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Historic Predecessors of the Central Business District

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The progressive reconstruction of Rochester's Central Business District prompts a backward glance at the development and changing character of its predecessors. They were of course plural and in at least three respects—in time, in function, and in the character of their construction. Thus the Central Business District, as we know it today, had its antecedents in the Four Corners of the village days, in the Buffalo, Main, State and Exchange Street district of the canal era, in the Powers Block and horse-car era, in the years dominated by the electric trolley, and finally in the decades encompassing the first and second World Wars. Each of these chronological eras was marked by increasingly differentiated functions and by new structural characteristics. Indeed the evolution of Rochester's Central Business District reviews many major aspects of the city's history.

The Early Business District

The original four-corners settlement was in effect the frontier business district for the entire lower Genesee area rather than for

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the pioneer west-side village. Neither the first Mansion House tavern on the site of the present Flagship Hotel nor the first post office on the site of the Reynolds Arcade was more than a stone's throw from the Four Corners where Azel Ensworth opened his more commodious tavern in 1818. A two-story frame structure, that second tavern added a high attic two years later to provide a large public hall and ball room, and Dr. Ensworth installed a water trough in front of the tavern to assure its position as the chief stagecoach depot. Not to be outdone, John Christopher, who had taken over the Mansion House, erected a three-story wing adjoining his tavern and equipped it with a large dining room that attracted residents and travelers every day and became the favorite center for banquets celebrating the completion of the canal three years later.

Each of these developments, however, had a regional rather than a village focus. Even the building of the first Court House a half block west of the Four Corners in 1822 was a county rather than a village achievement. And the construction of the canal aqueduct a year later represented a state accomplishment.

Other developments at the Four Corners soon revealed its local importance, however. Ira West opened the first store, a few steps north of the Scrantom cabin on the north-west corner in 1812, several months before the Mansion House was built across the road, and Silas O. Smith established a second store on the south-west corner a year later. Several craftsmen—the first tailor, the first blacksmith, and the first printer—soon arrived and located their shops along Buffalo Street between the pioneer post office and the bridge. Two sawmills and several flour mills as well as a tannery and a paper mill quickly made their appearance nearby. The thriving activity of these merchants and craftsmen spurred the development of a booming village which acquired its charter in 1817.

By 1822, when the village, now the seat of newly formed Monroe County, annexed the settlement on the east bank, the number of its buildings exceeded 600. They included some 60 craft shops and 25 stores, most of the latter clustered in the vicinity of the Four Corners and the bridge. The fire hazard, which mounted as the number of frame buildings increased, not only prompted the village trustees to require each householder to equip himself with fire buckets and a ladder, and to keep his chimneys in a safe condition, but also spurred the organization of a village watch and a volunteer fire company to man the handpump engine acquired in 1818. Unsatisfied by these precautions, the Brown brothers, whose mill at the Main Falls was the first fire casualty, rebuilt of stone in 1819, and the county constructed its first Court House of stone three years later.

When an enterprising merchant imported 100,000 bricks by lake boat from the east in 1819, many householders hastened to purchase some to reline their chimneys, and Silas O. Smith replaced his frame store with a brick building, the first at the Four Corners, in 1821. Ira West built a second store of stone a year later, and the Curtis brothers also used stone from the river to erect a building near the bridge on the east bank, but the arrival of a second brick dealer with a shipment of 100,000 bricks facilitated the construction of additional brick buildings. Quite appropriately the newly chartered first Bank of Rochester opened in 1824 in a brick building erected the year before as a tavern adjoining the Court House square. The Clinton House, opened next door on Exchange Street a year later, as well as the Morton House and the United States Hotel, which soon appeared on Buffalo Street, were likewise built of brick, as was the Eagle Hotel, which in 1829 replaced the Ensworth tavern at the Four Corners.

A mounting diversity of functions matched the increased

structural stability of the Four Corners district. Handicraftsmen of all sorts converged on the town, among them a score or more of printers who soon launched four local weeklies, three rival book stores and a circulating library, all located within a block or two of the Four Corners. When in 1827 Everard Peck, proprietor of the leading weekly and the most enterprising book store, published the first Directory, he not only compiled a list of householders and a separate list of boarders but supplied a 70-page account of the town's development and a discription of its chief activities and institutions. Peck was by no means alone in acclaiming Rochester's thriving character, for many visitors pronounced its growth "rapid almost beyond compare." Basil Hall, the British traveler, found its stores, churches, hotels and private dwellings "all in motion creeping upward," and its streets "crowded with people, carts, stages, cattle, pigs—far beyond the reach of numbers."

The rapidity of its growth frustrated Peck's effort to bring out a second Directory—he could not compile an accurate list of residents in time and hastened to issue his revised account of "Rochester in 1827" early the next year before it became out of date. He was able to include some grudging references to the first local daily, the Rochester *Advertiser* launched late in 1826 and edited by Henry O'Reilly who quickly emerged as Peck's leading competitor, and to take note of the first theater which he did not approve. He supplied a more enthusiastic description of the new public market opened in May 1827. Constructed out over the river at the north western end of the bridge, it added a new dimension to the town's growth, providing a center for produce merchants and market farmers, and spurring the construction of other stores out along the northern edge of the bridge so that the two sides of town were effectively linked along one principal street by 1829. The completion the year be-

fore of the new four-and-a-half-story Arcade had supplied Rochester with its tallest and most unique structure. Built of brick with two ranges of stores flanking a central corridor covered by a lofty skylight, it supplied a sheltered center for business activity, and the location of the post office at one side on the main floor prompted daily visits by many residents and assured the numerous renters in its upper stories of a steady flow of patrons.

The Arcade with the Eagle Hotel at the Four Corners and the Globe building, recently completed across the river, set a new standard of structural size and solidity. At least three stone mills already equaled or exceeded their height. But these industrial establishments, employing but a few men each, could not rival the bustling activity in the commercial houses. And although the canal provided the major economic link with the east, boosting Rochester's shipments of flour to top place in America by the early thirties, the slow pace of its boats, many of them built in Rochester boat yards, could not rival the dashing approach of the crowded stages down Main Street hill from the east or the frequent arrivals and departures along Buffalo and State Streets from or to the west. In addition to the eight or ten stages that clattered in and out of the town daily in the early thirties, a steady stream of wagons carrying settlers and immigrants into the west crossed the Rochester bridge making the town an important provisioning center. Two additional banks and a variety of insurance and forwarding agents made their appearance, expediting and safeguarding the shipment of local products and the importation of needed supplies. Long before the final adoption of its charter in 1834 Rochester had become a city in fact and function, if not in name, and was winning acclaim as the world's leading Flour City.

Several of the urban problems confronting the emerging city chiefly concerned its central district. The fire hazard called for

the purchase of additional hand pumps and the organization of volunteer companies to operate them; it also revealed the need for new water supplies and prompted the digging of cisterns in districts where access to the river or the canal was difficult. The first city charter empowered the council to ban the construction of frame buildings within the central district, but a decade slipped by before the aldermen accepted this responsibility. A tabulation in May 1843 revealed that a fourth of the 230 buildings under construction in Rochester that spring were of brick or stone, most of them in the central district. Emboldened by this wide acceptance of the practice, the Council moved a year later to establish a lamp and watch district within which the construction of new frame buildings was prohibited and the reconstruction of chimneys and roofs of fire resistant materials was required. That first building ordinance, applying only to the central district, spurred replacement of earlier frame buildings, as on Front Street after a fire cleared the way in the mid-forties. By the end of the decade solid rows of brick or stone buildings lined Buffalo and Main Streets, State and Exchange, Front and Water Streets, for a block or two in each direction.

Despite these rows of brick fronts, frequent fires and occasional floods created gaps that made way for new buildings. The mounting demand for downtown space and the opening of two active brick yards in the city and two more on its borders spurred the construction of new four- and five-story structures at the Four Corners and its approaches. A few recently arrived architects took charge of the work on several of these buildings. A. J. Warner put up two buildings on Exchange Street, one for the new Commercial Bank in 1859; he also collaborated with Merwin Austin in erecting the five-story Masonic block at the south-east corner of Exchange and Buffalo Streets to replace the Eagle Bank block destroyed by fire two years before. The burn-

ing of the Blossom Hotel on the east side in 1853 had cleared the way for the erection of a five-story commercial building on the north side of Main Street by George C. Buell in 1856 and spurred the completion of the Osburn House next door at the corner of Main and St. Paul. These, with four other five-story blocks and the row of three-story brick structures that now lined the northern edge of the bridge supplied unbroken brick fronts from Clinton Street west to Fitzhugh Street where the elegant new Rochester Savings Bank was erected by Henry Searle in a classical design that made its second story a fit home for the newly organized Academy of Music and Art.

William A. Reynolds installed plate glass windows along the street front of his Arcade in the late forties, and several other new blocks followed that practice in the fifties. Warner had boldly supported the Main Street front of the Masonic block on iron pillars, giving its stores an open appearance that was promptly adopted in the Crystal Palace block on Main Street and elsewhere. The new style encouraged the practice of promenading or window shopping, particularly along the north or sunny side of Buffalo and Main Streets. Earlier drygoods stores on State and Exchange found themselves outclassed by new stores that developed in the new five-story blocks at St. Paul and Main Streets. There Burke, FitzSimons & Hone developed Rochester's first department store in the late fifties, and there a decade later Sibley, Lindsay & Curr opened their Boston Store. Numerous specialty shops competed for space along this principal retail street or spilled over into State and Exchange, which attracted more wholesale dealers as well as the banks and forwarding agents.

Despite the increased specialization of the principal east-west and north-south streets, each boasted its leading hotels. When business functions appropriated the rooms of the Eagle Hotel in

the late fifties the new Osburn House and the Blossom Hotel on East Main achieved first place. Although the Rochester House was not rebuilt after its destruction by fire in 1853, chiefly because of the decline of travel on the Erie Canal, two large new hotels made their appearance overlooking the railroad station on State and Mill Streets to the north. If that northern location of the railroad station supported the wholesale and business life on State Street, it also encouraged the development of Mill and Front Streets, which became the center in the fifties of numerous merchant manufacturers in the rapidly mushrooming clothing industry. Water Street across the river with easier access to water power, both from the small upper and the main falls, was attracting small wood- or metal-working shops and shoe firms that needed power to operate their sewing and turning machines.

But if Rochester's business district by the sixties had developed several areas of specialization, it was held together by its continued focus at the Four Corners and in the Reynolds Arcade. The location there of the first telegraph office in the late forties and of the headquarters of Western Union in the fifties made it the undisputed center of information, while the building of Corinthian Hall in back, with its chief entrance through the Arcade, made it the center as well of intellectual and musical entertainment. Although the Athenaeum and Mechanics Association's library, which occupied rooms on the second and third floors of the Arcade, scarcely paid a commercial rent, the number of readers it attracted as well as the crowds drawn to its lectures in Corinthian Hall helped to maintain the Arcade's central importance.

The Powers Block and Horsecar Era

Several technological improvements promoted the city's growth and considerably transformed its central district. The

development of local transit lines, the installation of elevators in new and taller buildings, the use of iron piers and castiron fronts, and the building of a water system all contributed to the development of a more dynamic central district, which in Rochester was best characterized by the progressive construction of the Powers Block in successive stages from the late sixties into the mid-eighties. When a Buffalo wit, responding to the announcement that Rochester had changed the name of Buffalo Street to Main Street West, described Rochester as "the Four Corners settlement at the foot of the Powers Block," he unintentionally highlighted one of its important characteristics.

Rochester's days as a walking city were passing in the late fifties as the number of licensed hackmen increased to thirty or more and as successive if shortlived omnibus lines made their appearance. A first attempt to organize a company to build a horsecar line failed in 1859, but a second effort three years later attracted more support. The Rochester City and Brighton Railway Company, headed by Patrick Barry the nurseryman, secured a charter and successfully built its first north-south and east-west lines in 1863. The two lines, intersecting at the Four Corners, totaled only 6.6 miles of track, 18 cars and 48 horses, but the flow of traffic they brought into the central district gave it a new burst of vitality.

Since all the cars stopped at the Four Corners where Daniel Powers had established a private bank in the corner rooms of the old Eagle Hotel in the late fifties, the crush of business soon prompted him to undertake the construction of a new stone facade for his bank. Determined not to suspend banking operations, he ordered his architect, A. J. Warner, to build the new stone facade as a shell around the old structure, before removing its walls. While this operation was progressing in the late sixties, two fires destroyed nearby blocks, one on State Street and one on

Buffalo Street. An intervening building on each side protected Powers from these fires, but the threat was obvious, and he not only acquired the two vacant lots but also purchased the two adjoining brick structures and ordered his architect to build one all encompassing block and to construct it with the newly invented castiron components designed to harmonize with the stone of his corner section.

The five-story Powers Block, with its owner's office on a sixth floor under a Mansard roof over the corner section, set a new standard for downtown construction. An elevator, the first in western New York, carried passengers up and down between the separate floors, each paved with marble, and attracted an eager rush of tenants from nearby buildings. Encouraged by the demand for leases, Powers ordered his architect to extend the Mansard roof over the entire block, thus giving it a sixth floor, which he soon appropriated for an art gallery to house the works he acquired on a vacation trip in Europe. When the owners of the five-story Burns block across State Street replaced it in the late seventies with a new seven-story Elwood building, with gargoyles leaning out from the corners of the tower to peer down into the windows of Mr. Powers's sixth floor office, that indomitable gentleman ordered his architect to add a seventh floor under a second Mansard roof.

While this new rivalry was emerging between office blocks at the Four Corners, varied interests were developing new functions in other portions of the central district. When in 1870 Hiram Sibley remodeled the Gaffney block at the north-west corner of Main and St. Paul, the drygoods firm of Burke, Fitz-Simons, Hone & Company expanded its occupancy of the first floor and staged a grand new opening in April 1871. The opening of the Boston Store in the Marble block that fall provided a rival department store almost across the street. The reconstruc-

tion of other buildings farther east, and the opening of the New England House, soon renamed the Whitcomb Hotel, on the south side of Main Street, increased the street's activity and prompted the owners of the south-side lots along the bridge to build a row of three- and four-story brick structures that finally closed the last gap in Main Street, shutting out all view of the river.

Determined to check the eastward migration of the retail trade, Powers and other west-side leaders with major investments near the Four Corners joined in the purchase and demolition of the old National Hotel (formerly the Morton House) and replaced it with a new seven-story hotel. Designed by A. J. Warner and erected at a cost of a half million dollars, it was equipped with two elevators and boasted, in addition to 300 sleeping rooms, four large dining rooms, three reception rooms, a bridal suite, ten stores opening to the lobby as well as the street, and a marble staircase leading to a banquet hall capable of seating 500 guests. The opening of the Powers Hotel in April 1883 brought repercussions on East Main Street. The proprietors of the Osburn House acquired a lease on the Powers Hotel and surrendered their hold on the Osburn to the Sibley, Lindsay & Curr Co. who had been eager to add that space to their adjoining store. Osburn invested his returns from this deal in a New Osburn House on South St. Paul (South Avenue) overlooking the Erie Canal aqueduct. A seven-story building was erected nearby for the Y.M.C.A. and the old Opera House near Main was reconstructed on a grand scale.

These developments on Main Street, East and West, and on South St. Paul did not match those to the north. After a long controversy with the city, the New York Central had undertaken in the early eighties to elevate its main line and to replace the low standing depot on the west side with a new station on higher ground over the St. Paul Street underpass on the east side.

This relocation, completed in 1883, had a dramatic impact on both districts. The relatively new hotels on Mill and State Streets facing the old station lost their advantage, and the clothing firms that had clustered on Mill and Front Streets, because of their juxtaposition to the depot, hastened to seek new quarters near the new east-side station. The Central maintained its old freight yard near Brown's Square on the west side, however, which proved attractive to industries making heavy shipments. Thus although the milling industry was fading out along old Brown's race on the west side at the main falls, new industrial enterprises were taking over the old mill sites. Newly introduced electric companies were acquiring the power rights along the raceway and supplying light and power to new industries that hastened to fill the gaps left by commercial interests abandoning the structures on State Street. Among others who leased empty lofts along that street in 1880 was George Eastman whose Dry Plate and Film Company was ready three years later to begin the construction, three blocks farther north on that street, of its new camera works.

More dramatic developments were occurring on North St. Paul. H. H. Warner the patent medicine king chose a site adjoining the old St. Paul Church for his new factory but insisted that the city widen the street to make it a suitable commercial artery leading to the station. To avoid condemning half the Osburn block site at the Main Street intersection, the city widened the street only from the north line of that block, but its broader character spurred the construction of new buildings on both sides. Hervey Ellis, an inspired architect who had worked for a time under H. H. Richardson on the state capitol at Albany, had already prepared plans and secured commissions to erect new five- and six-story factories for three clothing firms along the west side of the street, and he now designed one for

Stein-Bloch on the new east frontage. His skill in the arrangement of windows and columns gave the facades of his structures a unity that introduced a new style, contrasting with the eclecticism of most surrounding structures and gave a new vitality to architecture in Rochester.

The reconstruction of St. Paul Street focused attention on another public improvement that had cleared the way for its development. The confidence Daniel Powers had placed in cast-iron construction in 1870 had disappeared when word reached Rochester that the Chicago fire had demolished several structures similar to the Powers block. Duly alerted, its proprietor had resigned his post on the tax league and took the lead in organizing a drive to secure a water system for Rochester. Unwilling to wait until a safe supply of potable water could be brought from Hemlock Lake, the leading down-town taxpayers persuaded the city to build not only a Hemlock system but a Holly system to make river water available at fire hydrants in the central district. The pressure supplied after 1874 by a Holly pumping station not only enabled the fire fighters to throw streams of water onto the roofs of the six- and seven-story buildings but enabled their owners to lease water from the system to power their new elevators. When the reconstruction of North St. Paul Street commenced a decade later, its promoters demanded and secured an extension of the Holly mains to serve their elevators as well as to safeguard their wholesale and factory buildings.

Unfortunately the new water systems, even where supplemented by steam fire engines, failed to check some fires. The sudden conflagration that gutted the new seven-story factory of the Steam Gauge & Lantern Works in 1888, trapping many of its workers behind the blazing wooden platform at its emergency exit and exacting a toll of thirty-eight lives, demonstrated

the need for iron fire escapes and other precautions. Recognizing the rapid expansion and upward extension of the business district, in which its principal liabilities were clustered, the Rochester Board of Fire Underwriters, organized in 1851 to devise a uniform tariff of insurance rates, adopted its fourth revised set of tariffs in 1891 to cover the several new categories of risks. Its new listing of the city's many business blocks, industrial and other buildings, excepting only single-family residences, published in a 320-page directory that contrasted sharply with its small 44-page issue of 1860, demonstrated the remarkable growth of the business district during the previous three decades.

Electric Trolleys Transform the District

But the business district was already entering a new stage in the early nineties. Developments in iron-frame construction, permitting the erection of still taller buildings, had taken hold in Rochester as well as in Chicago, New York, and other growing metropolises in the late eighties. The city began to feel the need and to see the economic justification for such taller structures in the early nineties when the introduction of electric trolleys increased the number of passengers delivered downtown every day. Mounting pressures from varied directions produced building codes to safeguard the occupants of the new skyscrapers, and new technological advances added to their comfort and efficiency.

The eleven-story Wilder Building, completed in 1888, inaugurated the new movement in Rochester. In addition to its lofty iron-frame construction, faced with brick, it incorporated the newly perfected mail chutes invented by its architect, James G. Cutler, whose previous most notable building, the Kimball tobacco factory had a massive smoke stack which served as the pedestal for the 21-foot statue of Mercury that supplied Rochester's favorite skyline symbol. Daniel Powers could not safely

add another story to his castiron block, but he could and did add two additional stories to the steel tower over his elevator shaft and in 1889 re-established his claim to possessing the highest point in the city.

Neither the Wilder Building nor the Powers Block could long retain priority in Rochester's hectic growth. The erection of the Granite Building on the north-east corner at Main and St. Paul in 1891-93 and the completion two years later of the Commerce Building on the south-west corner, both of steel frame construction and thirteen stories high, achieved new standards of comfort and elegance. But even the full loads and steady stream of trolley cars, passing their doors from early morning to late at night, failed to save the Commerce Building from bankruptcy in the midst of the depression that clouded the mid-nineties. In contrast, because of its more popular appeal, the Sibley, Lindsay and Curr store was able to expand its occupancy of the lower floors of the Granite Block and seized the opportunity in 1894 to arrange for the first local viewing in its basement of four kinascope displaying the motion-picture views magically captured on some of Eastman's new film. While construction was widely halted in most parts of the city in these depressed years, George Eastman was boldly pressing ahead with the erection of a second seven-story factory on State Street and added two more buildings on his Lake Avenue park site.

The pause in major construction activities afforded an opportunity to determine the provisions of a new building code. The first draft, incorporating the standards prescribed in neighboring Buffalo, brought numerous protests from local architects who maintained that Rochester, with a sure rock footing in its central district, did not require the heavy piers and massive walls needed in Buffalo, which stood on the loose shale and gravel of an ancient lake shore. After some last minute revisions the build-

ing code was finally passed providing for the installation of fire doors and other precautions as well as for the use of adequate though less massive structural materials; it also directed the fire marshall to inspect and approve all new constrution in the central district. Overwhelmed by his new responsibilities, the Fire Marshall protested and appealed for additional staff, but it was not until 1900 that a Bureau of Inspection was provided.

Despite these precautions Rochester was perennially troubled by destructive fires, none more spectacular than the Sibley fire in February 1904. Hampered by a heavy snow, the fire fighters had difficulty in confining it to the Main Street stores adjoining the new Granite Block, which however was saved. But the complete destruction of the principal portion of the store, the old Buell block, hastened the decision of its managers to build their new store east of Clinton. When the new Sibley store opened in its spacious block-long structure in 1905 it effectively extended the business district to East Avenue and beyond. The decision that year of E. W. Edwards of Syracuse to move to Rochester and open a department store in the reconstructed Buell block, and the preparations of John C. McCurdy of Philadelphia to enlarge the store he had recently acquired at Elm Street, on the south side of Main, further enhanced the status of that street as the principal retail district.

West-side investors were not ready to give up the struggle, however. The demolition of the old Smith Arcade on the southwest corner at Main and Exchange had cleared the way for the erection of a modern new bank and office building on that site. To hold the displaced retail trade, Walter B. Duffy took the lead in organizing and erecting what became known as the Duffy-Powers Department Store, which opened in 1907 in its new six-story block just west of the Powers Hotel.

Duffy also collaborated in the establishment and construction

of the new Rochester Hotel across West Main at the south-east corner of the Plymouth Street intersection. The Prince Furniture Company opened an enlarged store a block farther west, and the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railroad finally erected its handsome new station just beyond the canal crossing on that street. New west-side residential developments helped to sustain the promoters of the west-side business district, while plans for a cluster of factories at the new Lincoln Park station on the city's western outskirts promised further support.

These developments prompted the east-side promoters to redouble their efforts. News of the proposed west-side hotel spurred the announcement of a new hotel on Clinton Street where the Seneca Hotel made its appearance in 1908 just in time to join with the Powers and the Rochester hotels in supplying first class accommodations for the State Democratic Convention that fall. Mayor Edgerton, who as a contractor had erected the Sibley store and several of the other large structures, now pressed for the conversion and enlargement of the old Armory on Washington Square as a Convention Hall. That remodeled hall soon attracted a succession of state and national conventions to Rochester crowding its downtown hotels and filling the stores and amusement halls of the Central Business District with eager delegates. A rapid multiplication of centers of commercial entertainment occurred in this decade as the popularity of the city's first motion picture house, the Bijou Dream, opened at Main and Water Streets in 1906, prompted the establishment of fourteen additional cinemas in the next five years and pressured the three legitimate theaters to install motion picture screens as an accessory attraction. Some of the five- and ten-cent cinemas quickly succumbed, but the more securely established theaters added pipe organs and orchestras to enrich their entertainment and assure a steady patronage.

As Main Street East and West vied for precedence in retailing and to a lesser extent in commercial entertainment, other portions of the central district developed other specialized functions. The old Four Corners retained its firm grip on banking and as the center for office buildings. The construction of the third and greatly enlarged Court House on the old site in the mid-nineties helped to hold the legal profession in that vicinity, while the opening of several dining rooms in the Powers Hotel and other nearby structures made it a busy center at lunch and dinner time. Indeed the crush of business in the vicinity of the Four Corners and the Court House was so great that the Board of Education was delighted to move its high school classes into East and West Highs shortly after the turn of the century but retained the old Free Academy building as its administrative headquarters in order to maintain its contacts with the other city officials in the City Hall across the street. The City Hall, erected in the late seventies, occupied the site of the old First Presbyterian Church which, like several of the other early churches that had originally clustered around the edges of the central district of the village period, had moved to less congested neighborhoods. The First Unitarian Church, for example, had sold its site on North Fitzhugh Street to the federal government for the erection of a Federal Building and post office in the mid-eighties, while the two churches that had once straddled East Main Street at Clinton Street had made way for commercial structures.

St. Paul Street, which in the late eighties had made a sudden bid for primacy, had lost its punch during the depression, which humbled H. H. Warner among others. It had seen the migration of retailing farther east on Main and was content to become the center instead of a thriving wholesale district with clothing, shoe, and wood-working factories crowding the upper floors of

its newly built blocks, many of them extending onto the intersecting and adjoining streets of the north-east district that now practically filled the arc of the Central's elevated tracks. St. Paul extended under and beyond the tracks to the north as an industrial highway leading past several breweries and other shops to the cluster of factories developed since the mid-seventies by Bausch & Lomb at the Vincent Place intersection where a new river bridge was erected in 1873.

But St. Paul Street could not rival State Street as an industrial thoroughfare. The continued activity of small industrial ventures in the old Brown's race district, stimulated by the construction of Platt Street bridge in 1890, persisted after the conversion to electricity suspended most use except by the power company of its water falls. But these firms did not rival those along State Street itself, most notably the Eastman Kodak factories between the Platt and Brown Street intersections. Eastman's factories at Kodak Park two miles farther north were also expanding rapidly, but none there or elsewhere in the city rivaled the new 16-story office building erected by George Eastman at State Street in 1913. Even the flagpole atop the Powers Block tower, which had long held top place on the Rochester skyline, was finally surpassed as the Kodak Office Tower outsoared the tallest structures of the old Central Business District.

The Specialized Districts

Several basic developments combined to transform Rochester's Central Business District in the war and post-war years. The second eastward movement of the New York Central station, by expanding the area speeded its division into specialized districts, a move hastened by the multiplication of automobiles and their increased competition with the trolley cars, both as carriers and for downtown space. The outward migration of

industry further accentuated this development and presented the civic officials with problems that called for conscious city planning, which however prolonged and in fact delayed the transformation. Yet despite numerous uncertainties the Business District did acquire a new character and several important new functions.

The inadequacies of the second New York Central station had become apparent as St. Paul Street failed to attract the anticipated retail and hotel trade and as the passenger and train service exhausted the limited space. Although an effort to persuade the railroad to build a new station over the river at the brink of the falls, proposed by the Wilgus plan of 1905 (which sought to merge the east and west sides around a river vista flanked by classic buildings extending to Main Street), failed to achieve success, it alerted many Rochester business men to the possibilities of city planning and gave birth to a host of ambitious paper plans during the next three decades. The railroad made its own decision, moving a long block farther east in order to get more train docking space, but that location served to fracture rather than unite the business community and hastened the development of specialized districts. Claude Bragdon's unique design supplied a distinguished station when opened in 1914, but like the second depot it failed to attract the hotels and commercial establishments needed to make it a vital center and remained dependent on taxi, bus, and truck services to maintain its contacts with the city's now widely scattered commercial, industrial, and residential districts.

The Chamber of Commerce made an effort to draw the various portions of the business community together by moving down from its perch on the top two floors of the Commerce Building to occupy a new headquarters opened in 1917 on St. Paul at Mortimer Street. Donated by George Eastman and de-

signed and built by Claude Bragdon, the new headquarters, with a large banquet hall capable of seating 600 diners, soon attracted an increased membership and fostered the activities of so many committees and bureaus that an expansion quickly became necessary. The construction three years later of a five-story addition reaching down to Water Street in the rear affectively served an industrial management division, a social welfare and community planning council, and their various affiliates as well as the normal concern of business men.

Some members of the Chamber were vigorous advocates of city planning. They were concerned by the traffic tie-ups along Main Street and by the need for additional links between the east and west sides and the commercial and industrial districts. Several men proposed the construction of parallel streets to relieve the congestion on Main Street, but when the city engineer calculated the cost for the acquisition of property and the construction of a north-side parallel, south-side interests protested and property holders not directly benefitted resisted efforts to spread the cost. All action was suspended until the state's final success in building the Barge Canal, circling the southern border of the city, released the old Erie Canal route through Rochester and called for a prompt decision concerning its use. A proposal for the construction of a new city hall bordering the aqueduct, which was to be paved over to serve as an open plaza looking up the river, was headed off by George Eastman who bought the old Kimball tobacco factory (more recently occupied but now abandoned by the Cluett-Peabody collar factory) and gave it to the city as a more fitting site for a new city hall. That action in 1924 saved the aqueduct for commercial use and prompted a remodeling of the factory for temporary use as a city hall annex and central library.

In the course of this debate a still more important function

emerged for the aqueduct and in fact for the entire canal ditch. The popularity of the electric trolley in the 1890's had not only extended the transit service into all sections of the city, but had promoted the construction of electric lines into the suburbs and to distant towns and cities. Four of these inter-urban companies had constructed lines from Rochester to Sodus, to Geneva, to Syracuse, and to Lockport and Buffalo between 1900 and 1920. The big problem was to find an entrance into the city, and the abandonment of the canal finally provided an ideal route into the very heart of Rochester. The city accordingly purchased the entire ditch and launched construction of a railroad to serve the several interurban companies. It decided to build a deck over the aqueduct and over the canal through the central district to provide a new surface highway which it called Broad Street. The completion of that highway between West Main and South Avenue provided the start for a south side parallel, but efforts to extend it eastward to East or Park Avenues were blocked by rival advocates of other routes and by the onset of the depression.

Despite their inability to reach a consensus on plans for the central district the business leaders pressed ahead with new private developments that considerably transformed its character. Not only did the Sibley and McCurdy stores each expand its sales rooms by erecting and occupying new annexes, but the Seneca Hotel added a new ten-story wing and other investors built a new Sagamore Hotel on East Avenue. The erection of the Eastman Theater and the Eastman School of Music at Gibbs and Main Streets further buttressed the east side by strengthening its cultural functions. Finally the decision of the Lincoln-Alliance bank to erect a new office tower of 14 stories on the south side of East Main at Stone Street posed a dramatic challenge to the old banking center at the Four Corners. Some west-side interests responded by erecting the 13-story Genesee Valley

Trust Building at the corner of Exchange and the new Broad Street, topping it with a symbolic representation of Wings of Progress that challenged George Eastman to order the construction of three additional floors and a gothic spire on his tower to maintain top place on the Rochester skyline. The replacement of the historic old Reynolds Arcade with a nine-story office building marked the start in 1933 of a new modernizing trend in the Four Corners area.

The city's efforts to incorporate height restrictions in its zoning ordinance had been deferred until these additions were effected but the restraints it placed on new construction in the thirties were less rigorous than those applied by the depression which snuffed out the interurbans and effectively stalled most construction downtown for over a decade. Among the few exceptions were the new Public Library erected at the corner of Broad and South Avenue from the proceeds of the Rundel fund assisted by federal PWA grants. Efforts to secure PWA funds to extend Broad Street eastward to serve as a south-side parallel and to press ahead with other planning programs were frustrated by a lack of agreement locally and a diversion of federal funds to more widely supported projects. The federal government did erect a new post office in a spacious site adjoining the new railroad station, further strengthening the east side. Two additional clothing stores opened large new sales rooms on East Main and with other new stores clinched its position as the dominant retail district and speeded the final suspension of the Duffy-Powers store on West Main in 1932. The west side, however, retained its position as the favored banking and office center and, after surviving the depression and the Second World War, saw the construction of the new War Memorial on the old Kimball Tobacco Factory site as the first dramatic move toward the remodeling of the Central Business District.

But the building of the Inner Loop and the new downtown plazas, office towers and parking garages is another story, not completed, and its history must await a later chronicle.