferred until Mayor VanZandt's time. Edgerton, who served briefly as superintendent of building construction under his successor, died in June 1922 shortly after his 75th birthday and never witnessed the impending eclipse of the mayor's office.

### **The Eclipse of the "Strong" Mayor**

Clarence D. VanZandt, who had the dubious honor of presiding in the Mayor's office during the years of its declining importance, differed strikingly from his predecessors. Inexperienced in politics, he was as surprised as everybody else when Aldridge tendered him the nomination in August 1921 shortly after Edgerton announced his plan to retire. Aldridge, who had received the lucrative appointment as Collector of the New York Port from President Harding only a few months before, was, by introducing an entirely fresh face, venting his rancor against Chip Bostwick who had made a hasty grab for the leadership in Rochester. VanZandt, a native born Rochesterian, president for many years of the Paine Drug Company and active in fraternal circles, was 68 and well known in the city but not in political circles. Though successful in business he had none of the administrative experience of his two predecessors. Aldridge, who probably expected to tighten his hold on the office, saw VanZandt successfully elected in November with 35,179 votes to 33,478 for Frederick D. Lamb and 7100 for two lesser candidates. But after supervising the naming of department heads, the Boss returned to New York where he suffered a heart attack on June 14, 1922, five days before the similar death of former Mayor Edgerton.

VanZandt, whose most striking characteristic was his affability, endeavored at this point to harmonize the differences

between James L. Hotchkiss, the leading Aldridge lieutenant who captured the post of chairman in the primary that September, and Bostwick the 10th ward insurgent. Unfortunately the Mayor succeeded only in arousing the suspicions of Hotchkiss, who was further annoyed by the attention VanZandt gave to the recommendations of the Bureau of Municipal Research. The timely arrival of a series of reports on city finances, on the department of public safety, on traffic conditions, on the need for new school buildings and other subjects commanded the attention of the administrators involved. When the Mayor also welcomed the offer of George Eastman to present the old Kimball tobacco factory building to Rochester for municipal uses until its site could be cleared for a new City Hall, and recommended its acceptance, thus arousing the criticism of those who favored other sites, Hotchkiss seized the opportunity to announce his support for William C. Kohlmetz for Mayor. Surprised by the unexpected rebuff, VanZandt, supported by Comptroller Joseph C. Wilson and by a young attorney, T. Carl Nixon, refused to withdraw and captured the lead in the party primary and went on to win reelection with 42,683 votes as against 30,572 for Lamb and some 8800 for lesser candidates.

With the party leadership a shambles, VanZandt turned increasingly to the Bureau of Municipal Research for guidance and may as a result have stimulated its drive for a city manager form of government. Leroy E. Snyder who had come from New York to establish the Rochester Bureau in 1915 had since resigned to become assistant to Frank Gannett, the new editor and publisher of the *Times-Union*, and was allied with Eastman and others in organizing a City Manager Association to work for the adoption of such a government in Rochester. The Women's City Club headed by Mrs. Helen Probst Abbott, and a host of public spirited citizens rallied to the cause and per-

sueded the Common Council reluctantly to approve a request that the Bureau draft a suitable charter to be submitted to the voters under the City Home Rule Law. Neither the Republican nor the Democratic County Committees favored it, but Mayor VanZandt took a neutral position, promising to cooperate in the organization of the new government if it should be approved at the polls. After an intensive drive the registered voters were increased to 104,377, and although many failed to vote, those in favor numbered 38,573 as against 27,008 and the charter amendment carried. Unfortunately under the terms of the law it could not take effect until December 1927 and the old officials had two years to challenge and possibly abrogate its provisions. Since VanZandt retained his neutral stance while Hotchkiss and other party leaders pressed a court test of the Home Rule Law, George Eastman stood by VanZandt in his bid for a reelection in November 1925 although Leroy Snyder the most active friend of the city manager cause had accepted the Democratic nomination as Mayor. VanZandt won again, 46,823 to 41,987. His sudden death the next June, the first Mayor of Rochester to die in office, resulted in an elaborate public funeral that supplied in a sense a fitting close to the era of the strong mayors of Rochester. Since January 1928 the Mayor of Rochester has shared his honor and his perquisites with the City Manager chosen by the small City Council that now also elects the Mayor.