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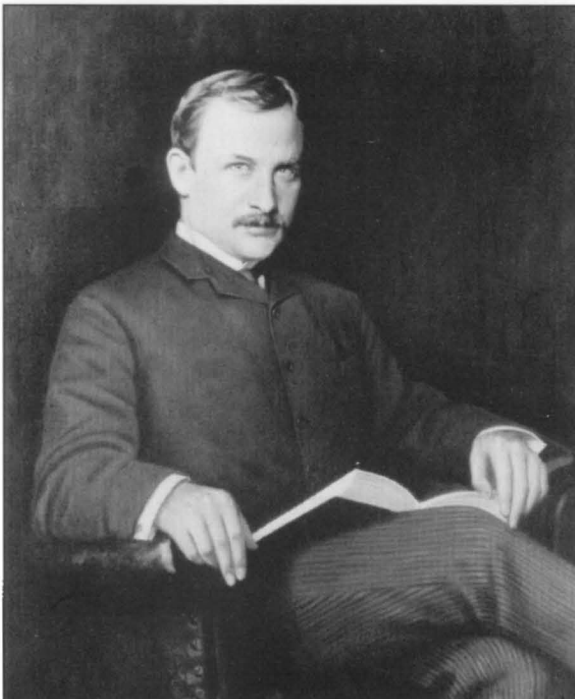
Spring, 1999

No. 2

HENRY STRONG DURAND

1861 - 1929

by Catherine Salber





(From an undated newspaper clipping.)

Cover:

Painting of Henry Strong Durand by C. B. Pereia circa 1895. (Yale University Art Gallery, gift of Mrs. Henry S. Durand)

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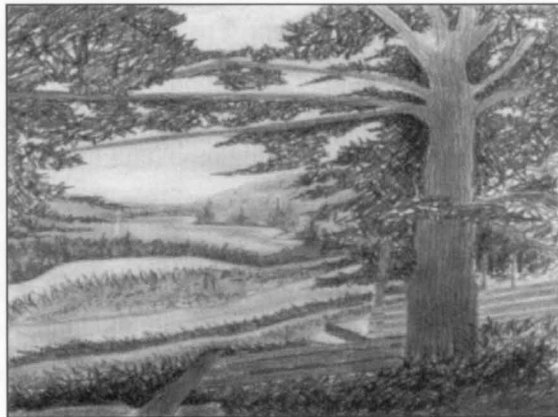
Henry Strong Durand

Henry Strong Durand was born to John Durand and Martha Boyd Stewart, on June 6, 1861 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Henry's ancestors on his father's side came from France to Milford, Connecticut in 1625. His mother's family came from Scotland, and settled in Ohio in the 18th century. Henry's father, John Durand, worked as a railroad manager from Connecticut to the Rochester railroad lines. Henry was the third of four children: John being his older brother, Ella the second oldest, then the youngest sister, Mary.¹

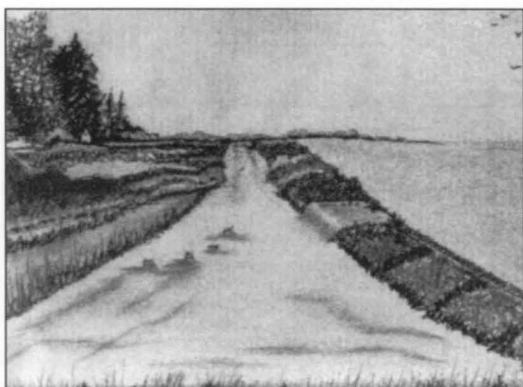
Born at the outbreak of the Civil War, Henry remembered troops passing his house during the latter part of the War. Henry also clearly remembered President Lincoln's assassination. He remembered the house being draped in black, and everyone talking in such sad whispers. Everyone seemed so quiet. On one occasion, Henry ran down to the gate in front of his house asking the soldiers, "Have you seen Uncle James?"

Some of the passing soldiers answered, "Why do you ask?" Henry replied, "Because he is my Uncle and I want to find him."

*The property of
Henry Strong
Durand which
he gave to the
people as a park.
(pencil sketch by
Catherine
Salber).*



As the troops passed by little Henry at the front gate of his home in Cincinnati, Ohio, they shouted out, “three cheers for Uncle James!”²



Before Henry's college years, his education took him to the Wilson's School in Rochester, then to the Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven, Connecticut where he graduated in 1877.³

Henry roomed with his brother at Yale University where he began to write for the college newspaper. In his senior year he became the Class Poet, which led him to write the words for the University's most popular song, “Bright College Years.” When he graduated in 1881, he decided to spend five months of the following year in Europe.

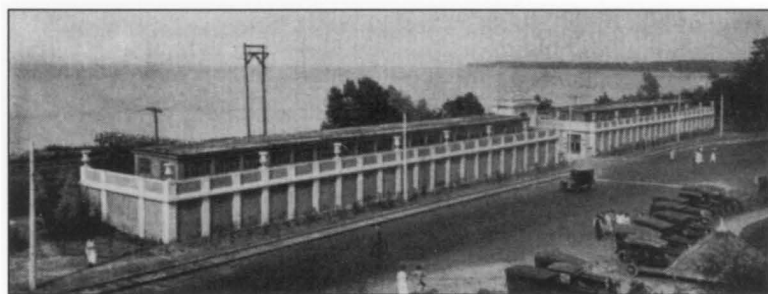
Durand furthered his studies in medicine at both Yale and Harvard. While doing his graduate studies, he wrote articles for several medical magazines and managed to write occasional poems for alumni dinners. During his studies of 1887, he practiced medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital for two years. He graduated on June 27, 1888, receiving his medical degree from Harvard. In 1889, Durand returned to Rochester to practice medicine.

Upon returning to the city, Durand lived at 87 South Fitzhugh Street where he and another doctor practiced medicine.⁴ Durand belonged to the Genesee Valley Club,

the Country Club of Rochester and other clubs around the country and in Europe. The Players Club of New York, the University Club of Los Angeles, the Tavern Club (a founding member) of Boston and the American Club of Paris. His friends loved his sense of humor and his gift of poetry, but most of all, they loved his ever genial camaraderie which unalterably endeared him. At some of the reunions he used to let himself go into a flow of sparkling wit; and that his friends always remembered about Durand.

Many members of old Genesee Valley Club, on the corner of East Avenue and Gibbs Street, warmed their hearts at the thought of the hours spent together there with Durand. In his quiet manner, his thoughts of the old Genesee Valley Club prompted him to put his talent of poetry to work.⁵ In his wife's writings about her husband, Harriet felt the importance of publishing Durand's poem, "The Whispering Gallery," in which he immortalized these gatherings in that poem.

During 1889, Durand became involved with several medical societies, including the election by the Monroe County Medical Society as a delegate to the Central New



The \$100,000 bathing house built at Durand Eastman Park was meant to accommodate 1,000 men and 1,000 women. It opened in 1924. Electric flood lights that allowed night bathing were a modern inclusion in the design. (Rochester Public Library)



*Himalayan
Mountain goats at
the Durand
Eastman Park Zoo
stand atop posts.
(Rochester Public
Library, Richard
Goodchild)*

York Medical Association for two years. He was endorsed for the Bellevue Hospital College and in 1891 was appointed out-patient surgeon at the Monroe County Hospital. He was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Medicine at their annual meeting in Jefferson, New Hampshire and later served as President of the Rochester Pathological Society and a lifetime member of the Medical Society of the State of New York. In November of 1895 he invented an irrigator for the surgical bandage machine. In 1898 he accepted an appointment at the Buffalo Hospital of the Sisters of Charity, as a consulting surgeon.⁶

One of Durand's uncles, an 1876 graduate of Yale University, was John Ewing Durand, who became the second President of the Board of Education in Rochester. Durand's youngest sister, Mary, also lived in the city. She married Canadian doctor Edward Mulligan. George Eastman's interests in hospitals had been developing for many years under the direction of Mulligan, a member of the Rochester Pathological Society, who became Eastman's private physician.⁷

Durand did not practice medicine after 1898. One of his dreams was to purchase land, which he did. After years of hard work, he purchased a 270 acre lake-front parcel on the shores of Lake Ontario. In 1904 he moved to his newly built Irondequoit home. Durand's property was wooded with rolling hills just a short distance from the lake. The Victorian house with white pillars on a wrap-around porch, faced the east to catch the early-morning sunrise. Nearby were fruit orchards with fruit cellars behind the house. Buggies brought visitors and friends up the brick drive from the city to spend time with Durand. On hot summer days, a row of trees provided shade on the south side of the house. The drive is barely visible under the soil where it once carried Durand's friends.

One friend, Arthur Stillwell, told Durand about his adventures in Mexico and his plan to return to search for gold and silver. Anyone with an adventurous heart could be caught up in the popular craze.⁸

The Journey to Mexico

In 1909, Durand decided to go to Mexico with Stillwell to mine for gold and silver; but it was the stories of adventure that attracted him. Together the two men reached Chihuahua, Mexico where they remained a week. They loaded up with supplies and pack mules to make the journey through the mountains to Urique. They passed through the Sierra Madre Mountains on a mule, on their way to becoming miners.

When he arrived at Urique, there was a comfortable adobe house with an Indian cook waiting for him. A few

thousand people lived in this village in a canyon at the foot of a 3,000 foot mountain range. The only way to reach the outside world was by mule over a trail to Batepilas thirty miles away. The mine manager was Alexander Shepard who became one of Durand's closest friends. He spent weeks with the Shepard family.

Urique, during the summer months, reached 117 degrees in the shade; but in winter, the days were comfortable. Durand appreciated the simplicity and rich experiences there, compensating for the loss of luxuries in the civilized world left behind. Social cares left his mind as he spent time outdoors close to nature. He became close to the villagers who needed a doctor. Though he went to Urique to mine, he found himself practicing medicine again and finding deep satisfaction. Durand



The New York Central, West Shore Railroad (Rochester Public Library, Munro Will)

spent seven years practicing and mining in Urique.⁹

Two days after Durand arrived in Urique, an Indian servant informed him that there were twenty-three villagers waiting on his front porch to see him about various illnesses. The people came from near and far as the news of a medical doctor spread. The looks of hopefulness and eagerness on their faces were too much for Henry, so through an interpreter he tried to make them understand that he would arrange to see them.¹⁰ There was no other doctor for 250 miles. Now there was no dream of prospect-

ing for Durand. The freedom and carefree routine had to wait; Durand was obligated to schedule appointments for the sick villagers.

Among Durand's friends, there was a joke about his schedule; he had to see his patients before breakfast, at lunch, at siesta and dinner times, even in the middle of the night. The villagers grew to love the doctor they called "Nuestro Doctor"— "Our Doctor."

Rushed orders for medicine and medical supplies of all kinds were regularly being sent to America. The amount of money for those badly needed supplies and medicines came to thousands of dollars, which Durand freely gave along with his time and skill.¹¹

In 1915, Durand was made Health Officer for Urique. Not long after taking office, an epidemic of smallpox broke out. Durand sent to Washington, D. C. for the vaccine. Durand's wife, Harriet made notes in her memoirs about scrubbing dirty little arms and legs while the doctor hastily scratched away with the smallpox vaccine, until there had been six to eight hundred vaccinated in their village.¹²

With Christmas fast approaching, Durand asked permission to bring a large fir tree from the mountains to the village plaza. Behind a large canvas, he decorated the tree,



*Animal shelters dot the slopes at the zoo at Durand Eastman Park.
(Rochester Public Library)*

keeping it hidden from the curious public. For days before Christmas, Durand joined with others to make little gauze stockings to fill with candy. They strung popcorn garlands to wrap around the tree. The doctor was worried that the gifts he ordered had not yet arrived. A battle in Chihuahua was probably the cause of the delay. Just two days before Christmas, the jingle of mule bells and the crack of the mule drivers' whips was heard. The gifts had arrived after a five day trip from the railroad. The celebration began with the shouts of joyous children and barking dogs greeting the tired mules. On Christmas day, the tree was unveiled amidst the singing of carols. Each child received a gift from Durand every year that he lived in Mexico.¹³

The children soon learned that Durand also loved animals. They began to bring sick and wounded Civet cats, coons, otters, deer and even a boa constrictor. Durand treated twenty-three animals. The amused Durand brought slides of the animals to show his friends on a return trip to Rochester in 1915.

Durand's wife, Harriet, wrote in her memoirs that the first time she heard about Durand was while camping in the Sierra Madre Mountains in northern Mexico. People told her of the Dr. Henry Durand's generosity and never-tiring efforts to help the people. She finally met him one afternoon as he was returning from one of his mines on a large black mule and at his side was a large Laverac English setter given to him by Morosco, a leader in the Mexican Revolution.¹⁴ Durand said that mining was good until the Revolution. The Santa Marta mine kept operating for two years after Durand permanently left Mexico.



Golfing on the shores of Lake Ontario at Durand Eastman Park. (Rochester Public Library)

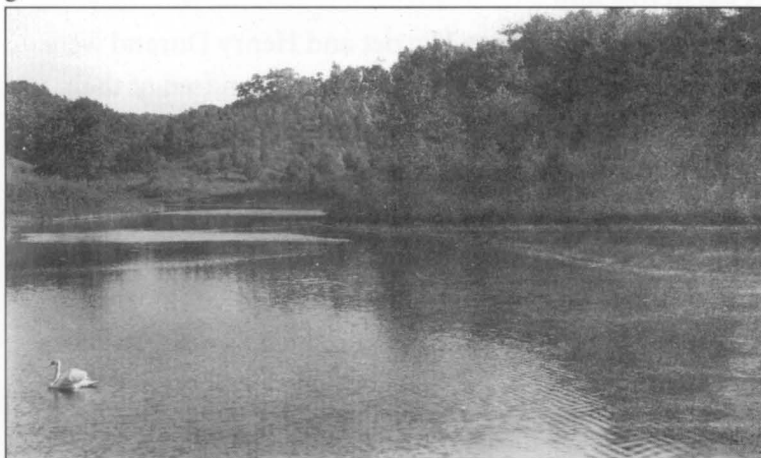
Harriet got a glimpse of Durand's personality too when a man named Foster passed a bad check and a judge ordered him to jail, saying, "Americans have to be taught that they cannot be allowed to pass bad checks in Mexico." Knowing that Foster was alone and had no funds, Durand paid the \$300 to free him.

A year after they met, Harriet and Henry Durand were married on August 9, 1916. About five hundred of their friends attended the ceremony held on the patio of the bride's home. The air was filled with the scent of laFrance roses and tropical flowers. The ceremony was performed by Mayor Don Juan Gonzales and Alfredo Monge, the judge, as six witnesses sat at a round mahogany table imported from Europe. The bride's friends admired her gown, a lavender frock with a bit of lace at the neck and a ribbon at the waist.

One of Durand's friends traveled to El Paso to get the gown, trying it on himself to be sure it fit, then persuading revolutionary officials to let them pass with the gown to the

anxious bride. Durand held a barbecue, serving one hundred guests a five-course luncheon under the “camachine” trees. Then others came according to their station in life, the custom in Mexico at the time. Most of the day and night were spent making speeches, serenading and dancing. This was a double celebration, not only for the marriage and adoption of Margaret, but for the doctor, only recently recovered from a lengthy illness.

Durand nearly died from three weeks of illness that drove him to bed with a fever of 107. For two days Harriet cooled Durand with water brought from the spring by Indians hired to carry it. There was no ice. Day and night Harriet cared for him. At five o'clock each evening, the church bells called the villagers to pray for the recovery of their beloved “Nuestro Doctor.”¹⁵ As soon as Durand recovered, he climbed onto the back of his mule and with riders on either side to steady the still weak doctor, he rode through the village thanking the villagers for their prayers. The people greeted him with tears and smiles.



A single swan drifts in the gentle water of Lake Ontario at Durand Eastman Park. (Rochester Public Library)



The rise and fall of the lake level affected the beach bathers every year. In June 1952, James Champion stood on the ramp leading to what had been a beach. The photograph is in contrast to the June 1959 photograph showing bathers enjoying over thirty feet of beach front depth. (Rochester Public Library)

Leaving Mexico

Henry had been recovered only two months when news of roving bandits, spawned by the Mexican Revolution, reached the Durands. They felt they had no choice but to leave Mexico. They traveled through dangerous, rugged country from Urique to La Cruz where they stopped to visit friends named Tayes. The Tayes were mourning the death of their son and asked the Durands to stay a few days. While there, war drums began to beat in the night. Realizing the great danger, they armed themselves and with the other villagers took shelter. Durand promised his wife he would take both of their lives rather than let them be taken captive by the local Indians.

The villagers warded off the bandits by lighting camp fires that led them to believe they were outnumbered by soldiers. The Durands took the opportunity to escape, traveling through more rugged countryside and crossing rivers in hand hewn log canoes. The scenery was breathtaking. At Wamuchil the Durands met soldiers reconstructing a railroad from Wamuchil to Mazatlan on the Pacific Coast. After three months of travel, the Durands arrived safely at San Pedro on November 10, 1916.

Arriving back in the United States

Soon After their arrival in Los Angeles, Durand met with Charles Richards and a Dr. Kellogg, fellow students at Yale whom Durand had not seen in years. Durand joined the University Club and the Gamut Club where he was introduced to celebrities. Durand won local recognition for his poem "The Life Insurance Agent and the Doctor."¹⁶

Durand could write poetry with humor and sentiment. He was recognized in commendation letters from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and J. G. Holland.¹⁷

In 1924 Margaret wanted to study voice in Nice, France under the direction of John de Reszke. Durand took his daughter to Nice himself. The Durands settled in Paris where they spent three years, making friends from all over the world.

Dr. Durand's Affairs in Rochester

While Durand was in Mexico, he had expected an agreement he had made with the city regarding his property to be carried out. Together with George Eastman, Durand gave



In 1959, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Monroe County, Gordon Howe cut the ribbon that officially opened the Durand Eastman Beach to swimmers after 17 years of closings. (Rochester Public Library)

the city what is now Durand-Eastman Park. Durand left instructions retaining lifetime use of five acres adjacent to his house, including an ice house, garage, barns and other outbuildings and a 19th century log cabin that had become a local landmark.¹⁸ Durand wanted his home rented out and the money generated to be used to maintain his property. He also wanted the city to build a pavilion in the park. A road that he wanted paved became Lake Shore Boulevard.¹⁹ The Park Board and the Chamber of Commerce formed the Rochester Zoological Society in October 1912 with the intent of building a zoo inside the park. George Eastman could not be contacted with detailed plans because he was serving on jury duty, but had generally agreed to the zoo project. Durand could not be contacted since he left no address for Mexico.

In January of 1915, Durand returned to the city to learn that the protests of his servants regarding the construction of a zoo on the northern end of his property had been ignored. The city had cut down almost all of the apple trees he had planted himself, selling the wood for firewood. Durand wrote an angry letter to Mayor Hiram Edgerton stating that he was “greatly amazed” to find his property so used. Park Commissioner Alexander B. Lamberton assured Durand the plan was only temporary, but in August, Durand sold his farm equipment, closed up his house and retired to California with his family.

George Eastman bought the Huntington property from the city for private development in January of 1920. Durand rushed back to the city to learn that he had lost Huntington to the city forever and that William S. Riley, who had succeeded Lamberton as Parks Commissioner, had not carried out the 1916 agreement.

When Durand encountered Riley in the lobby of the Powers Hotel, he verbally roared at Riley for all to hear for not leasing out his house as he had requested, for tearing down his garage, for burning down the log cabin where his servants were living, for cutting down his apple trees and for carting away his iron fence.²⁰

Two years later, in 1922, when Durand returned to Rochester, he visited his land and found “my broken windmill still hangs from its 50-foot tower as a long-distance signal of distress to the whole countryside.” Durand was so angry at what he saw that he sent a bill for all the damages to Mayor Hiram Edgerton, including “unwarranted and unlawful seizure of my land for the purpose of a zoo.” Durand had

also noted that Riley had included the land around “my house on the maps as city property.”²¹ Durand left for Paris.

The next year, 1923, Durand wrote a letter to Eastman expressing his thoughts about finishing the artificial lakes in the park and the accomplishments of the park itself.

Durand hoped that the future generations of Rochesterians would enjoy the beauty of the land and that Eastman would like the end result. Eastman wrote back to Durand that he should put the whole unpleasant experience with the city parks behind him.²²

In 1926, Eastman and Durand’s cousin, Dr. Audley Durand Stewart, visited him at his home in Paris on their way to Africa for a hunting expedition. Three years later, on May 8, 1929, Durand died after an illness. A month later his remains arrived back in Rochester where he was interred in the family plot at Mt. Hope Cemetery. He was buried on June 6, what would have been his sixty-eighth birthday.²³

After Henry’s death, Harriet moved to Rochester where she lived at 253 Alexander Street until she became ill. She moved to Knorr Sanitarium at 139 Troup Street where she died January 7, 1949 at age 75. Margaret (Durand) Marcus Bordeaux survived her parents and was living in Guadalajara, Mexico with her children and grandchildren.²⁴

Catherine Salber is a local freelance writer.

Endnotes

1. Coffin, Charles P., *A History of the Class of 1881 Yale College*, Volume II, 1930, New Haven, CT., pp. 96,141.
2. *IBID*, p.96.

3. *IBID*, p.142.
4. *Harvard University Directory*, The Harvard Alumni Association, Boston, MA, October 6, 1913.
5. Coffin, p.99.
6. Coffin, p.98.
7. McKelvey, Dr. Blake, *The Quest For Quality, 1890-1925*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1956 p. 387.
8. Coffin, p. 101.
9. *IBID*, p.101.
10. *IBID*, p.102.
11. *IBID*, p. 102.
12. *IBID*.
13. *IBID*, p. 103.
14. *IBID*, p. 104.
15. *IBID*, p. 105.
16. *IBID*, pp 106,107.
17. *Democrat & Chronicle*, from Henry Durand clipping file, Local History Division, Rochester Public Library.
18. Brayer, Elizabeth, *Irondequoit Press*, May 1,2,3, 1990.
19. *IBID*.
20. *IBID*.
21. *IBID*.
22. *IBID*.
23. Coffin, p 110.
24. *Democrat & Chronicle*, Durand file, Local History Division, Rochester Public Library.

BRIGHT COLLEGE YEARS.

Words by H. S. DURAND, Yale '81.

Music by Carl Wilhelm.



Bright college years, with pleasure rife,
The shortest gladdest years of life;
How swiftly are ye gliding by,
Oh, why doth time so quickly fly?
The seasons come, the seasons go,
The earth is green, or white with snow,
But time and change shall nought avail,
To break the friendships, formed at Yale.

We all must leave this college home,
About the stormy world to roam;
But though the mighty ocean's tide
Should us from dear old Yale divide,
As round the oak the ivy twines
The clinging tendrils of its vines,
So are our hearts close bound to Yale
By ties of love that ne'er shall fail.

In after-life, should troubles rise,
To cloud the blue of sunny skies,
How bright will seem, thro' memory's haze,
The happy, golden, bygone days!
Oh, let us strive that ever we
May let these words our watchword be,
Where'er upon life's sea we sail:
"For God, for Country, and for Yale!"

Back cover:

Carryalls full of visitors line the Lake Shore Boulevard at Durand Eastman Park in the late 19th century. (Rochester Public Library)

