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ROCHESTER: AN  
EMERGING METROPOLIS  
1925-1961

BY

BLAKE MCKELVEY

*City Historian, Rochester, New York*

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## PREFACE

*Rochester: An Emerging Metropolis: 1925-1961* concludes my four-volume account of the city's history. Commenced over two decades ago, this series has been designed as a community biography. We have, in the first volume, witnessed the birth of the Genesee milltown and its development, spurred by the opening of the Erie Canal, into a thriving "Water-Power City." In the second volume we saw that early Flour City transformed, by successive waves of immigrants, into a cosmopolitan "Flower City." The third, reviewed the joint efforts of enterprising industrialists, skilled workers, civic reformers, and social idealists, inspired by a "Quest for Quality," to transform the community again into a prosperous technological city. In this last book I have carried Rochester's story forward to the present, viewing the city as an "Emerging Metropolis."

These successive titles are, of course, symbolically descriptive, not analytical. Readers should not expect to find here a synthetic study of the nature and evolution of a metropolis, but rather a biographical review of the experiences of a particular community in the throes of such a transformation. In these thirty-five years, Rochester also experienced the successive impacts of a great depression and a great World War. Local responses to these challenges not only hastened the city's metropolitan emergence, but also helped to determine its character.

A city already proud of its technical proficiency, jealous of its autonomy, confident of the productive capacities of its industrialists, conservative in temperament and in political outlook, Rochester in these years developed a new conception of social security, learned to make more generous provisions for community welfare, fostered a wider appreciation of latent cultural opportunities, and acquired a broader sense of its national and international responsibilities and interdependence.

Of course these characteristics, which have been noted by articulate residents and visitors alike, reflect the attitudes and endeavors of many but not all citizens. In portraying the changing views and fluctuating responses of the community and its institutions, I have singled out some of the leaders who appeared to take the initiative or to give momentum to each development. In many cases, no doubt, the real leaders, content to let others take the credit, were slightly mentioned in the documents and have been overlooked in this review. If I have, on occasion, given more credit to a chairman and less to his chief stand-by than was due, I trust they will accept this apology.

I am likewise concerned lest some error or chance turn of phrase has conveyed an unjust criticism of any of the individuals mentioned in these pages. As an historian, I have, of course, endeavored to view and record events and to depict personalities objectively, but few who have lived in Rochester during most of the period under review could remain entirely dispassionate, and any report that failed to display some of the tensions and emotions these years aroused would lack force. Yet Rochester's conservative temperament fosters restraint, and in writing of my contemporaries I have tried to safeguard their rights to privacy in personal affairs. It is hard to divorce private from community interests, however, and if, in portraying the city's development, some inappropriate details have intruded, as an historian, not a judge, I hasten to apologize.

On the other hand I know that as a resident and student of Rochester during the last 25 years I have earned the privilege, in fact incurred an obligation, to express strongly held views on the many controversial issues that arose in these years, even when they do not always conform to the majority opinion. The support received by this writer and the response given to his earlier publications display both unusual generosity and exceptional hardihood. The warm associations I have enjoyed in the city may have disposed me to favorable judgments on some matters, but I have felt no compulsion to gloss over municipal or social defects. Indeed the city, in maintaining this historical program, has demonstrated, in yet another way, its penchant for self-analysis. I can only hope that these volumes have faithfully mirrored its past.

*Rochester, New York*  
*July 21, 1961*

BLAKE MCKELVEY

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Its publication, as in the case of the preceding volumes, *Rochester: The Water-Power City, 1812-1854*; *Rochester: The Flower City, 1855-1890*, and *Rochester: The Quest for Quality, 1890-1925*, has been facilitated through the use of a fund created some years ago by an eminent Rochesterian, Miss Kate Gleason, in memory of Miss Amelia Brettelle, her history teacher at the old Rochester Free Academy. Miss Brettelle gave occasional public addresses, some of them on local history, and after her death in 1890, Miss Gleason determined to promote an interest in that subject. Miss Gleason also played an active role in the city's history and was a member of the Gleason Works management until 1913. As a developer of housing in East Rochester, she took part in Rochester's first suburban movement and served the community in many other capacities.

Throughout the preparation of this volume I have been greatly assisted by Miss Emma B. Swift, head of the Local History Division, and by her assistant, Mrs. Thelma Jefferies, as well as other members of the Rochester Public Library staff. I am most grateful for the friendly day-to-day cooperation they have given to my oftentimes tedious researches.

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