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A City Historian's Report

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It was in June, thirty-seven years ago, that I came to Rochester as a candidate for the post of Assistant City Historian. Curiously enough, my first impressions still seem not only fresh and vivid but also relevant to its history, at least as I have come to know and interpret it. Perhaps a recounting of some of my experiences will prove revealing concerning the nature of my scholarship. Yet few readers of *Rochester History* will be surprised to learn that my analysis has relied more on an intuitive interpretation of the available records than on a quantitative abstraction of their essence.

After all, computers had not yet been invented in 1936, and when Professor Dexter Perkins, the newly appointed City Historian, attempted to give his prospective assistant a conception of the subject community, he drove me to the top of Cobbs Hill for an overview of the town. I can still recall my impression of Rochester as a tranquil home-owner's city spreading out under a green canopy with only a few office buildings, the Kodak Tower, and several chimneys and scattered steeples visible above the tree tops. And that evening, as I strolled around downtown, I got a suggestive sense of its historic past. Crossing the Genesee

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River on Court Street Bridge, I had a good view of the old Erie Canal aqueduct, which then served as a subway crossing under Broad Street Bridge, thus spanning a century of urban and transportation history. On the west bank was the City Hall Annex housing the business branch of the Public Library in an aging brick structure with a massive chimney topped by a giant-sized statue of Mercury. Facing it on the east bank was the modern stone-faced structure of the new Rundel Memorial Library where, if I landed the job, my office would be located.

Strolling north across the library's unfinished plaza and west onto Broad Street Bridge, I got a good view of two or three old stone mills bordering the river and of the backs of the three- and four-story brick buildings lining Main Street Bridge, the only replica of "Old London Bridge" in America. Curious about the history of these quaint structures, I strolled down Exchange Street to the Four Corners, where the massive Powers Block with its three Mansard roofs faced and overtopped the Elwood Building with gargoyles peering down from the four corners of its tower as if to warn passers-by of the historic mysteries that surrounded them.

I was ready and eager to accept the job, when the offer arrived a week later, and hastened to move to Rochester to assume my new duties on July 1st. The depression was still evident on all sides, and I did not consider it unreasonable that a tenth of my salary of \$3500 was withheld to help the city balance its budget. I soon found myself cooperating in several New Deal projects—reading proof on the voluminous chapters of the *New York State Guide*, for example, as well as on the *Rochester and Monroe County Guide*, both completed by Writers Project teams in my first year. I also assisted in the instruction of the numerous teenagers who were employed by the National Youth Administration in an ambitious project of indexing the Rochester newspapers from their first appearance in 1817 forward.

Unfortunately that extremely useful project terminated on the outbreak of World War II, when the indexers had barely reached 1897, and its completion awaits a new emergency.

Meanwhile a WPA grant had helped to rush the completion of the Rundel Building, and I moved in on its opening as the headquarters of the Rochester Public Library in September 1936. One function of the City Historian was the compilation of an annual volume published by the Rochester Historical Society, and under the direction of Professor Perkins, I produced as our first volume in that series one devoted to the history of libraries in the Rochester area. The favorable response to that book prompted us to launch a second on the history of education in Rochester and Monroe County, and then a third reproduced excerpts from the journals of early travelers to the Genesee Country.

In the midst of compiling and editing these volumes I assumed several new historical functions. Our study of educational developments had made us aware of a Fourth Grade course on "Our City and Our Community" and brought a request from several teachers that I prepare a book for use as a reader in that course. Responding to this novel challenge, I produced a mimeographed text for such a volume, which was used experimentally in four carefully selected classes in the fall of 1937. After extensive revisions to meet the criticisms and suggestions offered by the teachers in charge of these test classes, *A Story of Rochester* was published by the Board of Education in 1938.

Perhaps my most thrilling experience came several years later as an outgrowth of this publication when a ten-year-old lad appeared at the office one afternoon and asked for some copies of a new pamphlet we had just released. "How many do you want?" I asked. "How many have you got?" he replied. "We have quite a stack of them," I said. "What do you want them for?" "My teacher sent me down to get some," he responded, "because they

were written by the same guy who wrote the book we are reading.” “How would you like to meet that guy?” I asked. “Sure,” he replied, looking around. “I’m the guy,” I said. “Naw,” he protested, “it was an Old Citizen.” “Part of the book was a collection of excerpts from an Old Citizen’s Letters,” I agreed, pulling a copy of the book off the shelf, “but there is more to it than that,” I said, opening it to another section. “Say,” he exclaimed (pointing to a picture of the first aqueduct reproduced in the book), “we were just reading about that canal aqueduct today. How do you write a book like that?” he asked. “Do you use the encyclopedia?” I had to explain that there isn’t much on Rochester in the encyclopedias, but I told him he was right that we start with other books, and using an index to the publications of the Rochester Historical Society I showed him how I found that picture and an account of the building of the canal in one of these volumes. “Gee,” he exclaimed as he took it all in (tucking three copies of my new pamphlet into his pocket), “I’m going to write a theme on how to write a book.”

The pamphlets he picked up were copies of the current issue of *Rochester History*, which the Rochester Public Library had recently launched for us. This new publication had been inspired by a desire to reach a more general audience than that represented by the membership of the Rochester Historical Society. An invitation to address an outdoor gathering at the Tonawanda Indian Reservation in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Phelps and Gorham Land Purchase Treaty at Buffalo Creek on July 8, 1788, had prompted me to write a paper which, with related documents, provided the script for a 24-page pamphlet and thus determined the size of our new quarterly for which it supplied the first issue in January, 1939.

A major objective of *Rochester History* was to provide a means to reach into the upper grades of the public schools as

well as to supply informative articles to interest library visitors in the community's history. Generally one issue each year has been designed to appeal directly to teenagers, and the second issue that first year was written by my able new research assistant, Dorothy S. Truesdale (now Mrs. Humes and Head of the Central Branch of the Rochester Public Library). Her charming article on "The Younger Generation: Their Opinions, Pastimes and Enterprises: 1830-1850" admirably filled the first objective, and Professor Perkins, who followed with one on "Rochester One Hundred Years Ago," addressed himself to the general public. I wrote the fourth article for that first year on "Indian Allan's Mills," which quite appropriately marked their appearance at the upper falls of the Genesee just 150 years before.

Successfully launched in 1939, *Rochester History* became a major feature of the City Historian's program and is now in its 35th volume. Free copies of the current issues are still available at the Information desk in the Rundel Building, and all public and most parochial and private schools in Rochester and its suburbs maintain fairly complete files of the back issues of this journal, which is now gaining a recognized place in many metropolitan and university libraries as well. Several students of various aspects of Rochester's history have contributed articles, notably Professor Glyndon VanDeusen on "Thurlow Weed in Rochester" and Virginia Jeffrey Smith on "Reminiscences of the Third Ward," but as the one chiefly responsible I have written most of the articles, many on topics suggested by interested readers. Each of several talented research assistants contributed one or more articles, including "Literature in Rochester" by Natalie F. Hawley, and "Journalism in the 1890's" by Hilda A. Coates, two of the best we have published.

Rochester History supplied an ideal stimulant to research. To help meet one deadline, Professor Perkins contributed an article on Henry O'Reilly, Rochester's most talented Irishman, news-

paper editor and promoter of the telegraph, which made a fortune for another Rochesterian, Hiram Sibley. Requests from varied organizations for lectures on special topics launched researches that occasionally resulted in articles for *Rochester History*, notably one on "The Seneca Time of Troubles" prompted by an invitation to give a talk at the Museum of Arts and Sciences on the Indians of the Rochester area. Sometimes the reverse occurred and the appearance of an issue on an interesting subject brought a request for a lecture on that topic, as when my article on "Rochester and the Erie Canal" brought an invitation to speak at a canal celebration in New York City. That occasion of course called for the preparation of a new paper, which was published in the *Quarterly* of the New-York Historical Society as "The Erie Canal, Mother of Cities."

Aided by a succession of research assistants and by the contributions of independent scholars, we were able in the early forties to produce not only the quarterly issues of *Rochester History* but also the annual volumes of the Historical Society. The receipt of a well-documented manuscript of a full length biography of "Charles Williamson: Genesee Promoter" supplied the text for the 1941 volume. Its scholarly author, Miss Helen I. Cowan of Baltimore, also contributed "Williamsburg: Lost Village on the Genesee" to *Rochester History*, and the appearance of her book, Volume XIX of the Society's series, brought to light a manuscript journal of the Berczy settlement at Williamsburg, which we published as Part II of the 1943 volume. Convinced that a concentration on one topic each year added to the merits of its volume, we generally adhered to that plan, sometimes adding a second part on another topic when space permitted. Thus as Part II of our volume on libraries we printed "The European Travel Journal of Lewis H. Morgan," edited by Professor Leslie White of the University of Michigan and recording a full year spent in England and on the Continent by

Rochester's most distinguished scientist—an addition which assured this volume an international market, most especially in Russia, although Communist scholars were disappointed to discover that Morgan did not respond with the interest and respect that Marx expressed for him. The publication of this journal prompted Sister Marcelle LeManger Lane of Richmond to submit a manuscript on "The Life and Works of Jane Marsh Parker," another Rochester author and historian, which we published as Part II in the 1946 volume.

As its 1945 publication, the Historical Society bought and distributed copies of the first volume of a new series I had undertaken. That book, *Rochester: the Water Power City: 1812-1854*, published by the Harvard University Press, was planned as the first of three, later four, volumes on the history of the city. Only three or four scholarly histories of individual cities had yet appeared, and the prospect of contributing to the development of the new field of urban history had been a major attraction of the new job. In the course of compiling and editing the annual volumes for the Rochester Historical Society as well as the quarterly issues of *Rochester History*, I had made a probing examination of the historical books and manuscripts assembled over several decades by the Society and now on deposit, together with the Library's own collections, in its Local History Division, which adjoined my office. I devoted one issue of our quarterly to "Early Almanacs" and in another presented a summary account of "Historical Writing in the Rochester Area." My work with the National Youth Administration newspaper indexing project had prompted me to undertake, with the aid of my research assistants, a systematic reading of the back volumes of all Rochester papers. And since the unbroken files of these publications served as an invaluable community diary, I was able to produce what some urban historians elsewhere have characterized as a city biography.

In that first volume, which dealt with the settlement and early development of the city, I found the key to Rochester's history to lie in the progressive exploitation of the water resources available to it. After reviewing the geologic origins of the site and the fleeting contacts of the Indian predecessors of the white man, I discovered that the river and the lake together supplied a unifying trade channel for the pioneers scattered throughout the Genesee Country. The migratory diffusion of the early settlers was suddenly focused on the Genesee artery by the adoption of the Jeffersonian embargo and non-intercourse acts, which diverted trade from the Atlantic ports to new markets in Canada. Thus the upper falls of the Genesee, which halted all rafts coming down this north-flowing artery, provided a crucial break-in-trade and supplied power to convert their cargoes for local consumption or for convenient transshipment. Colonel Rochester's pioneer settlement at the upper falls prospered in the mid-teens, but it was the building by New York State of the Erie Canal, with its Genesee crossing a stone's throw below the upper falls, that gave the most powerful boost to urban developments at the site.

Mushrooming as America's first boom town in the 1820's, Rochester emerged from the hectic fluctuations of that decade as a prosperous flour-milling center. It acquired a city charter in 1834 and for the next two decades milled and shipped more flour than any other port and was widely known as the Flour City. I might have taken that nickname for the title and theme of my first volume, but it did not seem as meaningful or inclusive as the caption I chose: "The Water-Power City." It was water power that carved out the Genesee gorge and prepared the site for a great city. And the water power that later ground the flour also sawed logs into lumber for houses and shops and for canal boats and ships to carry the town's produce by rival water routes to distant markets. Moreover, it was not the score or more of flour millers alone, but these men with a numerous community

of merchants, craftsmen, canalers, and pioneers in professional fields who built a dozen churches, organized a thriving Athenaeum, and established a host of other institutions, including a small denominational college by the mid-century. As the Water-Power City, Rochester stood 20th in size among American cities by 1855.

When one citizen, who bought that first book expecting to get a full history of the city's power companies, protested, I hastened to assemble a series of documents on Rochester's water power resources for inclusion as Part II in the Historical Society's 1946 volume. Indeed the work of compiling and editing those volumes as well as the successive issues of *Rochester History* contributed in a constructive way to the progress of my more comprehensive series on the city's history. Thus during the many months following the completion of the manuscript for the first volume, while waiting its final publication, I suppressed my impatience by commencing work on its successor. But in order to get a comprehensive view of Rochester during the Civil War, I decided to devote the 1944 annual volume of the Society to that subject. A careful sifting of our collections unearthed two manuscript diaries recording the activities of local regiments, two series of letters from Rochester boys at the front, and an excellent reminiscent account by another officer of the battle actions of his unit, popularly known as the Rochester Regiment. A summary essay on "Rochester's Part in the Civil War" by Ruth Marsh, one of my able assistants, coupled with these five documentary contributions, made a volume which was in such demand that it was soon out of print.

Also "out of print" at an early date was Miss Cowan's volume on Charles Williamson (fortunately now republished by August M. Kelley, Publisher) and a new biographical volume by Roswell Ward on his grandfather, Rochester's most distinguished natural scientist and explorer and founder of Ward's Natural Science

Establishment. *Henry A. Ward: Museum Builder to America* was published as Volume 24, the last of the Society's series, in 1948, the year I succeeded Professor Perkins as City Historian. The Ward book supplied an intimate first-hand view of important aspects of the city's history during the second half of the nineteenth century, yet it made few if any mentions of other significant aspects that called for research in depth. I accordingly plotted exploratory issues of *Rochester History* on Susan B. Anthony, Rochester's distinguished woman suffragette, Lewis Swift, its noted amateur astronomer, the Reverend Newton M. Mann and other local defenders of the new Darwinian concepts, as well as on such key social topics as the development of welfare agencies and the introduction of organized sports and other recreational activities. A basic aspect of the city's second period was the increasing diversity of its population, and to probe this development I wrote articles for *Rochester History* on the Irish and the Germans who formed the largest minority groups in the city in this period.

One fascinating topic, somewhat related to the history of minority groups, was the extent of the involvement of the Jerome family in Rochester. A strong tradition that Jennie Jerome, mother of Winston Churchill, had been born in Rochester greeted me on my arrival and required careful investigation. After painstaking research, Miss Truesdale determined and reported in a closely reasoned article that while Leonard Jerome, Winston's grandfather, had lived in Rochester with his younger brother Lawrence and his wife Catherine [Hall] in the 1840's, and while together in 1846 they acquired and published the *Rochester Daily American* (the "Know-Nothing" journal), Leonard did not marry Catherine's sister Clarissa Hall until April 1849. This occurred a few months before his appointment as consul to Ravenna, Italy, towards which the young couple sailed in January. Leonard was shortly transferred to Trieste,

and it was there or more probably in Brooklyn, in which he settled on his return, that Jennie, the second daughter, was born, as she herself recorded in her *Reminiscences*. But the tradition that the beautiful Jennie was not only born in Rochester but also attended school with the mothers of numerous local matrons lived on and prompted the University of Rochester to award Winston an LL.D. in 1941. Somewhat preoccupied with the Battle of Britain, Winston cabled his acceptance, saying in part: "As you tell me, my mother was born in Rochester and my grandfather published the Rochester *Plain Dealer*." Thus Winston or one of his staff knew enough of American history to try to clear his grandfather of harboring anti-foreign sentiments by changing the name of his paper to the *Plain Dealer*, which was a Cleveland not a Rochester paper! On a later visit to America, Winston obligingly helped dedicate a marker to the birthplace of his mother in Brooklyn, though the best evidence indicates that even there it was placed on the wrong house!

It was, I early discovered, almost impossible to avoid some errors. In my first volume, for example, I made a fleeting mention of Obediah Dogberry, editor of the *Liberal Advocate*, a free thought weekly published briefly in Rochester in the early 1830's. His name appeared on its masthead, and I accepted it without question. It was, as it turned out, a lucky error, for it brought a letter from Samuel Hopkins Adams, shortly after the publication of my book, generously congratulating me on its merits but gently suggesting that "Obediah Dogberry" sounded too much like a pseudonym to be taken literally. It was a good lesson to learn early, that even our pioneer forebearers not only read the Bible and Shakespeare, but also had a sense of humor!

Another early error is worth mentioning since it was also instructive, and fortunately I caught it in time. One job of the City Historian was to select sites for appropriate state markers and to prepare the text for the cast iron marker. A natural one

in Rochester was a marker to be erected on the top of Highland Park, Rochester's first and most prestigious park. I carefully checked the Common Council *Proceedings* and found the date on which the aldermen had voted to accept the gift by Ellwanger & Barry of a portion of their nursery on Mt. Hope as the nucleus for Highland Park. That vote was taken in October, 1887, and I promptly included it in the script of my proposed marker, which I sent to the park superintendent for his approval. He protested that the date generally accepted was 1888, but I rechecked my source and read him the ordinance from the Common Council *Proceedings* over the telephone. Faced with such evidence he agreed, and we sent off the proposed text. Fortunately the state was a bit slow in ordering the marker, for a month later, after I had decided to write a *Rochester History* on civic developments in that period and had pressed my researches further, I discovered that the aldermen, fearing the large cost of maintaining a park, had voted to rescind that action at their next meeting. It was not until January 17, 1888, that local advocates of the parks were able to muster enough support to re-enact the original acceptance of the gift with a proper expression of thanks, and it was in May, 1888, that a Park Commission was finally created. Luckily these details emerged in time to correct the text for the marker before it was cast and erected at the top of the hill in Highland Park where it still stands today.

After several years of research, including a thorough reading of the four and five Rochester dailies of the post-Civil War decades, I was ready to tackle my second volume. The westward expansion of the nation had not only developed grain fields and milling centers that completely overshadowed Rochester and its hinterland, but had also threatened to convert the canal port into a backwater community. Many of its former inhabitants had moved on, but some ingenious men had remained and with

enterprising newcomers from abroad had helped to transform the old milling city into a thriving manufacturing center noted for its women's shoes, its men's clothing, its furniture and carriage factories, its metal-working, optical, and instrument shops. Yet Rochester in this second period became more than a factory town, offspring of its water power. None of these industries proved as representative in these years as the work of a group of talented horticulturalists who transformed Rochester into the Flower City. Several of these men had discovered in the thirties and forties (as we had previously noted in Volume XVII of the Historical Society) that the vast expanse of Lake Ontario, a few miles north of the city, served as a temperature stabilizer, holding its summer heat long into the fall and winter and safeguarding neighboring plantings from the killing frosts that struck more exposed farms. By the 1850's and for a half century thereafter the lush output of Rochester nurseries exceeded that of any rival center in America and became Rochester's proudest boast. Yet more important than the commercial value of their young trees and shrubs was the flowering of the cosmopolitan mixture of its inhabitants drawn from Ireland, Germany, Britain, Scandinavia and other foreign sources, as well as those of native origin. It is in this symbolic sense that the title "Flower City" provided a meaningful theme for my second volume; it encompassed the upsurge of the women's suffrage and labor movements as well as the new interest in science and in social and cultural entertainment and the new excitement over sports.

The publication of my second book in 1949, again by the Harvard Press, brought an invitation to read a paper on urban history at the annual convention of the American Historical Association in December 1951. Its appearance in the July 1952 issue of the *American Historical Review* helped to develop a new self-consciousness among a score or more of historians variously interested in urban topics. That article also brought an

invitation to present a paper on "A History of Urban Government in America" at a session of LaSociete Jean Bodin in Paris, in October 1952, which featured a series of papers on "La Ville" submitted by scholars from various western countries. Although unable to attend in person, I submitted a paper which was read by the British delegate, and I accepted an invitation to prepare and read a second historical paper on "Urban Social and Economic Institutions in the United States" for the Society Jean Bodin's session at Brussels the following year. On that, my second trip to Europe, I made a flying tour, stopping for two-day visits at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, and Copenhagen in addition to Brussels.

With my earlier visits to London, Paris and a dozen other European cities, I was acquiring a basis for a comparative appraisal of Rochester's development. This approach was becoming more essential as I advanced into the third period of its history, for it was in the nineties and after the turn of the century that Rochesterians had commenced to view their city comparatively. In my first two volumes I had endeavored to keep relevant national events—wars, depressions, migrations and the like—constantly in view. Now it was desirable to keep the contrasting developments of other cities in mind as well, and I seized every opportunity to visit American cities too. I became at least visually acquainted with all those over 150,000 in population in the Northeast and North Central states by 1955, when I added a dozen on a western tour to my list. To extract the full value from these trips, I devoted two issues of *Rochester History* to an historian's comparative reflections on foreign and American cities.

I again made use of the successive issues of that quarterly to explore key aspects of the city's development in this period. Thus "Walter Rauschenbusch's Rochester," "An Historical View of Rochester's Parks and Playgrounds," "The Depression of 1893 in Rochester," "The History of Public Health in Rochester,"

“The First Century of Art in Rochester to 1925,” and “Rochester’s Political Trends: An Historical Review,” all dealt with crucial themes of the nineties and after. To help keep the full sweep of the city’s history in view, I wrote a second survey article, “A Panoramic Review of Rochester’s History,” which was more inclusive than my earlier issue on “Economic Stages in the Growth of Rochester.” I wrote other issues on “The History of the Rochester City Club,” and “The YMCA’s First Century in Rochester,” and Stephen Thomas, Director of the Museum of Arts & Sciences, contributed one on his predecessor “Arthur Caswell Parker.” Professor James W. Silver of the University of Mississippi discovered and edited a portion of his father’s diary “Making a Living in Rochester,” a fascinating account of huckstering and house building at the turn of the century.

Of course the man who assumed the leading position in Rochester’s third period was George Eastman. A reviewer of my second volume had criticized it for neglecting the Kodak King, but the reviewer was in error in assuming that Eastman’s dominance had dated from the launching of his enterprise in the late 1870’s, whereas his active interest and participation in community affairs did not begin until about 1907. I had written a 2000-word biographical article on George Eastman for the *Dictionary of American Biography*, and I was ready to give him full credit for many significant contributions in the teens and twenties, but first there were other men and women to introduce and appraise. Joseph T. Alling, Mrs. Helen B. Montgomery and a dozen others, including Boss George Aldridge, Mayor James G. Cutler, and President Rush Rhees as well as Professor Rauschenbusch, each played significant roles in the changing life of the city.

Yet it was the city’s evolving economic character that proved most crucial. Although the depression of the mid-nineties had snuffed out many enterprises, a few local companies had pros-

pered, notably those that specialized in patented or quality products. The better men's clothing and women's shoes, the finer instruments and optical products, the unmatched cameras and newly developed films manufactured at Rochester continued to find a market while cheaper products glutted the warehouses. It thus became evident that the city, lacking the advantages of ports on the upper lakes or in the great valley of the Mississippi—not to mention those on the Atlantic—could not compete in heavy industry or as a major shipping center. Its only economic prospect was as a producer of quality products based on the skills of its workers and the ingenuity of its entrepreneurs. But this would require better schools to assure high standards of training and better cultural facilities to hold the most talented. As the community awoke to a realization of this situation, leaders in every field took up "the quest for quality," making it a meaningful theme and an appropriate title for my third volume.

Advocates of good government, of social Christianity, of high standards in music and art, vied with the industrialists and the Chamber of Commerce in an all-absorbing effort "to make Rochester the best city in the world in which to live and raise a family." That of course was George Eastman's phrase, frequently repeated and rephrased in the teens and the twenties. It reminds us of the increasingly effective leadership he supplied in the organization of philanthropic effort, and in the promotion of civic efficiency and of educational and cultural advances. His policies, developed in collaboration with other community leaders, supplied the major content of my third volume published by the Harvard Press in 1956.

By emphasizing the *quest for quality* I avoided, as residents of that period had done before me, any need to appraise the extent of its attainment. Indeed, in spite of my efforts to visit as many cities as possible, I had not attempted to develop criteria for the comparison or rating of different communities; in fact it was

only in the early fifties that a few sociologists were beginning to formulate standards for grading cities. And it was in 1953 that a number of historians interested in cities took the first steps to form an Urban History Group to assist in developing procedures for urban historical study and comparative analysis.

Serving for the first six years as chairman of that group and as editor of its *Newsletter*, I took part in the accumulation of substantive research data and in the early formulation of conceptual approaches to urban history. This broader backing encouraged me to extend my earlier efforts to secure a firm grasp on urban developments throughout the country. The need for a volume treating this aspect of American history comprehensively led gradually into a private research project which resulted a decade later in the publication by the Rutgers Press of my volume on *The Urbanization of America: 1860-1915*. These wider researches alerted me to the fact that while Rochester in these mid-years, covered in my second and third volumes, had outgrown much of its earlier dependence on the Genesee Country, like several growing cities in other parts of the nation it was in the twenties and after developing a new relationship to the surrounding towns, one that foreshadowed its emergence as a regional as well as an industrial metropolis.

I had earlier become the perennial secretary of the Genesee Country Historical Federation, whose annual journeys into various parts of Rochester's twelve-county region brought some of the antecedents of contemporary metropolitan ties into view. With increasing years of residence in Rochester I had assumed a number of citizen responsibilities—in the reform campaigns of the Better Housing Association, in the planning efforts of the Council of Social Agencies, and in the organizational work of the Montgomery Neighborhood Center. These participatory experiences gave me a clearer understanding of many community processes. As City Historian I assumed a lead in several com-

munity-wide celebrations, notably in the staging of the pageant, "So Proudly We Hail," written by Harold S. Sliker in honor of James A. Hard, Rochester's last Civil War Veteran, and presented in Highland Park bowl before some 13,000 onlookers on June 11, 1948. Fourteen years later we staged a similar pageant in the War Memorial, filling its tiers of benches in a commemoration of Rochester's part in the Civil War which emphasized its discovery and development in that ordeal of new national ties and of closer intra-city community bonds. Solidly based on earlier researches, these pageants and the thirty to forty lectures I gave annually to various societies and gatherings may have helped to supply some residents of the changing city with a renewed sense of its heritage.

That last term recalls what was perhaps my most novel assignment—a request for a hundred or more two- or three-line captions recalling local historical incidents that could be depicted graphically as illustrations for a "Rochester Heritage Cookbook" to be published and sold as a benefit for the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary of Rochester. Although convinced that the enterprise would be a flop, neither I nor the members of the Rochester Art Club could refuse to cooperate, and after compiling the desired captions I responded to still another request and wrote a foreword whose chief merit was its title, "Rochester: A Pinch of History," which, according to the reports of the committee in charge of sales, reached a wider audience than anything else I have written!

These activities certainly helped the historian to acquire a firmer grasp of his subject, but the chief contribution of experience came as a resident citizen sharing the impacts of the depression, of the war, and (with special import for my last book) of the emerging metropolis. I was in fact becoming increasingly occupied in the late fifties with an analysis of the changing social and economic structure and prospects of the city as it acquired

metropolitan status. Successive issues of *Rochester History* dealt with its changing ethnic composition, the arrival of Italians, Poles, and Jews, the fluctuating course of local Negro history, the declining activity of its lake port, and the development of new methods of transport and communication, the evolution of new welfare agencies and of new cultural institutions. Among other titles of this period were "The Semi-Centennial of the Rochester Public Library," "The Men's Clothing Industry in Rochester," and "The Rochester Area in American History." The preparation of these and other articles and continued researches in the city's published and unpublished records provided the substance for my fourth volume on Rochester.

When my third volume, *Rochester: The Quest for Quality*, had appeared in the mid-fifties, some readers, despondent over the city's numerous troubles, had enquired whether a fourth volume would treat "The Decline and Fall." I was of course looking for a more palatable title and found it, as my researches continued, in the new challenges Rochester faced as "An Emerging Metropolis." The happy years in the late twenties, when Rochester was still preening itself in George Eastman's image, had come to an end with the onset of the depression. After a brief attempt to check its ravages single-handedly, Rochester had welcomed state and federal assistance, and when a sharp division developed over the New Deal programs, the city had shelved many ambitious civic improvements and devoted its efforts to balancing the budget. It was only with the outbreak of the Second World War that the energies of the community revived. Rochester found in that struggle and in the postwar readjustments a resurgence of vitality that made it one of the most prosperous metropolises in the Northeast. Responding at last to long-deferred housing, traffic, and related problems, Rochester cooperated with the state in launching a super highway system and with the federal government in plans for the renewal of several inner-city areas. The private construction of

Midtown Plaza brought renewed confidence to the central business district and gave assurance that Rochester's suburban expansion would not overshadow or erode its central leadership. The spectacular rise of Xerox, then still known as Haloid-Xerox, with its offices in the new Midtown Tower and a new plant going up in suburban Webster, assured a new unity for the metropolis.

In order to finish volume four in time for a celebration of the 150th anniversary of Rochester's permanent settlement in 1812 we arranged for its publication by the Christopher Press in Rochester. That strategem assured its appearance in December 1961, but plans for the sesquicentennial celebration had been sidetracked by a political upset at the polls a month before, when Democrats, who suddenly acquired control, became absorbed in more pressing concerns. A local columnist, Howard C. Hosmer, greeted my new book with a review listing some of the many events he had himself experienced in the years under review, 1925-1961, but which had somehow escaped mention. He generously published my rejoinder in the same column a week later, and this dialogue not only stirred considerable interest in the book but spurred me to write an article for *Rochester History* on "Errata and Addenda, Plus Some Thoughts on the Nature of History and the Rochester Story," in which I discussed some of the problems and hazards as well as the objectives of a city historian.

A dozen eventful years have slipped by since the publication of my fourth volume. Its acclaim by one reviewer as "a fit conclusion to the most complete history of a major city yet written" was moderated by other reviewers who detected gaps in its coverage and deficiencies in its conceptualization. The study of urban history was attracting new interest and was becoming interdisciplinary as well as quantitative in its approach. Moreover the contemporary metropolis was experiencing an even

more dramatic transformation. As City Historian, in an endeavor to respond to both challenges, I plotted a series of *Rochester Histories* on its mayors and other aspects of its political history; another on its transit and transport developments; another on the housing and urban renewal programs in varied inner-city districts; and still another on its streets and neighborhoods, and on one of its new preservation districts. That last issue of *Rochester History*, a double one on "East Avenue's Turbulent History," may have contributed to my appointment a few years later to the newly created Rochester Preservation Board. Individual articles on "Rochester at the World's Fairs," "Water for Rochester," "A History of Penal and Correctional Institutions in the Rochester Area," "The First Four Decades of the Chamber of Commerce," and "Organized Labor in Rochester before 1914" picked up topics that had long been deferred. Several interested scholars contributed other articles, one by the late Professor Arthur May on the University of Rochester, one by Miss Doris M. Savage, Head of the Local History Division, on the old Rochester Theological Seminary, and one by Mrs. Erville Costa on Claude Bragdon, Rochester's most noted architect.

Most of these articles were of course retrospective in character, but the events erupting in Rochester's streets and inner-city neighborhoods in the mid-sixties called for a new historical focus. The Rochester riots of 1964 and subsequent events brought a host of students and other investigators to the Historian's office in search of data concerning the causes and consequence of these disturbances and stimulated a plan to prepare a historical account of Rochester in the 1960's. However, as the decade progressed and the number of responses multiplied, launching developments such as FIGHT and the Model City Program that have scarcely had time to show their historic impact, the hazard of a premature assessment of their contributions has prompted me to leave the writing of such a book to a future scholar and to

compile instead a summary account tracing the city's growth through ten generations from 1812 to 1972. Already in page proof, *Rochester on the Genesee* will be published this fall by the Syracuse University Press.

Meanwhile an invitation late in 1963 to deliver a lecture at Syracuse University on the changing urban developments of the last half century alerted me to the transformation that has occurred since 1915 in the relationships between cities and the federal government. A further study of this development, stimulated in part by an invitation from the Brookings Institute to address a study group it was conducting in Memphis, Tennessee, coupled with my ongoing analysis of Rochester as an emerging metropolis, contributed in the next five years to the writing of *The Emergence of Metropolitan America: 1915-1966*, which was published by the Rutgers Press in 1968.

The decision of the Library of Urban Affairs to include my two national books in its list of offerings gave them wider publicity and brought new invitations. Two simultaneous requests, one from England for the writing of a summary essay accompanied with illustrative documents on "The City in American History" for use in university and adult-education programs in Britain, and another to give a summer course on that subject at Sir George Williams University in Montreal resulted in the publication of a book with that title by Allen & Unwin, Ltd., in 1969. Two similar invitations soon followed, one for a summary review of America's urbanization, viewing it in comparison with urbanization in other parts of the world, and the other to accept a temporary appointment as Bentley Professor of Urban History at the University of Michigan. Again the joint requests resulted in the preparation of a text for *American Urbanization: A Comparative History*, which was published in paperback by Scott, Foresman & Company in April 1973. The writing of this last volume afforded me an opportunity to make use of the materials

I had long been collecting on foreign cities, an interest that had been quickened in recent years by visits to Rochester's four Sister Cities abroad.

The invitation to commute to Ann Arbor as a visiting professor came at a propitious moment. I had just completed the manuscript for my summary volume on Rochester's history and faced the long wait generally required for the publication of an unsolicited book. In the past I had always had another book on Rochester to work on, and now I seized the Michigan appointment as an ideal substitute. I needed somebody to carry on the work of the City Historian's office in my absence, and fortunately Joseph W. Barnes, whose work had first come to my attention two years before when he submitted an article titled, "The New York Central Elevates Its Tracks Under Municipal Pressure," was available and accepted a temporary appointment as Assistant City Historian. Readers of recent issues of *Rochester History* have sampled material adapted from his doctoral dissertation, "Rochester's Era of Annexations, 1901-1926," which is now nearing completion. Trained in the newer approaches to urban history, he undertook a special task of surveying the documents in the inactive files and store rooms of the various city departments with the object of making these archival resources more accessible to students interested in a quantitative analysis of early urban developments.

Thus the City Historian's program is about to embark on a third major era of development. It was launched in January, 1921 by Edward R. Foreman, a scholarly attorney who served as editor of the Rochester Historical Society *Publications* and of the three-volume *World War (I) Service Records*. His practice of soliciting and editing the contributions of scholarly citizens was continued but given a more academic emphasis under Professor Dexter Perkins in 1936. In the years that followed, as reviewed above, I have endeavored to interpret Rochester's history as a

growing community in a changing regional and national setting. The changes, both local and national, have been most dramatic as the placid and depressed city I first visited in 1936 has grown into a dynamic and prosperous metropolis. While it has lost its seeming tranquility and most of its noble elms, it has acquired in addition to new demographic and regional problems a new participatory vitality, which is abundantly evident in both civic and cultural institutional affairs. Historically it is therefore time for a shift from an emphasis on the city's expanding horizons to a quantitative examination of its internal structure and an interdisciplinary assessment of its character. This will require the direction of a younger scholar equipped with the skills requisite for the new approach, and I am delighted to have found such a man for my assistant. I am pleased to conclude this report with an announcement of the appointment by City Manager Kermit Hill of Joseph W. Barnes as my successor to assume full charge of the City Historian's Office in July 1973.