

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

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## **Rochester and Monroe County An Historic Partnership**

By *BLAKE MCKELVEY*

The city of Rochester has played many significant, sometimes discordant, roles in the history of Monroe County, which is this year celebrating its sesquicentennial. One hundred and fifty years ago, Rochester, then a mere village, was the principal applicant for the county's creation and became its unchallenged county seat. The village of course profited from its new distinction and relied for a time on the county for some of its urgent needs. When continued growth brought the grant in 1834 of a city charter, Rochester was able to assume full charge of several of these services, including the police function among other matters that the county was relieved to turn over in order to undertake new responsibilities in other directions.

As the city grew in numbers it also expanded in size and, in the process, absorbed additional portions of the adjoining towns. From time to time its representation on the county board was increased, though it never until the late 1950's attained a proportionate number of legislative seats there. The city's mounting needs made it the perennial advocate of increased county services and thus often constrained it to pay a disproportionate

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share of their cost. In later decades, however, as the county assumed larger functions it provided some of the services that had previously been supplied only by the city—services which had sometimes prompted suburban settlements to apply for and welcome annexation. Deprived of that inducement, the city has in the last half century ceased to expand, and the towns, absorbing its mounting overflow, have grown more rapidly than the city proper and finally outweigh it in numbers as well as in potentialities and political power.

### Origins

Rochester was of course established before the County of Monroe was organized, though not before most of the towns within its present borders were settled. Yet because of its advantageous location at the falls of the Genesee River (where log rafts coming down with produce from the upper valley had to be unloaded and broken up for processing in its mills and where the most convenient crossings were located), Rochester early became the center of activity along the lower Genesee. As a result it supplied leadership in the battle for the establishment of Monroe County.

The agitation for a new county commenced in January 1815 when the hamlet at the Genesee falls numbered only 332 settlers. Francis Brown, promoter of the 200-acre tract at the main falls, which adjoined Colonel Rochester's 100-acre tract on the west bank where a bridge had recently been completed, gave notice of an application for the establishment of a new county within three years or as soon as the nine towns clustered around the lower Genesee acquired 15,000 residents. That notice appeared, of course, in the *Ontario Repository*, western New York's only newspaper, a weekly published at Canandaigua, seat of old Ontario County. Its editor, as events would reveal, was not too happy with the application, but the establishment a year later of

the weekly *Gazette* at Rochester supplied a local advocate and facilitated the printing of petitions for distribution throughout the neighboring settlements. A subscription circulated in 1816 pledged \$6,722 for the construction of the county buildings, and the proprietors of both Christopher's and Ensworth's taverns made their facilities available for frequent public meetings to agitate the cause.

To the enterprising settlers on the lower Genesee the logic of their appeal seemed clear. The inconvenience of traveling twenty or thirty miles over difficult roads to Canandaigua, the seat of Ontario County east of the river, or to Batavia, seat of Genesee County on the west side, was becoming more of a handicap as land sales and other legal transactions multiplied. Moreover, settlers in the surrounding lower Genesee towns, who had to bring their grain and other produce to the milling and marketing town at the falls, wanted to transact their legal business on the same trip.

Unfortunately the issue was complicated by regional and political jealousies. Neither Canandaigua nor Batavia wished to see its sphere of influence reduced, and already the voting strength of their wide spreading counties was a matter of concern to the fairly evenly matched Clintonian, Bucktail, and Federalist factions at Albany. Moreover, though a division of these two huge counties would ultimately be necessary, the aspirations of Avon, a Yankee settlement south of Rochester, to become the seat of a long county straddling the Genesee from the lake south to Steuben County, seemed more agreeable to the Yankee Federalists of Canandaigua than the rival claims of Colonel Rochester and his Bucktail associates. To strengthen their position the Canandaigua leaders encouraged a group of Clintonians in Palmyra to apply for the creation of another long county along the lake shore, from Irondequoit Bay east to Sodus Bay. This combination of interests proved sufficient in

1817 to block action on the petitions carried to Albany by Col. Nathaniel Rochester for a lower Genesee county.

But Colonel Rochester could afford to wait, for time was on his side. Meanwhile he presented and secured a favorable response to a second petition that March for the chartering of Rochesterville. That move gave Rochester an advantage over Avon and Palmyra, which lacked village status, and prompted the call of a convention at Ensworth's tavern in October 1818 of delegates from Pittsford, Brighton, Henrietta and Perinton in Ontario County, and from Riga, Parma, Gates and Ogden in Genesee County at which resolutions favoring the establishment of a lower Genesee county were adopted. When a delegation headed by Dr. Matthew Brown, chairman of the village board, journeyed the next January to Albany with this resolution and several supporting petitions, the opposition again prevailed, but a renewed and more forthright effort was soon undertaken.

The new petitions, prepared in the winter of 1819-1820, were elaborately documented. Twelve towns [three of the former nine had subdivided] now supported the application, and their total population was confidently estimated as "approaching 25 or 30 thousand." The "flourishing village of Rochester," as described in the petition, already had five flouring mills, ten lumber mills, one paper mill, one oil mill, two tanneries, two printing houses, seventeen merchant stores, and five commercial warehouses. Its exports during the previous season had included 23,600 bbl. of flour, 8,670 bbl. of pot and pearl ash, 1,450 bbl. of pork, and were valued at over \$400,000. Numerous sailing vessels of 20 and 30 tons and the lake's one steamboat had visited the Genesee port below the lower falls some 250 times during the season. Moreover, the start of construction work on the projected Erie Canal aqueduct made it increasingly difficult to find time for a trip to Canandaigua or Batavia on court business.

The application carried to Albany, this time by Enos Pomeroy and Charles H. Carroll, both of Rochester, seemed conclusive, but again the opposition was able to defer action. A renewed effort was necessary, and Col. Rochester, despite his advancing age, agreed to lead a new delegation to Albany as soon as sufficient snow arrived for good sleighing. Before departing for the east Col. Rochester alerted friends in Geneseo up the valley to apply for a new county straddling the river from Avon south, and other friends in Lyons to apply for a lakeshore county stretching east from Palmyra to include the lakeshore towns of giant-sized Cayuga County. This strategy proved effective at Albany, and the bill creating Monroe County passed the first and second readings with flying colors. The opposition had not given up, however, and J. C. Spencer of Canandaigua, who was described by Col. Rochester, impatient to get back to the Genesee, as a man able to speak for an hour at any time on any subject, succeeded in postponing the final passage until February 23, when the governor finally attached his signature.

Named after the nation's fifth President, who had recently sailed westward on Lake Ontario past the Genesee on his ceremonial journey around the country, Monroe County secured its original territorial claim and portions of Caledonia, Rush and Mendon on the south, an area of 607 square miles, which made it slightly larger than any of the other new counties. Despite its tardy settlement, the lower Genesee region already contained 27,288 residents and by 1825 would exceed the population of the much reduced Ontario County.

The establishment of Monroe County was achieved only after bitter local jealousies had been submerged. It was thus proper that all factions should share in the first appointments, and the state Council of Appointments accordingly named a former Federalist, Elisha B. Strong of Carthage, as First Judge, a Clintonian, Elisha Ely of East Rochester, as Surrogate, Colonel Roch-

ester, a Bucktail Jeffersonian, as County Clerk, and Timothy Child of Canandaigua, who planned to move to Rochester, as District Attorney. In accordance with a provision of the act establishing the county, the supervisors of the fourteen towns of which it was composed convened at Christopher's Mansion House (on the site of the present Flagship Motor Inn) on May 8, 1821, and with Matthew Brown Jr. of Gates (including Rochester-ville) as their chairman, formally launched the new county.

Several crucial decisions had to be made in these months. Col. Rochester and his partners had reserved a site at the center of the 100-acre tract for a court house, but so had the Brown brothers on their 200-acre tract at the main falls a few blocks farther north, and so also had Elisha Johnson, proprietor of the East Rochester subdivision across the river. Because of its more central location Col. Rochester's court house square was accepted by the commission named in the act to determine the location of the county buildings and to plan their construction. Its decisions were announced at an adjourned meeting of the Supervisors in June at which funds for the construction work were voted. Meanwhile the Court of Common Pleas had convened in May in the newly added loft of the Ensworth tavern at the Four Corners, and a grand jury was organized to inquire into the activity of the numerous grocery and dram shops in the village. The need for a jail was so urgent that plans to construct a stone goal were deferred and a log structure on Fitzhugh Street was strengthened and pressed into service. Work on the court house was rushed during the winter so that the Supervisors were able to meet in their handsome new structure on October 1, 1822.

The construction of the Court House gave Rochester a new civic status. Thus numerous residents gathered at the Mansion House on September 1, 1821, to march behind the Rochester band in the town's first official parade to the Court House

Square for the laying of the cornerstone. When completed, the modest stone structure, erected at a cost of \$7000, boasted a belfry and cupola as well as two Ionic porticoes, one facing on Buffalo (West Main) Street and the other on the open square behind. The Court House added a touch of charm to the community and dignity to its civic affairs. The reconstruction of the log jail and the erection of a stone wall about it at a cost of \$3674 in 1823 focused attention on the crime problem. Thirty major and minor offenders received sentences from the Circuit Court that year and most of them served time in the jail. When two who were confined in the structure before it was completed managed to escape, concern for the community's safety prompted the village trustees to appropriate \$200 for a night watch that winter to assist the justice of the peace appointed by the county. The opening of the Erie Canal east of Rochester to Albany late in 1823 had brought a surge of activity to the booming mill town, but it also brought troublesome new civic problems. One local editor declared the next February that "probably no place in the Union the size of Rochester is so much infested with the dregs and outcasts of society as this village." When the funds for the night watch were exhausted as spring approached, a score of young men formed a Vigilant Society to make the nightly rounds during the balmy season at no expense to the town.

Under New York State law each town was held responsible for its own poor, those who had resided for a year or more within its borders, but "foreign" paupers who could not establish a local claim had to appeal for support to the counties. Since Rochester was for a year or two the western terminus of the canal, it was overrun in the mid-twenties by westward migrants, both native and foreign, many of whom had exhausted their resources. Monroe County's outlays for "foreign" paupers jumped from \$834.72 in 1823 to \$1184 the next year, most of it

going to stranded migrants in Rochester. To ease its tax burden the county leased the corner lots in front of the Court House to Vincent Matthews and Dr. J. B. Ellwood who built their respective lawyer's and doctor's offices at these choice locations. It also sold a strip off the south part of the court house square to the Presbyterian Church to enable it to erect supporting abutments to strengthen the walls of its new stone edifice.

These economies seemed necessary because of the urgent need to rebuild Main Street bridge after a series of floods had weakened that key structure. The village had pressed the county to rebuild the bridge early in 1822 but had itself refused to accept half the burden for a \$14,000 all stone bridge. A year later, when the continued deterioration of the old wooden structure forced action, the county submitted a second plan to expend \$6000 on the construction of stone piers and a wooden superstructure. When authorized by the legislature to proceed, the county gave the contract to Elisha Johnson, the eastside promoter whose subdivision was now annexed by the expanding village. Johnson completed the second bridge with its three stone piers in December 1824 and thus assured the continued growth of Rochester, which now dropped the *ville* from its name and reported 5250 residents in the state census a year later, when the county's total reached 39,108, some 1600 in excess of the population of reduced Ontario County.

Local civic affairs, both town and county, were somewhat overshadowed in 1825 by the opening of the state built Erie Canal. Thousands turned out at every stop along its route to greet Governor Clinton's official party as it journeyed eastward on the canal in a ceremonial opening of the artery late in October. The ceremonies at Rochester on the 27th were, despite a chilling rain, the most elaborate yet staged by the local town and county officials, though the reception given a few months before to General Lafayette on a balmy day in June had drawn



a larger throng of spectators. Rochesterians were somewhat relieved that year when the Supervisors voted to build a County Poor House on a rural site in Brighton. Its location two miles south of the village promised to remove many "foreign" paupers from the downtown streets.

Although the villagers who convened at a public meeting late in December 1825 resisted the first move to apply for a city charter, because of their fear of increased taxes, the trustees responded with enthusiasm two years later to a proposal for the construction of a public market over the river at the northwestern corner of the bridge. That location required the superintendent in charge of its construction to secure the county's consent to an extension of the west pier farther down the river and the consent of Charles Carroll, owner of the adjoining river bank, to the use of his river wall as a parallel support with the pier for the market floor. Its completion not only supplied a valuable new commercial facility under civic operation, but also set a precedent for the construction of other structures along the sides of Rochester's Main Street bridge, a development that eventually gave the city one of its most unique features.

When Rochester's booming growth was checked in the recession of 1829, the hard times that followed aggravated the crime problem and focused attention on the inadequacies of the old jail. The state had authorized the construction of a new jail the year before, but work was not commenced until 1830 when a new site overlooking the river south of the aqueduct was acquired from Colonel Rochester and his partners. Unfortunately the death of the county treasurer and the discovery that he was not only insolvent but deeply in debt as a result of reverses during the recession, delayed construction, and the new jail was not ready for occupancy until October 1832. Built of stone at a total cost of \$12,500, it was equipped with 40 cell rooms and soon won the nickname of the Blue Eagle, in contrast with the more

sumptuous new Eagle Hotel at Rochester's principal four corners.

### **The City and the County**

The relationships between Rochester and Monroe County acquired a new complexion with the grant of a city charter in 1834. Separated for the first time from the towns of Gates and Brighton, Rochester was granted the right to elect three representatives to the Board of Supervisors, which now also included representatives from 16 towns (since two of the original 14 had been subdivided). When the city's population reached 14,404 in 1835, or a fourth of the county's total as reported in the state census that year, the Supervisors granted Rochester a fourth seat in 1836 and a fifth (one for each ward) a year later, but refused despite its continued growth to make further adjustments for another fifteen years. The City Council secured the use of the Grand Jury Room in the Court House in 1834 by a payment of \$30 annually, and the next year it paid the county \$60 for the exclusive use of the court house bell, which it employed as a fire alarm and to sound the morning, noon, and evening hours, thus providing an essential time standard in the bustling city.

Despite its added stature the city still looked to the county for many services. Crime was an increasing problem and called for the appointment in 1836 of a full-time police justice in the city, for which the county paid a salary of \$800, stipulating that all fees be turned over to its treasurer. The Supervisors voted at the same time to install 20 new cells in the jail at a cost not to exceed \$3000, but they refused to assume responsibility for the rebuilding of Main Street bridge after a serious fire destroyed part of its frame superstructure. That fire, in January 1833, had completely consumed the wooden buildings lining its north side, including the market building, a severe loss to the town. The county had contributed \$1,000 for repairs to the roadbed that year and again in 1836, but only after the city had undertaken

the essential repairs itself in order to keep the structure open. When more extensive repairs finally became necessary in 1838, the county again refused to take the lead but eventually paid \$5500 of the \$9504 cost, compelling the city to defray the balance plus its portion of the county tax.

The bridge problem was a perennial one because of the need for additional river crossings. The county had paid part of the bill for a bridge at Carthage above the lower falls and for another at Clarissa Street just south of the city, but it resisted pleas for aid in maintaining the bridges at Court and Andrews Streets, built partly by private subscriptions, and it only grudgingly assisted in the construction of the Ballantyne bridge three miles south of the city.

The county acquired a new function in 1836 when the state appropriated funds for the support of public schools and gave the counties responsibility for their distribution and proper use. A move to improve the schools of Rochester and to secure authority for the creation of a Board of Education had led in 1836 to the formation of a Committee for Elevating the Standards of Common School Education which failed to get the desired legislation but prompted the Supervisors to create a Board of School Visitors for Monroe County. Its chairman, the Rev. Henry J. Whitehouse, conducted a series of meetings in city and suburban schools and attracted sufficient interest to speed the passage in 1841 of an amendment to the city charter authorizing the creation of an elective school board in the city. The close cooperation between the school authorities of the city and county was continued the next year when the Board of School Visitors was abolished and Henry E. Rochester became Deputy Superintendent for county schools. But Rochester's share in the state aid for schools no longer fell under county jurisdiction.

Several additional annexations in the early forties and an increase in the number of wards prompted a desire for addi-

tional representation on the county board. Opposition from the towns blocked the move, however, as well as another to designate Rochester as a separate county, but the Supervisors did agree in 1844 to divide the county into two school districts, each had a deputy superintendent with responsibility over the suburban schools east and west of the river, leaving the city schools to the supervision of Isaac Mack, the first Rochester superintendent. Under its second city charter, granted by the State Legislature in 1844, Rochester, comprising a total of 5123 acres, was divided into nine wards, but a move the next year when its population reached 27,000 to increase its seats on the Board of Supervisors was again defeated.

The continued growth of the county as well as the city, both ranking fifth in population in the state in 1840, brought new demands for services. The Justice of the Peace took over the east room in the basement of the Court House as a police office in 1841, but there was no space available for the highway superintendent appointed six years later and charged with the supervision of the new plank roads which were fanning out from the city in the late forties. The judges, too, felt cramped, especially after the appointment of a Vice Chancellor in 1839 with jurisdiction over equity cases divided the functions of the 8th circuit court centered at Rochester. It was only with difficulty that room was found for the Supreme Court session held at Rochester in 1841, and when the Mayor sought space for the sessions of his court in 1843, the need for a new and larger court house became clearly apparent.

The agitation for a new court house continued for almost a decade. Part of the delay was occasioned by the move to split Monroe into two counties, and only after that scheme was defeated in 1845 was the need for a new court house seriously considered. Fear of the added costs troubled the supervisors from the rural towns, who of course dominated the board. As a result

the first plan approved in 1849 called for a modest structure to cost only \$30,000. Fortunately a re-examination of the county's needs revealed that the proposed new structure would scarcely accommodate the functions already provided for, and a new and enlarged plan was hastily devised and approved on condition that the costs should not exceed \$50,000. Designed by A. J. Warner, an architect recently arrived from the East who would plan many of Rochester's most famous buildings, including the Powers Block, the three story structure, more than double the size of its predecessor, had an imposing Ionic porticoe in front facing a modest plaza to which its classical style contributed a note of dignity. It too was surmounted by a wooden dome, held aloft by a pilastered belfry, above which rose a smaller dome on four pillars, which in turn was topped by a goddess of Justice who shared her command of the Rochester skyline with the cross atop the First Presbyterian Church still standing on the adjoining lot.

Again Rochester took a just pride in the new Court House. Preparations for the laying of the cornerstone on June 20, 1850, included the collection of more than fifty historical documents, books, and sample copies of the five contemporary dailies and eight weeklies published in Rochester at the mid century. The ceremonies this time had a more urban flavor, one characteristic of the cosmopolitan city Rochester was becoming. In addition to a file of city and county officials, the parade included such marching units as the Grays, the Light Guards, the German Grenadiers, the German Union Guards, and the Hibernia Fire Co., No. 1. Major L. B. Swan of the Grays was marshal for the day, and the Honorable Moses Chapin delivered a stirring oration. The costs mounted as the work progressed but the city, eager to see it completed, agreed to share part of the cost, and by careful supervision the architect was able to complete the structure in December 1851 at a cost of \$72,000. The mayor and

the other city officials as well as the Common Council hastened to occupy the quarters on the third floor assigned to the city. The new building served the needs of the city and county for several decades.

No one questioned the county's responsibility for the maintenance of the courts and for the provision of suitable county buildings, but there was less agreement over the construction and care of river bridges. Since both the city and the county straddled the Genesee, communication between east and west-side towns, as between the eastern and western parts of the city, depended upon the availability of river crossings. The continued growth of Rochester and of the towns had so increased the traffic over the four river bridges within the city and the three beyond its limits that all but one required major repairs or reconstruction, and pleas for three more were earnestly pressed on the Supervisors. When the county failed to take action, the Common Council determined to go ahead with the rebuilding of Main Street bridge and to bill the county for its share at completion. The Supervisors, fearing the escalation of costs and eager to secure agreement on several proposed bridges, adopted an omnibus appropriation, authorizing the sale of \$38,000 in bonds to supply \$20,000 for the county's share of the proposed \$50,000 Main Street bridge, and a partial payment of the cost of new bridges at Charlotte, at the lower falls, and at Ballantyne's crossing.

The city accepted the responsibility for the design and construction of the new Main Street bridge. A stone arch structure commenced in September 1855, it did not reach completion until the fall of '57 though fortunately traffic was maintained throughout most of the intervening months. Its more substantial character permitted the extension of its three piers up and down the river to support brick buildings of three and four stories, which completely enclosed the north side of the bridge by the

end of the decade and, in the early seventies, provided a similar row of business blocks on the south side as well. Despite repeated floods and fires, Rochester's Main Street bridge would withstand the ravages of time until cleared of its commercial structures in recent years and reconditioned as a part of the Crossroads Urban Renewal Project.

Josiah W. Bissel Jr., the engineer in charge of the construction of the new Main St. Bridge, was also engineer for the construction of the new bridge at Carthage. Also the fourth bridge at that lower falls location, it was a suspension bridge, built of newly developed wire staves that supported the floor of the bridge as it soared over the gorge between the east side and west-side towers. Constructed at a cost of \$16,000, partially shared by the county, it was opened to use on July 30, 1856, but an inspection by the bridge committee of the Council found so many defects in its structure that traffic was slowed to a walking pace and other restrictions limited its use until a heavy fall of snow the next April caused it to collapse into the gorge.

Deprived of that crossing, the city hastened to undertake an omnibus plan of its own and secured state authorization for the creation of a Bridge Commission to undertake the construction of new river bridges at Andrews, Court, and Clarissa Streets and of a new structure over the Deep Hollow cut under State Street. Since none of the three river crossings was at a major highway, the best the city could hope for was county aid in their maintenance. Work was speeded after a spring flood weakened the supports of the oft repaired wooden toll bridge at Court Street prompting its replacement by a bow-string truss bridge constructed on stone piers and completed in 1859 at a cost of \$23,045. The original Andrews Street bridge was replaced at the same time by an iron bridge for about half that sum, and the city's bridge commission expended only \$1400 on repairs to the Clarissa Street bridge. Its efforts to secure reim-

bursements from the county in these outlays proved futile.

Monroe County was giving more attention to another problem that also deeply concerned Rochester. The city, like the towns, had relied for two decades on the county sheriff and his deputies and on the justices of the peace for the apprehension of criminals. It had maintained a night watch, primarily to guard against the outbreak of fires in winter months, although that service had also discouraged criminal disorders especially after the appointment of a captain of the watch in 1836 had brought more effective supervision. But increasing problems with disorderly elements finally prompted the city to appoint a paid police chief in 1853 and to authorize him to engage 20 deputies at \$600 a year each. This service placed increased pressure on the facilities of the county jail and prompted the county to establish another institution to house those convicted of minor offenses. The county workhouse and penitentiary, built in 1854 at a cost of \$22,707, was located just beyond the southern border of the city and soon won wide fame because of the success of its director Zebulon Brockway in organizing productive activities that enabled the institution to defray its operating expenses. Brockway achieved still greater fame after his conversion at a Finney revival in Rochester started him on a lifelong search for reformatory techniques that profoundly influenced the development of penology throughout America. Most of Brockway's contributions were made after his removal to Detroit in 1860, later to Elmira, but one of his successors in Rochester, Levi S. Fulton, maintained a local connection with those wider developments.

In addition to the Workhouse and Penitentiary for the confinement of minor offenders, the county in 1857 built an asylum adjoining its poor house for the care of those judged insane or mentally deranged. Its accommodations for 48 inmates had to be expanded two years later and again in 1870. As its facilities, rebuilt and expanded after a fire in the late sixties, became



crowded, the congestion at the jail, where prisoners had to be held until they could be accommodated elsewhere, became more acute. The repeated refusal of the Supervisors to move for its replacement was finally overcome in 1884 when a grand jury condemned the old jail as unsanitary and totally inadequate. That stand, expressed by city editors and interested observers for several years, was at last endorsed by the Supervisors who voted for its replacement by a new Exchange Street jail built at a cost of \$86,000 in 1885. Equipped with a cell block of 144 cells made of chilled iron, each 5x8x8 feet in size, it also provided a row of cell rooms for boys and another for the detention of women, both separated from the main cell block.

The continued growth of the city, which reached 81,722 by 1875 while the county beyond its borders held steady at about 55,000, saw Rochester increase its share of the total from 50 to 60 per cent in the first decade of peace. The city's mounting functions had long since overtaxed its limited space on the third floor of the Court House, and when the county, also pressed for space, offered in 1870 to buy that part of their jointly owned structure, the Common Council hastened to undertake the construction of a city hall. A spectacular fire had destroyed the First Presbyterian Church back of the Court House the year before, and the council voted to purchase that site for its new home. Scarcely had the council's building committee prepared for construction there when a rival faction secured the aid of the city's representative at Albany in the passage of an act creating an independent commission to be appointed by the mayor with full responsibility over the construction of the city hall. When that commission assumed charge of the work back of the Court House, the council's building committee transferred its activities to the old market site on Front Street and built a new city building there to house the volunteer fire companies and other functions.

Although the city officials were thus amply provided for by

the mid-seventies, the county was still seriously cramped. When in 1874 the municipal offices moved into the new City Hall, also designed by A. J. Warner, and constructed at a cost of \$335,684, the overcrowded county offices quickly absorbed the relinquished space. The Law Library of the Appellate Division had been lodged in a corner of the city's quarters since the opening of the Court House some two decades before. Its steady growth had amassed a collection of books and judicial reports of great interest to the lawyers and judges of Rochester, and the collection, valued at \$75,000 by an examiner at this point, required exclusive use of two third floor rooms. Fear for its safety in case of a fire added to the pressure for a new court house, but many residents of the rural towns, wary of the expense for a new court house, persistently opposed its construction.

Their opposition was, however, losing its force. The Supervisors had granted the city one seat for each of its ten wards in 1852, and had thereafter increased that representation by an additional seat for each new ward. Thus although the city's 16 supervisors of 1885 could not match the 19 supervisors from the towns, by 1892, with the organization of four more wards, Rochester was able for the first time to outvote the towns. Most divisions were not of course as simple as that, for the vote was more generally on a party line basis, but on non-political issues, such as the need for a new court house, the weight of Rochester's 133,896 residents, who comprised 70 per cent of the county's total in 1890, could at last carry the day. Fortunately the decision to build a new court house came in March a few months before the outbreak of the depression blasted local confidence. Yet the prospect of creating new jobs prompted the officials to combine the cornerstone laying with the community's celebration of Independence Day the next July, and George Aldridge, the Republican boss of the city and the county and currently Mayor of Rochester, presided at the impressive joint ceremonies.

The third Court House, designed by J. Foster Warner, son of the architect of the second Court House and the City Hall, occupied the full width and most of the depth of the old Court House Square. Built at a cost of "more than \$800,000," it represented a ten fold increase over the cost of the second structure, which had similarly multiplied by ten the cost of the first court house. These dramatic increases reflected the growing wealth and power of the city and county, and fortunately the outlays in 1894 and 1895 also helped to relieve unemployment in these depression years. In the demolition of the second court house two items were saved for new uses. First the wooden statue of Justice was stored for a time in the art gallery in the Powers Block and then remounted in a niche over the central entrance of the new Court House. Meanwhile the huge stone blocks out of which the pillars of the portico had been built, were pressed into use as heavy rollers in a road building program designed to ease the unemployment crisis that summer.

But the huge costs of the third court house intensified the demand of the city for tax equalization. To meet its own mounting expenditures the assessors in Rochester had steadily increased their appraisals of city properties, while most town assessors, feeling no such pressure, had progressively lowered theirs, partly to discourage residents on the outskirts of the city from giving support to the periodic drives for annexation in order to make connections with the city's water and sewer mains. As the county's outlays began to mount, the debate over the equalization of assessments became more heated and in fact erupted on December 11, 1894 in a brief display of violence as two members exchanged blows. When the question arose again the next December all twenty of the supervisors from the city lined up in support of a resolution which directed that \$1,012,013 be deducted from the city's assessments and be apportioned among the towns. After a similar battle in December 1896, when by a

vote of 20 to 19 \$1,500,000 was deducted from the city's assessment and again apportioned among the towns, the city's total was cut to \$105,289,000, while that of the towns was increased to \$38,260,000. Despite the bickering over its heavy cost, which climbed eventually to \$881,560, the sumptuous new Court House became an object of community pride. Both city and county officials hastened the next year to greet delegations from Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore when they visited Rochester to examine the new Court House as a possible model for structures being planned in these much larger cities.

Rochester continued to look to the county for aid in the maintenance and sometimes in the reconstruction of its river bridges. The city had built the Vincent Place bridge itself in 1873, but sought county aid in strengthening it two decades later. The county built the first Elmwood Avenue bridge in 1888 long before it was annexed to the city; it paid part of the cost for the Driving Park Avenue bridge, which connected major east- and west-side highways at its opening in December 1890, and it would finally in 1916 erect a lift bridge to carry Stutson Street across the river between Irondequoit and Charlotte before the annexation of the village a few years later. But the city had to assume the full cost for new bridges at Andrews, Court, and Platt Streets in the early nineties.

Rochester took the initiative in developing another service later assumed by the county. It was in 1898 that Judge Charles B. Ernst instituted the separate hearing in his private quarters of the cases of children brought before his police court. His successor carried on the practice of considering juvenile cases separately after the regular police court was suspended, and in 1906 the city made more formal provisions for its infant's court and for the appointment of a probation officer to supervise those released in his care. The County had appointed its first probation officer in 1901 for the supervision of adults released under

his custody, and in 1910 the county secured authority under a new grant from the legislature to establish a Juvenile Court to consider all cases against children of sixteen or less as a part of the regular county court function.

As Rochester's growth continued and its superior services facilitated new annexations in 1913, 1918, and other years, the city absorbed an increasing portion of the county's population, peaking at 80.8 per cent in 1925. The nineteen towns, despite these periodic losses to the city, had maintained a population of approximately 55,000 for over half a century helping to sustain Monroe's reputation for agricultural and horticultural production. Yet the county had in effect become the city's metropolitan district as the United States Census would define it fifteen years later. But the census had already recognized Rochester as the 22nd among 29 metropolitan areas with close community ties to its four surrounding towns; to work out congenial service relationships with its suburbs, the city had to develop new relationships with the county.

### **The County Becomes the Metropolis**

It is too early to place the increasingly complex relationships during the last half century between the City of Rochester and the County of Monroe in proper historical perspective, for some of their conflicting positions have yet to be resolved. Several trends, however, are clearly apparent, and a brief listing of the major developments and unsettled issues will perhaps help to bring their basic relationships into focus.

A major shift occurred in the respective rates of urban and suburban growth. The city's territorial expansion had practically come to an end in 1922 chiefly because the organization of independent water districts, supplied by deep wells that tapped newly chartered underground water resources, and the development of septic tanks obviated the need to tap the city's water

mains and sewer conduits. As a result, Rochester's proportion of the county's population, after topping 80 per cent in 1925, commenced slowly to recede. In other words, the city's continued growth was now spilling into suburbs that were becoming permanent communities. Several undertook to establish sewer as well as water districts and to provide other urban services of their own or to pressure the county to supply them.

The city likewise pressed the county to assume new functions in these years. As an emerging metropolis it had interests that reached beyond its borders and could only be served by a responsive county organization. Fortunately the city, with 24 wards after 1919, had 24 seats on the county board, to 19 for the towns, and although this was by no means proportionate to its population until the late 1950's, when the towns began to approach it in numbers, its representatives did at last have a dominant voice. As a result it was able to persuade the county to acquire and improve park lands to supplement the park system developed by the city during the previous half century. And, by its own example, Rochester helped to persuade the county in 1936 to adopt the council-manager system of government in order to secure the efficiencies inherent in professional administration.

The developments of the twenties and thirties were only a foretaste of the expansion of county functions in subsequent decades as the Rochester community's urban needs were felt throughout its broader metropolitan district. The county required and created its own civil service commission in 1942, a water authority in 1951, a library board in 1952, a soil conservation board in 1953, a mutual aid coordinator and fire advisory board in 1954, a sewer agency and mental health board and department in 1955, to mention only a few of the new functions it assumed. Some of these services benefited only the suburbanites, though Rochesterians helped to defray the costs; but the city was glad to collaborate with the county in several addi-

tional activities. The Joint City and County Planning Committee of 1953, the consolidated Department of Civil Defenses of 1954, the Civic Center Commission of 1957, the Port Authority of 1958, the City and County Youth Board of 1960, and the Human Relations Commission of 1961 were all examples of cooperation that benefited the entire community. The establishment in 1957 of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Board is an instance of still wider governmental collaboration.

But these structural and programmatic developments were not the only new aspects of the Rochester and Monroe County relationship. The city continued to hold its 24 seats on the Board of Supervisors, to 19 for the towns, until 1967 when the new County Legislature was established with the towns grouped into 14.5 districts and the city similarly subdivided. Of course the numerical balance thus achieved, which slightly overrepresented the city in the late sixties, was of little practical significance, since as we have noted the divisions were more frequently on party lines. The policy making bodies of the two chief parties were their county committees, and their composition or at least their orientation did have significance. By the late forties the traditionally rural orientation of the Republican committee was acquiring a distinctively suburban outlook, while the urban orientation acquired by the Democratic committee in the depression years began to show similar suburban tendencies. Thus the county's expanding functions have received support from representatives of both parties, both from the city and the suburban towns, though these districts as well as the rural towns have also produced opposition based on fears in the city of rising taxes or of diminishing autonomy in the towns.

The county's orientation towards the suburbs is apparent not only in its political leanings and its functional activities, but also in its fiscal policies. Its control of the rich source of revenues supplied by the county sales tax since its adoption in 1951 has

enabled it both to support the urbanizing trends in the towns and villages and to assume the additional urban functions we have noted above. It has in addition taken over the major portion of the cost of some formerly city services that are especially prized by suburban inhabitants, such as the parks, the libraries, the museum, and the new community college. It has followed city leadership in the development of county-wide public health and welfare programs, but it has so far displayed little concern for the solution of the problems of the inner city, a portion of the county that is not effectively represented. Indeed the prejudice of suburban towns against low-cost housing, and their general opposition to or neglect of schemes for the integration of school populations, are reflected in the failure of county officials to assume responsibilities in these fields. The oft discussed trend toward city and county consolidation—at Rochester as at other American metropolitan centers—awaits the development of mutual understanding and the acceptance of broader responsibilities by all members of the community.