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“Blake McKelvey’s Rochester”

Script From a One-Hour Film Documentary

By Blake McKelvey and Joseph W. Barnes

Film Director and Producer: Raymond Ho
Director of Cinematography: Gerardo Puglia

FOREWORD

If the publication of this film script represents a departure for *Rochester History*, the creation of the film itself is an important first for Rochester. Plans for a filmed history of Rochester began in late 1974 when Raymond Ho, a director for public television station WXXI, visited the City Historian’s office in search of ideas. After some preliminary discussions between Ho and the present writer, we asked retired City Historian Blake McKelvey to serve as the film’s co-author and on-screen “talent.” Two historians balanced two filmmakers, since Ho had already enlisted the energies of Gerardo Puglia, WXXI’s gifted young cinematographer.

“Money,” as Obediah Dogberry was once quoted in these pages (himself quoting Plutarch and others), “is the sinews of war.” Filmmaking is an expensive business. Several months were spent in searching for funds to help pay for “Blake McKelvey’s Rochester.” Finally, with some help from the

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Rochester/Monroe County Bicentennial Committee, WXXI station management found a generous sponsor for the film in Sibley, Lindsay, & Curr, a large local retailer.

With the goal of completion in the beginning of 1976, Ho drew up a tight production schedule for the fall of 1975 – even while the four of us continued to debate details and unfinished sections in the plan of the film. For “plan of the film” is what any documentary script must be, not an end in itself. There is, in the natural course of events, ample contrast between the typical point of view represented by historians and that represented by filmmakers. We debated specificity and generality, drama and dullness, the tastes of the mythic average person, and above all the concept of “what would work.” After a time, our discussions produced more light than heat. The hopeful result is the best collaboration of the verbal and the visual.

The extremely difficult job of compressing the history of Rochester and its region into a one-hour film – equivalent to 30-45 minutes of speech – was made easier by considering “what would work” in film. Ho and Puglia were determined to minimize the use of black and white still photographs, common in history films, and instead make use of existing outdoor scenes and landmark buildings live action, reconstructed interiors in museums, and the like. To a degree, content had to be tailored (though never distorted) to fit this artistic requirement. Paradoxically, the result was an emphasis on early history up to the rise of the Eastman Kodak Company, at the expense of twentieth century developments.

Our intended goals were simple: to account for the character of Rochester; to show the evolution of that character as part of a historical process (suggesting, as in McKelvey’s conclusion, that present decisions will influence the community’s future just as past decisions shaped Rochester’s present); and to emphasize the role of people,

both individual leaders and groups, in creating this metropolis.

One must see the film to judge how well these purposes have been met. The script is a dry husk without the visual elements which lend it descriptive force. Part of the reason for publishing it in this form, however, is the hope that it may be read alone as a concise history. Teachers who will use "Blake McKelvey's Rochester" in classrooms during forthcoming years should find the written script valuable. Perhaps readers in other parts of the nation who contemplate similar projects will be able to use it as an example.

WXXI-TV plans several broadcasts of "Blake McKelvey's Rochester," both in the evening and for daytime use in classrooms, beginning in February, 1976. It is expected that prints of the film will later be made available to local film libraries and schools. The film's narrator in the sections not taken by McKelvey was Tom Teuber of radio station WXXI-FM.

J.W.B.

“Blake McKelvey’s Rochester”

PROLOGUE

Narrator:

A million persons in the Genesee region share in the fortunes of Rochester; yet how many are aware of the city’s traditions, its reasons for being, or its future prospects?

The city is the heart of the region; our fortunes prosper or decline along with that of the city; and we’re bound to it by a thousand strands of culture and tradition.

What is Rochester? As George Eastman put it, “Rochester is the best city in the world in which to live and raise a family.” On the other hand, Stanley Levey, who grew up in Rochester during the thirties, characterized it in a long article



Early Settlement Reenacted

in the *Saturday Evening Post*, as “complacent,” “middle-class,” and “always ready to point with pride.” And just recently, a federally-sponsored study of the quality of life in American cities ranked Rochester sixth among major metropolises.

Which is correct? One man who should be able to tell us is Blake McKelvey.

INTRODUCTION

Narrator:

For nearly forty years Dr. Blake McKelvey has focused his attention on the history of Rochester. With scholarly objectivity he has portrayed the city’s successive generations as participants in its history. One purpose of his effort has been to show that what came before explains where we are today, and that what we do today will determine the shape of tomorrow.

McKelvey:

Rochester has presented different faces to many people, changing faces over succeeding decades. I can well remember my first view of Rochester, here, from the top of Cobbs Hill. I recall my impression of the city, in the summer of 1936, as a tranquil, homeowner’s town, spreading out under a green canopy. Only the Kodak Tower, scattered chimneys and steeples were visible above the tree tops.

In forty years, the changes have been dramatic. The community has acquired a more dynamic quality. It has developed new industries and new institutions. It has attracted many new residents. And as the city has become a metropolis, it has acquired the sobering knowledge of harsh experiences.

Yet, despite these far-reaching changes, the marks of the

early history of this region are still to be seen all about us. Down at the foot of this hill is a busy expressway. It lies in the right-of-way of the old Erie Canal, built a century and a half ago. When I first arrived it was occupied by an open subway.

That route endures today as an example of geography's contribution to the city's history. But it was the successive generations of Rochesterians, who built and used the canal, the subway, and the expressway, who determined the city's character.

GEOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY

Narrator:

Before man left his mark on the city's history, nature had fixed its site.

The Genesee River once flowed quietly through the broad Irondequoit Bay. During the most recent ice age a glacier scraped its way southward over western New York, blocking the river's outlet. When the glacier melted, the tumbling Genesee carved a deep gorge through successive layers of rock, creating a series of waterfalls along the way. The dramatic records of a million years of prehistory are recorded here like pages of a book, later to be read by geologists.

As the glacier retreated, it also left behind fine rock sediment ground up by the ice sheet. These glacial deposits would make the Genesee Valley the "bread-basket of America" in its early history.

THE GENESEE COUNTRY

Narrator:

Long ago, before the coming of the white man these

spacious fields were the hunting grounds of the Seneca Indians. The Genesee Country takes its name from a word in their language, “che-nis-seo,” which means “shining valley.”

After the American Revolution, the Senecas were pushed aside by a human flood of migrants.

The magnet that drew settlers to the West was land — valuable land in abundance. Suddenly, it seemed that America was frenzied with a new illness, called “Genesee Fever.” Townships were being surveyed; crude roads were cut through forests and swamps, and speculators acquired parcels of land measured in square miles. Pioneers bought small plots subdivided from large holdings. Often the land was uncleared forest, days of hard travel from the nearest village.

Life was not easy for the pioneer settlers of the Genesee country. The woods had to be cleared and turned into farmland and orchards to provide food for growing families. They constructed cabins to shelter themselves from the dense forests outside. These were simple structures, centering around an open fireplace which was used for cooking and heating. These were years of incredible toil and struggle. To meet annual payments on the land, surplus crops had to be produced and transported to markets. Weeks were required to haul heavy wagons between the Genesee and the Hudson. But these pioneers carried with them the legendary Yankee qualities. They were determined, ambitious, and hard-working. Many had known the rocky soil and harsh climate of New England. Now they were, truly, in a “land of opportunity.”

JOSHUA MARSDEN

McKelvey:

Imagine: a vast new land, rich in potential, but only in the first stages of settlement. For years the main falls of the

Genesee remained undisturbed, unseen except by occasional visitors.

One such visitor was the English minister Joshua Marsden, who made a journey to the falls in 1812:

We could now and then obtain a glimpse of the river above the falls, gliding like an arrow The roaring and foaming of the rapids before the river arrives at the precipice the immense interminable mass of wood which fills the whole of the surrounding country, and borders to the very edge every part of the river, which boils along as if in haste to escape the horrible chasm in which it had been engulfed, formed altogether a scene of grandeur and beauty which can hardly be rivalled I was literally stunned with the noise, and now I first understood the grandeur and force of that expression [Rev. I. 15] – “And his voice [was] as the sound of many waters.”*

NATHANIEL ROCHESTER

McKelvey:

The power of the Genesee falls remained unused until men able to harness it arrived. One such man was Col. Nathaniel Rochester, who not only became the promoter of the water-power site at the small upper falls, but established a tradition of civic leadership. More than a land speculator, Rochester was a community builder. He was founder of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, of the first Bank of Rochester, and of the first weekly newspaper. He was first president of the

*Marsden’s commentary was narrated for the film by Professor Anthony Hecht of the University of Rochester. Excerpted from Joshua Marsden, *The Narrative of a Mission to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Somers Islands, with a Tour to Lake Ontario* (Plymouth Dock, 1816), pp. 192-196.

Rochester Athenaeum, the town's first adult academy. Born in Virginia, Rochester served briefly in the Revolution and afterwards became the leading merchant in Hagerstown, Maryland. But as the eldest of his sons approached maturity and became restless, Rochester joined them in responding to the lure of the Genesee Country.

Narrator:

In the course of several prospecting journeys north Rochester and his partners, Fitzhugh and Carroll, bought a hundred acres of land at the small upper falls.

Already the Genesee Country was filling up. Forests were being cleared, roads opened, and the best land turned to the plow. When he saw rafts laden with the produce of forest and field floating down the Genesee, Col. Rochester hastened in 1811 to divide the One Hundred Acre Tract into lots for a commercial and milling center.

Soon, grist mills and lumber mills sprang up at the falls, tapping its rich source of power. But the real productive potential of the Genesee Country was as yet unrealized. Rochester would remain only a village until a startling new project would alter its fate.

THE ERIE CANAL AND THE FLOUR CITY

McKelvey:

The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, was the State's (and the nation's) greatest single public-works project. It extended some 350 miles from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. When surveyors charted the course across western New York, they discovered that the most practical crossing over the Genesee was in the rapids a short distance above the main falls. That route would bisect the Hundred Acre Tract. No one suspected that the canal would transform Rochester into

America's first boom town.

Many New Yorkers doubted the State's capacity to complete the Grand Canal. The difficulties were enormous. Channeling the canal through snake-ridden forests and insect-infested swamps; bridging the broad but deep Irondequoit Valley; crossing the flood-prone Genesee — all presented new challenges to engineers and laborers alike.

Narrator:

Within a few years the canal proved its value. Heavy products could now be shipped east and west at a fraction of the former cost. The stone aqueduct, which carried the canal across the river through the heart of Rochester, became a symbol of the city's link to the nation's economy.

For a few decades Rochester was the flour milling capital of the world. In some years the city's mills shipped nearly a million barrels. In 1835, a year after Rochester received its first city charter, local editor and historian Henry O'Reilly recorded:

There are now within the City of Rochester twenty-one mills capable of manufacturing five thousand barrels per day. The water-power of the two Great Falls is estimated as equal to 1,920 steam engines The value of this water power, calculated according to the cost of steampower in England, is almost incredible, amounting to nearly *ten millions of dollars, for its annual use!**

As flour poured out of Rochester on the Erie Canal, newcomers poured in. The population of the Flour City multiplied ten-fold in forty years.

*Quoted in Maude Motley, "The Romance of Milling: With Rochester the Flour City," Rochester Historical Society *Publication Fund Series*, Vol. X (1931), pp. 141-234. See also Rochester *Daily Advertiser* June 5, 1830.

CAMPBELL-WHITTLESEY HOUSE

Narrator:

One of the newcomers was Benjamin Campbell from Connecticut. Prospering as a merchant-miller, he built this gracious mansion in the Third Ward, the choice residential neighborhood of the Flour City.

McKelvey:

The elegant life-style represented here contrasts sharply with the pioneer conditions of a few decades earlier. Parlors like these prompted not only afternoon teas and evening musicals – they also supplied gathering places for new social and community organizations that blossomed in the young city. Susan B. Anthony rallied support for women’s rights in similar parlors. The first meetings of the trustees and faculty of the University of Rochester were held in the front parlors of the nearby Jonathan Child house.

Narrator:

Benjamin Campbell and his family lived here barely six years when disaster struck. A sudden drop in the price of flour in New York caught Campbell with tons of grain purchased on credit. Along with several other Rochester millers, he was bankrupt.

Sudden change in the price of flour was not the only hazard in the milling business. Millers on the Genesee faced sharp fluctuation in the water supply. Wheat farmers up the valley suffered attacks of blight in the fields. Both farmers and millers were moving west to larger grain fields and newer flour cities.

One aging miller lamented, in the late fifties, his failure to move while still young. “Rochester, with its old-fogey ways, is a dying town,” he bemoaned. But in fact only milling was dying – or at least stagnant.

Of course flour milling was not the city's only activity during its boom days. The canal spawned important secondary industries, among them barrel making, boat-building, and the hotel business. Side by side with the flour mills there appeared breweries, edge-tool, furniture, and carpet factories. Dozens of wholesalers, retailers and the shops of specialized craftsmen crowded the streets of the bustling city.

PEOPLE OF THE FLOUR CITY

McKelvey:

The city's increasing population and economic growth enabled the struggling weeklies of village days to become thriving daily papers. Each had its staunchly partisan editor with positive views on questions concerning the city and the nation.

It was little wonder that the Rochester press produced men of distinction: Henry O'Reilly, the impulsive Irish editor of the *Advertiser* would later become the first promoter of telegraph companies; Frederick Douglass of the *North Star* would receive repeated nominations to the National Hall of Fame as America's first Negro statesman. In that capacity he visited President Lincoln in the White House and persuaded him to recruit blacks as soldiers to battle for their own freedom.

Narrator:

A steady flow of immigrants was bringing new life and vitality: Irishmen such as James Cunningham the carriage maker; Germans such as Henry Bartholomew the brewer, Jews such as Henry Michaels the clothing manufacturer.

Some of the newcomers, with their foreign accents and traditions, were not welcomed with open arms. Ethnic

hostilities abated on the outbreak of the Civil War, when great numbers of Irish and German lads joined the Yankees among the volunteer recruits. The war provided a dramatic challenge that brought the community a new sense of identity. When Col. Patrick O'Rourke fell as he led a Rochester regiment into battle at Gettysburg, Protestants and Jews as well as Catholics crowded into St. Bridget's Church to mourn his heroic death.

The Civil War generated a new sense of social unity locally as well as nationally.

The development of the nation's railroad network had brought increased economic unity as well. Steam trains speeded shipments, progressively displacing horse-drawn canal boats. But the railroads chiefly benefited other transport centers, such as Buffalo and Chicago. They threatened to bypass Rochester because of its limited supply of raw materials. With the decline of milling, Rochester's future would depend on the enterprise and skills of its people.

NEW ENTERPRISES AND INDUSTRIES

Narrator:

Two immigrants established Rochester's claim to the title of the Flower City — now spelled “F-l-o-w-e-r.” George Ellwanger from Germany and Patrick Barry from Ireland had founded a nursery on fertile lands near Mount Hope.

The broad expanse and great depth of Lake Ontario a few miles to the north assured an ideal climate for growing seedlings and young trees. The lake, which never freezes over, acted as a safeguard against harsh temperatures and assured an abundance of moisture.

On these natural assets Ellwanger and Barry developed a profitable nursery. Soon other nurserymen ringed the city

with fields of blooming bulbs and flowering fruit trees, thrilling inhabitants and visitors alike each spring. The Rochester nurseries earned national fame and made western New York a major fruit-growing region.

None rivaled Ellwanger and Barry in size or excellence of product, as the magnificent grove of trees that still surrounds their mansions on Mt. Hope Avenue attests. In the eighties these nurserymen would take the lead in persuading the city to develop public parks; Ellwanger and Barry contributed the nucleus for the beautiful Highland Park – stocking its hillsides with an unexcelled variety of pine trees on the north slope, and of lilacs on the south.

McKelvey:

Two other immigrants, John Jacob Bausch and Henry Lomb, both from Germany, supplied leadership in another direction – industrial technology.

Bausch, as the active head of their small optical shop, crafted and sold spectacles in Rochester. He made his first breakthrough when, on a peddling trip across town, he kicked a stone which bounced so oddly that he picked it up and discovered that it was a piece of newly invented hard rubber.

Observing its firm structure, he determined that it was an ideal substance to use in the manufacture of spectacle frames. On securing the patent rights he acquired an advantage over all competing spectacle makers.

Narrator:

The Bausch & Lomb factory became the leading manufacturer of spectacle frames and of mountings for microscopes and telescopes. It also developed grinding machines and techniques to produce lenses of fine calibration. The two proprietors with their sons became leaders in the city's new scientific circles.

Hiram Sibley, a Yankee from up the valley, took the lead in linking O'Reilly's scattered telegraph lines into Western Union. The fortune he reaped alerted other Rochesterians to the merits of patents — a lesson many learned.

The dominant personality in downtown Rochester's mid-years was Daniel Powers. When building his bank at the Four Corners, a fire nearby prompted him to cover the outside walls with cast-iron panels.

The Powers Block set a new standard of elegance in the business district. When neighboring buildings overtopped his block, Daniel Powers ordered the addition of first one, then two, and finally three Mansard roofs and a lofty tower to maintain top place on the Rochester skyline.

Confident that his cast iron block was fireproof, Powers joined the tax league to oppose the construction of a costly water system. But, when he learned that the great Chicago fire had destroyed even the cast iron buildings, Powers hastily switched sides. He declared that Rochester needed a water system immediately. Within three years the city had built an outstanding water works.

This raised a new demand for a system of sanitary sewers. These were important steps in the assumption of Rochester's civic responsibilities.

GEORGE EASTMAN

Narrator:

Despite the bustling activity in shoes, clothing, brewing and tobacco the city's fortunes were destined to spring from an unexpected source.

McKelvey:

George Eastman, a somewhat taciturn bank clerk, had become fascinated with photography as a young man.

Impatient with the cumbersome equipment required in the wet-plate process, he experimented with a dry-plate that could be sensitized beforehand. After successfully testing a dry-plate formula, he devised rollers to coat the plates, and then other rollers to sensitize a roll of paper-backed film that could be used for many exposures with a small camera.

Finally, in 1888, he produced this magic box, which he called a Kodak -- a name which he also invented. Equipped for 100 exposures, this Kodak sold at the modest price of \$25. "You press the button, we do the rest" was Eastman's catchy slogan. Customers were instructed to return the box at the end of the roll. For ten dollars the company would develop the photos and reload the Kodak for another round of snapshots.

Eastman was the first to make photography available to the average man. This was a stroke of marketing genius. Thousands of orders flooded in.

Narrator:

Instead of resting on his oars, Eastman pressed the search for flexible film suitable for motion pictures. Soon he had a film that Thomas A. Edison could put to use in developing his camera and projector.

At the onset of the depression in the nineties, when most industrialists were laying men off, Eastman was expanding. To meet the demands of his new market, he announced a doubling of his company's stock. An incredulous editor warned his readers to be wary of the "novelty works on State Street." It would, he wrote, probably go the way of H.H. Warner, Rochester's patent medicine king, whose bankruptcy had just been announced. That editor received a one-way ticket out of town from his publisher as the Kodak novelty continued to sell despite the hard times.

Building on the early devices that created moving images, inventors explored their application to photography. The

first display of Edison's Kinetiscope in Rochester occurred when the Sibley, Lindsay and Curr department store installed four of these experimental peep shows in its basement to attract customers.

When motion pictures began to catch on in the late nineties, Eastman saw the demand for his film skyrocket.

Two or three other Rochester industrialists made similar break-throughs. William Gleason produced a machine to cut gears and saw his market expand as bicycle and automobile firms mushroomed across the land.

Neither the Gleason machines, nor the microscopes of Bausch and Lomb, nor Eastman's cameras required the importation of heavy raw materials. Instead, each relied on patents and on skilled workers, which Rochester supplied in abundance.

McKelvey:

As the funds rolled in, George Eastman developed a new facet of his personality. On receipt of his first large cash dividend in 1899, he distributed generous bonuses to his employees and made his first large donation to Mechanics Institute. Soon his contributions to hospitals, to the Chamber of Commerce and to the University of Rochester far overshadowed those early gifts.

Narrator:

He made generous donations of park lands – Cobbs Hill for example and of course Durand-Eastman Park. Eastman generally pledged 30 or 40% of a fund drive, contingent on the community raising the balance. He became first president of the Community Chest because he saw it as an efficient instrument to limit the number of fund drives and to encourage wide support.

In similar fashion, Eastman established the Bureau of Municipal Research to promote civic reforms that promised

economy as well as improved services. On the grounds of efficiency he backed the drive for a city manager.

He supported the development of playgrounds and varied public health programs. George Eastman with other Rochesterians was experiencing a growing concern for the quality of life.

ROCHESTER'S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

McKelvey:

Industry and commerce may be the life blood of a community, but education and the pursuit of the arts are its soul.

A community's well being is often measured by its culture. Fortunately the productivity of Rochester's enterprise provided financial support for its many cultural institutions. But it was the aspirations of its people that assured rich diversity.

Narrator:

Several prosperous residents returned from business or vacation trips abroad with copies of some of Europe's great paintings, a few with original works of art. Hiram Sibley, founder of Western Union, was Rochester's first serious art collector.

But of course Rochester's chief art patron in the mid-decades was Daniel Powers. The gallery he maintained on the fifth floor of his block provided many Rochesterians with their first view (at 25 cents for adults) of a sampling of European art. A few years after the Powers gallery closed Hiram Sibley's daughter, Mrs. James Sibley Watson, donated funds to establish the Memorial Art Gallery.

McKelvey:

Around the turn of the century Rochester became aware of its public responsibility for certain educational institutions. In the depression of the mid-nineties, many of the unemployed were ill fitted to find new jobs. This had alerted some leaders to the need for better schools – schools to equip young men and women with skills that Rochester's technical industries required. Civic leaders supported the development in the early 1900's of an outstanding school system and the building of East and West High Schools. Local industrialists founded Mechanics Institute (later renamed Rochester Institute of Technology).

Narrator:

Generous gifts by various Rochesterians helped to erect several buildings, such as that given by Edward Bausch for the Museum of Arts and Sciences. Another patron, Morton Rundel, left a will that enabled the city to build the headquarters for the Rochester Public Library. But no gifts rivaled those of George Eastman to the University of Rochester. His increasing support of that institution enabled it to expand from a small Baptist college into a diversified university. He helped finance construction of the River Campus and the School of Medicine and Dentistry. Finally, he established the Eastman School of Music.

McKelvey:

George Eastman's support of music had developed slowly. His mother's fondness for music led him to install this pipe organ in his new mansion here on East Avenue. The Sunday musicals that delighted select gatherings here featured string quartets directed by the German orchestra conductors. Eastman became their major backer and finally paid off their accumulated debts and merged them into the new Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.

Narrator:

It was to house the new orchestra and to provide a fit hall for the showing of carefully selected motion pictures (produced on Kodak film) that Eastman financed the erection of the Eastman Theater adjoining the recently established School of Music. Their opening in September of 1921 provided a high point in Rochester's cultural development.

TROUBLED DECADES

McKelvey:

The confidence and high spirits Rochester enjoyed under Eastman's leadership in the 1920's were sorely tested by the onset of the great depression. The Community Chest, the Bureau of Municipal Research, the Chamber of Commerce, responded to the challenge. But they soon found themselves and Rochester overwhelmed by the world-wide economic collapse.

Narrator:

The city slashed its budget, municipal services faltered, and home construction ceased. Federal programs provided unprecedented assistance. New Deal work relief projects took up the slack in some public services. Federal safeguards enabled the long dormant labor organizations, to gain a secure footing at last in Rochester. But stagnation and unemployment continued until the outbreak of the Second World War brought new demands for production from Rochester's technical industries.

The city's renewed prosperity revealed some of the ravages of the lean years. Returning veterans found jobs with surprising ease but many faced an acute housing shortage. Rochester's resurgent industries created a thriving

metropolitan community, providing an abundance of technical jobs. Unemployment fell to the lowest level of any major city.

This enviable situation was highlighted by the rise of the Xerox Corporation. Joseph C. Wilson, its enterprising chief executive, assembled a group of research technicians who perfected an imaginative new copy-making process and made it the basis for a spectacular new communication industry. Sybron, another rising firm, prospered by drawing several of Rochester's older technical companies into a co-ordinated conglomerate.

As Rochester's technological industries multiplied the city was finally transformed from one based on water power to one in which knowledge is power. It was not surprising that many communication industries likewise prospered. The Gannett Press, local radio and finally television stations mushroomed and helped to restore the city's earlier ties with the Genesee Country.

Rochester's thriving enterprises attracted a host of job-seekers, including many blacks from the South. Soon the blacks out-numbered even the Italians the largest ethnic minority in Rochester after the turn of the century.

The Italians, like the Germans and the Irish before them, had brought new economic and cultural talents and despite some resistance, they had achieved a secure place in the community.

The blacks, however, encountered much greater difficulty. Many were unskilled and unable to find lodging except in depressed inner-city districts.

Overcrowded, and with many unemployed, numerous blacks participated in the first inner-city riots of the 1960's. Shocked by the outburst, the city redoubled its renewal efforts and launched a model-city program. The Federation of Churches, under the presidency of Mrs. Harper Sibley, made an earnest effort to dispell racial prejudices. Several

industrial firms established training programs for the unskilled and joined in founding Rochester Jobs, Incorporated to find jobs for the unemployed.

Even more significantly, many blacks organized to tackle their own problems. Several black organizations collaborated to found the militant association known as Fight to combat racial injustices. Some formed new churches, launched black owned and operated enterprises, and opened black cultural centers. Like many ethnic minorities before them, they were determined to win an equal and secure place in the community.

Inevitably, the inner-city turmoil aggravated and was aggravated by the split between the central city and the suburbs. The steady influx of blacks widened their search for housing and speeded the flight of whites to the suburbs.

But suburban expansion had been in process for several decades. By 1930 the automobile and the good-roads movement had boosted the population of suburban towns to one-fourth of Monroe County's total. It was in the prosperous fifties that the suburbs mushroomed. Not only did they increase dramatically in population, while the city suffered a slight loss, but they attracted a number of migrating factories. Several new suburban shopping plazas challenged the economy of the downtown business district.

The construction of the expressways in the sixties, while designed to integrate the entire metropolitan community, boosted the suburban population above that of the city. The county government, which chiefly served the suburbs, appropriated the major share of the sales tax revenues. Suburban growth further undermined the city's tax base by attracting the more affluent to new residential districts and to modern school buildings. City government faced the task of meeting an increasing annual budget with declining revenues.

Fortunately Rochester's civic and business leaders determined to maintain and improve the central business district and the surrounding inner-city as well. The construction of Midtown Plaza, the first mammoth enclosed plaza in the nation, gave a dramatic new boost to downtown Rochester. The rise of a half dozen spectacular new office buildings brought new vitality. While the task of eradicating the inner-city slums has progressed more slowly, yet new housing units have appeared on all sides — on West Main Street, in the old Third Ward, and south along the river.

CONCLUSION

McKelvey:

Many problems remain, largely unabated, but the sense of crisis has passed. As the city enters the nation's bicentennial year we return to the question with which we started — what kind of city is Rochester?

As we recall the past, contemplate the present, and look to the future, we perhaps may "point with pride," as Stan Levey put it disdainfully, at several fine accomplishments. We have developed technological industries with productive capacity sufficient to maintain our physical well being, to support our cultural institutions, and to assure us the leisure for self fulfillment.

These and other accomplishments in civic and social fields have won Rochester a high rating among the nation's metropolises. But whether they have made it, as George Eastman proposed, "the best city in which to live and raise a family," may well be questioned by some residents.

The challenge is for the future, not the past.

This display of flags from cities representing several of the ethnic streams that have merged in this community is our symbolic pledge to preserve and respect the traditions each

has brought.

Today and tomorrow as in the past, we the people comprise Rochester's principal resource. We have the votes and the voices – we have the talents and the aspirations that can, and in fact do determine the breadth of participation, the vitality and warmth, indeed the very quality of life in Rochester.



On Location, Genesee Country Museum