

The Third Ward

and its

CORN HILL HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT



This brochure has been prepared by neighborhood volunteers.

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The oldest resident ever recorded to live in the Third Ward was a Mastodon, the ten thousand year old tusk of which was uncovered at the corner of Clarissa (Caledonia) and Plymouth in 1837 by workmen who were digging the ditch which was to become the Genesee Valley Canal, a feeder canal which helped traffic from south of the Genesee River Valley enter the Erie Canal; much as a clover leaf helps cars enter a super-highway. The Third Ward seems to encourage longevity. At one time, South Fitzhugh Street alone boasted more than a dozen people between the ages of eighty and one hundred. At a neighborhood party in 1980, a ninety-eight year old, when complimented on her lovely lace blouse, replied, "This old thing? I bought it on my first trip to Italy. I was sixteen then." To live to one's nineties is common and the present "oldest man in Monroe County", Mr. Harold Cody, 104, only moved away a couple of years ago. When asked to what he attributed his long life, he answered, "I married an heiress at the age of sixteen and never had to work a day in my life." Actually he and his wife devoted their lives to the care and support of the many foster children they took in to share their lovely home and genteel life.

The Third Ward has been home to a great number of heiresses, heirs, politicians (among them, twelve mayors in the first sixty years of the city's history), doctors, lawyers, even Indian chiefs. We have also had our share of butchers, bakers, shoemakers, soldiers, sailors, tinkers, tailors, rich men, poor men and even thieves. An heiress had a choice of the rich and famous. Many went away to marry into the finest families in the world as did Leonard Jerome's daughter, Jennie, when she married the brother of the Duke of Marlborough. Many came to the ward to marry into Rochester's finest families as did a sister of Mrs. Potter Palmer of Chicago. Our butchers (Corn Hill brand sausages) and our bakers (or, rather, our millers; half of Rochester's lived in the ward in 1830) became rich. Even our thieves and soldiers (remember the rioters and the National Guard?), while they didn't become rich, certainly became famous. Our sailors rode the canal to fame.

and even poor men could live comfortably in their small homes next to mansions and maybe get rich by buying in on Western Union when it was first formed by a group of wardians in the 1850's. But it is important to note that rich men became poor as easily as poor became rich. In 1841, Harvey Ely's mansion on the corner of Troup and Livingston Park (the present D.A.R. House) had to be sold at auction to pay his debts. He and his brother had built the first flour mill (the Red Mill) in the village in 1814. He rode the Flour City's first boom up and rode it down. His friend, James K. Livingston, went down with him. Livingston Park was named after James K. The Livingston-Backus House was moved to the Genesee Country Museum in 1965 to save it from the path of the Inner Loop. It is considered to be one of the finest mansions there.

Even tinkers like Selden and cigarette makers like Kimball lived here; some for a short while, some for a long life. Many moved from one career to another more easily than they could bear to leave the ward. A lawyer, Lewis Henry Morgan of South Fitzhugh, became known as "The Father of American Anthropology" for his devotion to the study of American Indian culture. Miss Millie Alling, a nonagenarian heiress and also of South Fitzhugh, gained fame as a painter of china, back when that was in demand. Her artistry was so fine, Tiffany's and other New York stores sold her work. Nathaniel Rochester, himself a man of multiple interests, chose the Third Ward when he finally decided to settle in the village he founded. Although he encouraged others to settle here, he didn't move to Rochester until 1818. His first choice for a home was in the path of the canal so he had a house built on the corner of South Washington and Spring Streets. The spot is now occupied by the Bevier Building. It is cut off from Corn Hill by the Inner Loop but is still part of the Third Ward. Rochester paid \$850 for the plain, three-story, brick part of his house and \$600 for the two-story, wooden kitchen ell. The first district school had been built nearby in 1814 where the Board of Education building is now located.

Corn Hill is part of the Third Ward but not all of the

Third Ward is Corn Hill. The Corn Hill Preservation District is named after the Corn Hill Tract but very little of the district is in the tract. A look at the map and a little history may help explain the confusion of terms.

When the Village of Rochesterville was incorporated on March 2, 1818, the initial land purchase, the Hundred Acre Tract, extended only so far as what is now Troup Street. South of that, the land that is now the Third Ward was purchased by individual farmers and land speculators. The purchases were called "tracts" and were usually given the names of their owners. For example, the Chapin Tract is on the corner of Troup and Clarissa extending to the corner of Beaver (formerly Plum Alley) and Eagle. It was owned by Judge Moses Chapin. His garden and orchard gave names to Garden, Plum, Peach and Pear Alleys. Other smaller tracts, such as the Reynolds Tract and the Churchill Tract, were named after their owners: Abelard Reynolds and William Churchill (no relation to the Prime Minister). South of those small homesteads were two tracts with unusual names: the Corn Hill Tract and the Caledonia Tract. The Corn Hill Tract stretched six blocks from the river to Reynolds Street but was only two blocks wide. Adams and Clay (Tremont) Streets ran the length of this tract. The Caledonia Tract, almost as long, was also two blocks wide. Its streets are now Edinburgh and Glasgow. As the village grew to a city in 1834, it absorbed these tracts from the town of Gates and included them in the Third Ward. The Erie Canal (Broad Street) became the northern border of the ward, the Genesee River became the eastern, and the Genesee Valley Canal (Ford Street) became the western border. Together they formed a triangle surrounded by water.

The Corn Hill Tract was a farm purchased in 1825 by Josiah Bissell. Since he was one of the first three merchant-millers to arrive from Massachusetts in 1814, his friends knew he didn't intend to become a farmer. He had seen the danger of being involved in only one scheme for making money. He told his friends he intended to cut it up into lots and sell them as

village lots. He gave the farm the name "Corn Hill" and described it as the Corn Hill Tract in his deeds of sale. At the time he bought it, it was a large cornfield, and he continued to raise corn on his land which could be seen clearly for some distance from the river by travelers coming from further south to the growing community by the Falls of the Genesee.

The earliest records of the Genesee Falls were made by French travelers of the eighteenth century who described their great beauty. They are still attractive when viewed from the riverbank, but several deaths occurred when boats were carried over them. The first (or then called) upper falls would be encountered a short distance after one passed the cornfield-covered hill. These falls were removed to make room for the aqueduct. The falls were said to be haunted by "Dutch" Andrews, who was swept over them while helping Indian Allan move his mill wheels down the river to his mill in 1789. Allan had served so much liquor to his other helpers that they were too uncoordinated to form a rescue team. The Dutchman's curses and groans could be heard when a log or fallen tree was carried over the falls. Tragedies like this could be avoided if the boatmen poled, rowed or paddled their rafts, boats or canoes to shore when they passed the "corn hill" without waiting for the sound of "white water" to warn them of impending danger. The recently debated question of whether or not corn could grow on the Corn Hill Tract was settled by Mr. Dewey McElrath in 1981 and '82 when he grew ten and eleven-foot stalks of corn in his garden on Tremont Circle, the exact center of the Corn Hill Tract. Stalks that tall would be seen even in winter when corn fields are quite often a forlorn landscape of stubble and abandoned stalks. The corn was so rich during the nineteenth century that it supported a thriving meat-packing business on Sophia (South Plymouth) between Adams and Edinburgh, not to mention eight distilleries, including "Corn Hill" brand.

The Caledonia Tract was purchased from John Greig of Canandaigua by a group of Scottish settlers who took Caledonia, the ancient Roman name for Scotland, as

the name of their tract. The first village directory, published in 1827, divided the lists of residents according to the ward in which they lived and whether or not they owned the residence or were boarding in it. If one knew all that, the directory could tell the address, the occupation, and, in the case of boarders, the landlord. Names were not, even then, listed alphabetically. The directory listed 258 householders and 215 boarders living on High, Exchange, Ford, Sophia, Fitzhugh, Washington, Spring and Troup Streets in the Third Ward. "Caledonia and Corn Hill" was given as the address of 47 other householders. Everyone in the nineteenth century took in boarders because the population kept growing faster than houses could be built. Even Nathaniel Rochester and Jonathan Child, his son-in-law and first mayor, took in boarders. Many names of those who became rich and/or famous in later Third Ward history were first recorded as boarders in early directories. Servants weren't listed and women only if they were widowed householders or unmarried boarders over twenty-one. Sons over fifteen were boarders. Occupations tended to be mostly working class (called mechanics, regardless of occupation) with a heavy emphasis on carpenters, masons, laborers and butchers. The first City Directory in 1834 and subsequent ones listed names alphabetically, except for the second (1838) directory which tried to put the "Colored" in the back of the book. While only 2% of the city's population was black, 8% of third wardians were, and they were already learning the techniques of affirmative action at their African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church on Favor Street. The next city directory integrated the names with the letter (c) after some. This makes it easy to see that Negroes lived on every street in the ward but mostly along High (Clarissa) Street and that they boarded in the homes of whites.

The border between the Caledonia and Corn Hill tracts runs half way between Tremont and Edinburgh Streets. This means that the New Corn Hill A.M.E. Zion church buildings are actually located in the Caledonia Tract.

In the directory of 1834, 23 householders were listed on S. Clay (Tremont) Street and eight, including a sausage maker, on "Corn Hill". In 1838, when both Clay and Adams were named as addresses, it was still felt necessary to indicate their locations by adding (Corn Hill) after the names. Obviously most people knew where "Corn Hill" was but were still not familiar with the streets named after the Senator and President. "Corn Hill" brand sausages and whiskey spread the fame of the name to New York and other cities.

The name Corn Hill was definitely associated with the Third Ward before Rochester became a city, but only as the name of one of the many tracts into which a ward is divided. The city engineers and tax authorities rely on this division for accuracy in their recordkeeping. The city was divided into numbered wards, the wards into named tracts and the tracts into numbered lots. Ever since parts of the original five wards had to be added to newer wards around them, these names and numbers have never changed. The wards and their tracts may be criss-crossed with the alleys, streets, avenues and boulevards which can be renamed, moved, widened, extended or removed; but the wards, tracts and lots will provide continuity. The records of just one house on Tremont Circle show five number changes and three street name changes but the house has remained on the "Corn Hill Tract, Lot numbers 90 and 91" for over 140 years.

Around 1970, when a committee of the Greenwood Street Neighbors Association were searching for a name which would take in more of the Third Ward to apply to their newly organized association, Cora Russell remembered being told as a girl in the 1890's that the hill in the center of the ward was called "Rattlesnake Hill" by the first settlers and then became known as "Corn Hill" once the rattlers were killed off. At a bounty of 3¢ per rattle, agile pioneers could make as much as \$9.00 a day (in a day when a loaf of bread cost a penny) by killing the slow-moving varmints that sunned themselves on the ledges and rocks overlooking the river. Oil of rattlesnake was used as a cure for stiff joints and the gall was used for fever. In 1826, one

hundred live rattlesnakes were shipped to Europe for the oil. Settlers complained that the crops were "bullfrogs, knee deep, with rattlesnakes enough to fence them." Silas O. Smith cleared four acres of forest in 1814 where St. Luke's Church and the Court House now stand. He planted wheat, "had a fine crop and the harvesting cost me nothing. The job was effectively done by squirrels, coons and other beasts of the forest." The forest contained not only beasts but maple, beech, ash, oak, elm, basswood, hickory, chestnut, cherry, pine, poplar, butternut, black walnut, dogwood, alder, birch, choke cherry, blue-beech, and bramble in whose tops were matted ivy and wild grape in a "tangled canopy". A salt lick on the corner of Main and South Plymouth and a sycamore swamp where Broad and Ford meet added to the wild appearance of the place. In 1818, when Judge Chapin bought his lot on Troup for a homestead, it was covered with a dense forest. One evening, while visiting Judge Sampson on the east side of the river, he explained he couldn't stay long because he didn't like to leave his family alone in the woods. Charles J. Hill, a wealthy miller by the 1870's, remembered that his first job in Rochesterville in the 20's was to cut brush on Corn Hill. In 1849, a forty-eight foot long oak log was brought to a sawmill on the river. It was the largest log ever brought in, according to the newspaper. That could mean a tree almost one hundred feet tall. There are no buildings in the ward that tall today. A building that tall would have to be almost ten stories high. It was the last of the big trees. The city looked barren of trees by the mid-1820's. Harvey Ely was the first to plant shade trees along a Rochester street. Livingston Park looked so lovely and was so comfortable to stroll along that the custom spread. By the turn of the century, if one climbed to the top of the Powers building to see where the former Third Ward resident, Lewis Swift, kept his telescope, one could pick out the Third Ward because it was a green triangle with church spires sticking out of it. By 1960, the trees had been cut down to make parking and driving space for cars while people sweltered in the hot summer sun with no shade.

Other settlers complained that the flies and mosquitos were so large and numerous that they would have been a terror if they weren't so lazy they could be killed by stepping on them. By 1900, a surprising number of livery stables were located in the ward, due to the custom of the residents preferring to rent rather than own their horses and carriages. Health officials calculated that the 15,000 horses of Rochester produced enough fertilizer every year to make a pile 175 feet high covering an acre and to breed 16 billion flies. The auto was welcomed as a relief from that pollution problem.

Mosquitos spawned in the pools of the summer riverbed spread malarial fever. Cholera and typhoid were also spread by drinking the contaminated water. Typhus was spread by fleas. These diseases were lumped together by the pioneers under the name "Genesee Fever". The slow-moving water of the canals and the river surrounding the Third Ward should have been a health hazard but the large lots and private wells, as well as the elevation of the hills and the rock ledge underlying the soil of the ward kept contamination to a minimum. The longevity of the residents proves the wisdom of the pioneer leaders in seeking out the safety of their "moated kingdom".

The river which bred the numerous and sluggish wildlife was, itself, wild in the spring when melted snow and rain raised its banks to flood downtown, but sluggish to the point of nonexistence in the summer when its power was most needed. This condition was created by the very actions meant to capitalize on the river. When the Genesee Valley was covered with forest in the eighteenth century, the runoff was slowed and the river held a more consistent flow throughout the year. As trees were cut to satisfy the demands for lumber for houses and as land was cleared for wheat, the river flow changed to the point that the mills couldn't operate in summer. Exchange Street was called Mill Street until 1828 after the grist mills which lined its banks. When the mills began to fail and other businesses took their places, Exchange seemed a more accurate name to describe the trading activity of the street.

The first newspaper, The Rochester Gazette, was published in the spring of 1816 on the present site of the Democrat and Chronicle building. Lumber yards continued to store the material along the river for the constant building that continued throughout the century. The lumber yards of William Churchill, Amon Bronson and George Hollister made wealthy men of their owners. As many as forty mansions were replaced by more palatial and stylish mansions, and the large lots were cut up into smaller lots with smaller houses on them because so many wanted to live in the popular neighborhood. The houses were built with such speed that studs were only finished on one side. A recent remodeling of an 1840 home revealed a 4" x 4" with a branch sticking out of one side. The carpenters didn't even bother to saw it off. Mrs. Trollope had said on her visit that "...the stumps of the forest are still to be found firmly rooted in the cellars." No one saw the danger of overcrowding and it took a long time to show, but slowly the older families moved away. By the 1850's only 10 of Nathaniel Rochester's 22 grown grandsons still lived in Rochester and not all of them in the Third Ward. By 1900, East Avenue and the Third Ward were genteel rivals, with young men required to make their New Year's Day calls on East Avenue in the morning and in the Third Ward in the afternoon.

Standing on the Court Street Bridge today provides a view of the forces which formed the Third Ward's topography, and walking up from the bridge provides a sense of its history. Looking down into the riverbed in summer, one can see how the rock strata, layer upon layer, formed up to 200,000,000 years ago at the end of the Paleozoic Era. Suddenly, a half million years ago, the pace of change quickened with the formation of the great Labrador glacier. In a few tens of thousands of years, it spread over Northeast America and backtracked, leaving a scene similar to a backyard in March: a barren landscape of clay, sand, gravel and peat deposits (or bogs). Peat is what you get when you forget to rake the leaves hiding behind the garage for several years. Mastodons get stuck in peat bogs and their bones are found thousands

of years later like the chicken bones your dog buried in the leaf pile. The Genesee River, which flowed before the glacier, had to wear down obstructions or go around them. It chose to wear down the 200-foot thick layers of dolomite limestone laid down earlier. The top layers, which were attacked first, were being stripped back (and still are) at the same time lower layers offered different degrees of resistance, thus forming the series of low cataracts, called the upper falls by the first white settlers, which were chipped away to make room for the aqueduct. One can see the even rows of drill holes in the rock of the river bed where layers of limestone were removed. The glacier also created the ideal topography for the construction of the Erie Canal so that one could say that the Third Ward's outlines were decided thousands of years ago.

The Indians followed a path from the lake along the river to their settlements on the "Little Finger Lakes." The path kept at enough of a distance from the river to avoid swamps and rugged terrain. The west side of the river was favored because it was a shorter portage route from the upper rapids to King's Landing in the early pioneer days. The white man paved the route, widened it, and called parts of it Hart, Jones, Sophia, and Caledonia all at the same time. It is still a principle thoroughfare of Rochester although now its names are North and South Plymouth and Frederick Douglass Boulevard. The names may change but the route remains the same. Exchange Street had a nine-foot ledge cutting across it into which Indians carved steps. South Fitzhugh had a hill at Troup that the children who sledged on it called Bunker Hill. Parents would close off Troup Street to traffic so that their children could sled on the hill from Clarissa to South Plymouth.

The Genesee is one of the few rivers in the northern hemisphere which runs from south to north, therefore, when you look "up" the river, you are looking south. Looking down the river to the city one sees the Broad Street Bridge, the northeastern corner of the ward. The Ford Street Bridge (formerly the Clarissa Street Bridge) is the bottom point of the triangle and the

place where Ford, Broad, and Main meet is the north-western corner. The Erie Canal was filled in to become Broad Street in 1921. Until then, children went swimming in it in the summer, and skating in the aqueduct in the winter. Drownings were common, but taken fatalistically. A marker on the wall of City Hall at Broad and Fitzhugh (no longer City Hall) shows where ceremonies honoring the opening of the aqueduct were held in 1823. The entire canal wasn't completed until 1825, but its completion through Rochester marked the assurance of many wardians' futures. President Van Buren appointed his friend, Jacob Gould, Collector of the Port of Genesee. Jacob went from being a shoe store owner to mayor in 1835 to a general in the Civil War in 1861. Since the port collected as much as \$248,210 in one year (1840), the position was very important.

The streets which crossed the canal had bridges over them. Some were so low, people were swept off the boats if they didn't duck. A popular song started, "Low bridge, everybody down, low bridge, we're coming to a town..." and another went, "Oh, Fitzhugh Bridge is broken down..." This seems to have been a common condition as newspapers reported strangers dropping from sight through holes in the bridges with frightening regularity. The Exchange Street Bridge was called the "Loafer's Bridge" after the numbers who hung around watching the boats coming into port. The largest number to drop from one bridge at one time occurred on September 22, 1829 when a crowd of fifty gathered to watch a fight between two crews over right of way across the aqueduct. The bridge gave way before the crews did.

The Exchange Street Bridge was changed to a moveable bridge in 1869. Nehemiah Bradstreet, State Assemblyman in 1868-69, thought this would facilitate traffic on the canal. It was the first such bridge on the whole canal. It was one of the reasons the canal had to be moved out of the city in 1913. It didn't facilitate traffic over the bridge. Locals were convinced that Captains waited until morning, noon and evening rush hours to parade their boats slowly through the

waterway. Many of the most influential men in Rochester lived in the Third Ward and liked to walk home for lunch (called dinner). Frustration at such a time was particularly upsetting and buying a bicycle or car to get home sooner didn't help improve the digestion, it simply increased the congestion. The bridge over the canal at the point where Clarissa, Ford, Broad and Main meet was first an overhead bridge, then a swing bridge, then a lift bridge. It was called "Old Calamity" because it was always jamming. Once it got stuck in the "down" position for days. Traffic on the canal was piled up for miles but the ease of movement for wheeled vehicles was a revelation. The canals were doomed.

Looking at the Broad Street Bridge from our Court Street Bridge position one can see the two layers of arches. The bottom row was the second Erie Canal aqueduct. The aqueduct and the Main Street bridge blocked driftwood and became dams in late winter which caused flooding in the business district on the west side of the river. A serious flood on March 17, 1865 caused more than a million dollars worth of damage. Finally, after another bad one in 1913, Main Street was raised and the whole river at this point was enclosed by the steep walls you can now see. Most of the Third Ward was never affected by the flooding because of its height above the river, but the steep rock ledge on Exchange Street was chipped away to make building material until it became a gradual uphill grade from the river to South Fitzhugh. The rock so close beneath the surface on Tremont Circle had to be dynamited in 1979 to lay new sewer pipes deeper than they had been previously. The Buffalo firm which gave the lowest bid was unaware of the geological formation.

When the Erie Canal aqueduct was covered over in 1928 to make a "subway," the hope was to get the "noisy, dangerous, interurban 'juggernauts' off the streets." These were the interurban trolleys which weighed forty tons, a little more than a semi. They traveled as far away as Geneva. A terminal for them was located on Court and Exchange from 1905 to the 1960's. The War Memorial stands on the site now. Local trolleys were

electrified in 1890, after being horse drawn for almost thirty years. The horses knew where to stop to let the regulars off on Clarissa Street. They only killed nine people in the whole city in twenty-five years. The electric trolleys killed six in their first year but people welcomed the speed. Before this age of speed, families would gather at the Erie Railroad Station (built in 1887) to take the train to Conesus Lake to spend the summer at their cottages. Papa would take the daily commuter train in the evening to join them and come back in the morning. The round trip cost 50 cents.

Looking up the river from the Court Street Bridge, one can see the Inner Loop passing over the part of the river which, during the eighteenth century, was one of the best ways to cross the river above the falls. English troops passed over at that spot during the Revolution and camped where the Erie Railroad used to be under the loop. Pioneer George Goodhue and his wife forded the river in a wagon. The wife was on the wagon and George was on the shore with the horses when the wagon began to drift toward the falls. George quickly chopped down a tree to fall into the water, blocked the wagon, retrieved his wagon and wife and went on his way. The engineers who designed the Inner Loop bridge probably had no idea they were building a monument to the traditional eighteenth century ford. The area was also a favorite collection point for ice harvesters. Ice was gathered from the river and stored farther south along the river to ship to cities as far away as South America. The mild winter of 1905 and '06 caused an ice famine the following summer, encouraging the development of electric refrigeration.

The street names in the Third Ward are also a reminder of its history. Sophia Street was named after Rochester's wife. His oldest daughter, Mrs. Jonathan Child, was also named Sophia. At first the street stopped being Sophia when it reached the southern border of the village where it became Corn Hill for two blocks past the part where the No. 3 School now stands, then Caledonia for three more. Caledonia was

named by John McConnell, the Scottish contractor who macadamized the roads. Macadamizing was invented by a Scot named MacAdam and Scots were supposed to be specialists at it. When the village acquired the Corn Hill and Caledonia Tracts, Corn Hill Street ceased to exist and South Sophia became longer. When the city decided to drop the name "Caledonia" in the interest of continuity, the Scots settlers refused to let the name die. The road which ran from the canal south along the highest point in the ward was aptly named High Street. The southern half of High Street was called Caledonia and the square in the middle of their tract continued to be called Caledonia Square. Clarissa was the name of John Grieg's wife. The first little girl to live in Rochester was Clarissa Stone. The Campbell-Whittlesey House owns a blue and white coverlet with "Clarissa Hill, 1837" woven into the border. Charles Hill had a daughter named Clarissa. In 1842, he was mayor. In 1844, Caledonia was renamed Clarissa and, a few decades later, all of High Street became Clarissa. After Grieg sold the Caledonia Tract to the Scots, a small tract south of it was still called the Grieg Tract. The two short streets which crossed each other in it were named Grieg and Clarissa Streets. Grieg is still the same size but Clarissa keeps getting extended. The latest extension came as a result of the recent urban renewal. Clarissa now curves around to intersect South Fitzhugh instead of continuing south to the bridge. While Clarissa threatens to surround the ward, Sophia disappeared for 125 years until it was resurrected in a small court beside the No. 3 School.

South Fitzhugh was named after Rochester's fellow pioneer, Colonel William Fitzhugh. Fitzhugh and Rochester had ridden up from Maryland with a friend named Charles Carroll looking for a likely area to settle in 1803. They each bought a one-third interest in the Hundred Acre Tract. Carroll also had a street named after him but when he had a disagreement with the authorities over riparian rights, they changed the name of his street to State Street in 1831. Perhaps his remark to Nathaniel, "I have learnt enough of Yankees to dread and fear their wiles and offers.

You are too honest and unsuspecting," didn't endear him to the wily Yankees, either.



Hoyt-Potter House, 133 South Fitzhugh Street

Some of the streets running east and west parallel to the Erie Canal are Spring, Troup, Atkinson, Adams, Tremont, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Hubbell Park. Spring is named after the mineral spring located in the area now occupied by the parking lot behind the Bevier Building. This may have been the spring to which Indian Allan sent a boy to get some water. When the child dawdled, Allan became so angry, he gave the boy a severe beating before witnesses who didn't forget the terrible scene in their list of faults attributed to our earliest settler. Technically just outside the ward but symbolic of its history, the site of Allan's mill one block north of the Broad Street Bridge on the west bank of the river, is also the site of the first black woman's home in Rochester. She was one of Allan's wives. He married Indians, whites, and the daughter of "Captain Sunfish", a fugitive slave who made a fortune trading livestock between the Indians and whites who passed through western New York. Allan married her for her father's money. The law at the time decreed a woman's money went to a woman's husband. When Allan had dissipated her money, he abandoned her.

Perhaps Allan was irritable because he was afflicted with the maladies the spring water was supposed to

cure. Later settlers noticed that their pigs would seek the comfort of the soothing waters to ease skin eruptions. Since mosquito and chigger bites led a list of skin problems adding to the settlers' woes, anything which might soothe them was welcome. The fame of the "Rochester Waters" spread throughout the state and more. A bathhouse down on Buffalo Street (West Main) was mentioned in almost every visitor's memoirs. At the time, even hotels in New York City did not have bathrooms, so the "Rochester House" built on Exchange in 1827 did not accommodate travelers that way. When it was modernized in 1834, it was given more rooms and a cupola, but not bathrooms. Travelers such as the President of the United States, Martin Van Buren, and the Marquis de Lafayette had to rely on the public bathhouse. The waters were praised so long and often that a 1930's Henry Fonda movie named "Chad Hanna" revolves around a sick lion and his master who are both given "Rochester Water" for their stomach ailments. The lion dies. Spring Street was called Fall Street until the upper falls were removed.

Troup and Atkinson Streets were named after Robert Troup, agent for the Pulteney estate in 1801 from which Rochester purchased the hundred acres; and William Atkinson, builder of a grist mill on the east side of the river in 1817. Adams Street was named after John Quincy Adams, not his father, John Adams. They were the only father and son team to become presidents of the United States. The naming of the streets indicates the year they were named. John Q. ran against Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson in 1824. Nathaniel's business partner back in Maryland, Col. Thomas Hart, was Clay's father-in-law. Andrew Jackson was a Locofoco (Democrat). The first Locofoco mayor of Rochester was Charles J. Hill in 1842. He lived on South Sophia (South Plymouth) and owned five lots on Clay Street. Although Rochester and his friends were southerners, the majority of the pioneers were from New England and they were disgusted with Clay's sponsorship of "The Missouri Compromise", an attempt by the Congressman to compromise pro and anti-slavery movements in the nation. When Clay died

in 1852, his body was borne in state on the canal to Buffalo and on down to his home in Kentucky. Within five years, Clay Street was renamed Tremont Street after the main street of Boston.

Washington Street was named after Rochester's home county in Maryland which was named after a Virginian Rochester probably met once or twice. LaFayette Street was named after the famous French hero of our revolution who visited the city and drew a crowd of 10,000 to see him arrive on Exchange Street.

Hubbell Park was named after Walter Hubbell of Canandaigua who gave a lot to the city for an orphanage. The ladies of the Third Ward had sponsored an asylum for the many lost, abandoned and orphaned children who were victims of the many diseases and disasters which were taken for granted in the nineteenth century. Tragically, the asylum finally became a victim of disaster in 1901 when a fire caused the loss of thirty-one children and the adults who rushed in to save them. The windows had been barred to keep the tykes from running away. Wardians never forgot the sight of the little faces in the windows and refused to allow the building to be replaced. A more healthful and less institutional environment was provided on a hill south of town which was named "Hillside". Glasgow and Edinburgh were called Ely and Hill Streets until renamed by the Scots in 1838.

From the beginning of the settlement, a great range of religious experience, mostly Christian, has occurred in the Third Ward. An Indian chief by the name of "Hot Bread", was described as "short and swarthy and a fine speaker but indolent and a glutton." His fellow chief, Red Jacket, called him "Big man here (stomach), small man here (head)." Hot Bread may have brought all this disdain on his head because of his disdain for the white man's religious fervor. He drafted a protest to the governor of New York against missionaries, saying, "Let us worship the Great Spirit as we think best. We ask our brothers not to force a strange religion upon us..." He sponsored an Indian ceremony at the corner of Troup and Livingston or

Clarissa, which were nonexistent then, in 1813. The ceremony was called, too appropriately, "The Feast of the White Dog". The white men saw to it that no further such non-Christian experience shocked the settlement and Hot Bread left town.

The proprietors of Rochesterville offered a lot upon which a church could be built on Fitzhugh, north of what is now Broad Street. The Roman Catholics and Episcopalians both sent emissaries down the river to apply. The Episcopalian rode a faster horse. As a result "St. Luke's Church of Genesee Falls", built in 1817, is Rochester's oldest church building. The First Presbyterian's first building, across the street, was two years older but it burned down in 1817. It was replaced by another building which was given up in 1871 when the old City Hall was erected. The congregation moved to the Spring Street corner of South Plymouth. Their lovely stone building weathered the proximity of the Inner Loop and the new jailhouse, and is now called Central Church of Christ.



Immaculate Conception Church Convent

The Catholics built their first church in another part of the city but, by 1849, so large was the Irish congregation of the Third Ward parish that the first Immaculate Conception Church was constructed facing Plymouth Circle (then Caledonia Square). The 1850's were a time of unrest in the United States. Some

felt threatened both by the large immigration of Irish Catholics fleeing the "Potato Famines" of Ireland and the rising tide of anti-slavery advocates. The threatened "Nativists" formed a secret political organization called the "Know-Nothing" party from their answer if they were asked about it. Dr. Maltby Strong, of South Washington Street, ran on the Whig ticket when he won the 1854 mayor's race, but his sympathies were with the "Know Nothing" administration which followed. Rochester suffered less from this antagonism than other cities where riots and lynchings occurred. Winston Churchill's grandfather, Leonard Jerome, lived on South Plymouth with his brother, Laurence, in the 1840's and published a "Know Nothing" journal called the Daily American in 1846. After he married Clarissa Hall in 1849, he moved to Brooklyn, New York, where Jenny Jerome was born. Perhaps his Indian ancestry explained his nativist attitudes.

The present Immaculate Conception Church was built in 1864 after the first frame structure burned. Over the years, as Irish moved away, Italian immigrants took their places beside the black communicants who didn't move. The church has experienced modification after a fire in 1872 and has been renovated on several occasions but continues to serve its parishioners well. When St. Joseph's Church downtown burned and its garden was converted into a private park by the Landmark Society in 1979, a gazebo from the garden was offered to the Corn Hill Neighbors by the Redemptorist Fathers. The gazebo was placed in Plymouth Circle Park which had been allowed to fall into neglect. In earlier years, picture postcards were made of the lovely flower displays of the circle. The gazebo looks so perfect there that many old-timers who return to tour the ward swear they remember playing in it. It is a favorite meeting spot for concerts, lovers, Christmas carolers and wedding parties' pictures. The nuns in the convent next to the church look forward to seeing bridal parties in their elaborate formal clothing on Saturday mornings. One hundred years ago, such clothing was typical Sunday-go-to-meeting dress!

In 1857 the Yankee Congregationalists pushed through



Gazebo

an appeal to change the names of Sophia, Caledonia, Jones and Hart Streets to one long avenue named North and South Plymouth after their church on the corner of Troup and (then) Sophia. A city council member asked why they didn't change the name to "Immaculate Conception" since the Catholics' church would be bigger. The Plymouth Congregational Church was built in 1853 by a group of residents that reads like a who's who of nineteenth century Rochester: Charles J. Hill, Dr. William Ely, Freeman Clarke, Dr. Chester Dewey, among others; and all of strong anti-slavery sentiment. By 1912, they had died or moved away and Spiritualism had become so widespread that what was considered the most impressive house of worship in western New York was its home. The Fox sisters had a home across the street from it. When they first came to Rochester, they lived up the street on Troup with their widowed sister, a music teacher. The fortune they made tapping out messages from the spirits paid for a house of their own. The following they developed was large enough to require one of the finest churches in the Third Ward to house its Rochester congregation. The church was in the way of the Inner Loop in 1954. All that remains is a monument to the sisters on the opposite corner, as close as one can get to the site of so much history.

A Quaker meeting house on Hubbell Park was all that was needed for many of Rochester's "Friends", as they preferred to be called. While small in number, their influence was great if you think of the work of the Anthony family in women's rights and anti-slavery alone. Christian Scientists bought Jonathan Child's Greek Revival home for their temple and Greek Orthodox faithful occupied the Lyon-Chapin House on South Fitzhugh in 1946 until it, too, made way for the Inner Loop. The congregation, which had occupied a sizable section of Adams Street and South Plymouth, contributing to the increasingly international flavor of the ward in the first half of the twentieth century, moved on to other parts of Monroe County as did so many others before and after them. Only Nick Tahou's Restaurant on West Main Street remains of the businesses operated in or near the ward by Greek immigrants and their families.

One by one, the churches closed, or were sold or demolished as their congregations moved away, grew too old or died. The one group who remained loyal, even when they moved to the suburbs, were the blacks. The Italians, the Greeks, the Irish, and the Scots could change their names, if necessary, to pass; but the blacks identified with more than a name. Even when they found property outside the city where a former owner had not bothered to specify on the deed "No Negroes or Italians", ugly news headlines of bigotry served to remind them of their brotherhood with those still living in the old neighborhood. So they returned from their homes in Greece and Pittsford, Brighton and Fairport, to make their churches into models of growth in a time of decay.

The review that is being made of only a few of the black churches in the Third Ward is to underline the continuing role of the black church in sustaining a people. Even in the early twentieth century, in the United States, non-white persons needed and received spiritual support to cope with many problems. The black preacher out of a sense of his own freedom began providing direction and leadership to his followers over 300 years ago.

From about 1910 until circa 1939, a small group of persons in the Third Ward provided leadership. They were members of Mount Olivet Baptist Church, primarily, and the majority appeared to have come from near Culpepper, Virginia.

On October 14, 1910, the mission, which was founded by Reverend Sedley E. Lee, located in the old St. George's Hall on South Avenue, was recognized as the Mount Olivet Baptist Church. Before it was given full status as a church at the 83rd annual session of the Baptist Union, the work was moved to the Odd Fellows Hall, 100 Caledonia Avenue (now Clarissa Street).

The Reverend Charles D. Hubert succeeded the Reverend Lee in 1912. He was once the church clerk and the first Negro to enter the Rochester Theological Seminary, then on Alexander Street, later the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. Under him, the structure known as Hubert Hall was erected on Adams Street.

After the Reverend Hubert's departure to accept a teaching position at Morehouse College, the Reverend L.B. Brown from Chicago was called and he assumed his new duties late in 1915. The membership grew to 147 under his dynamic preaching, with an annual budget of \$1,230.

Following a two and a half year stay, the Reverend Brown resigned and the Reverend S.M. Batchalar, a native of Tennessee, succeeded him. He remained two years and the church found itself again without a pastor. This condition remained throughout the year 1919 and part of 1920 until there came to join the valiant band who had been held together by such faithful souls as Miss Mary Keays, Miss L.M. Scott, the Reverend A.M. Kearney and Mr. Joseph Gantt, the Reverend James E. Rose, "the patron saint of Mount Olivet."

His achievements over a twenty-two year span as pastor constitute a saga in scholarship, community leader-

ship, inspiration to young people, and churchmanship so great in their proportions that no adequate statement can be made here. At Leroy, New York, he had founded and nurtured a work among the Baptists that still stands as a fitting memorial to his genius as an organizer. Following the death of his wife, he married Miss Carrie Dukes from Augusta, Georgia, who bore him two sons. She served faithfully in home, church, and community throughout her husband's ministry at Mount Olivet.

The Reverend Rose graduated from Howard University, Washington, D.C., the Rochester Theological Seminary as a classmate of Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, received his Master of Theology degree from Colgate-Rochester, and his Doctor of Divinity honor from his Alma Mater, Howard University.

It was under his leadership that the present church structure was erected in 1926 at a cost of \$50,000 and dedicated January 23, 1927. The membership at one time reached almost 500, and in 1926 the total budget, including building fund monies, was raised to the amount of \$20,652.24. Between this ebb and flow of statistical eventfulness, the following among other distinctions came to him: Moderator of the Baptist Union of Rochester and Monroe County, Vice-President of the Rochester Federation of Churches, President of the Rochester Minister's Association, President of the local branch of NAACP, one of two delegates from Rochester to President Hoover's Home Building and Ownership Conference, member of the Executive Board of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.

His death, May 14, 1942, was a crushing blow to both church and community.

After the passing of Dr. Rose, the flock considered one of its former student-assistants for the position. A few years before there was a young man who had been an assistant under Dr. Rose and had become part of the life of Mount Olivet. Charles Emerson Boddie, the son of one of the greatest men the Negro

Church has produced, was called to the ministry of this church, August 13, 1942.

He is a graduate of Syracuse (BA '33); Colgate-Rochester (BD '36); and the University of Rochester (MA '49); a member of the Board of Education and Publications of the American (Northern) Baptist Convention; President of the Rochester Pastor's Union, a youth leader, student counselor, author, lecturer, song leader, organist, social research specialist and member of the Rochester Ad Club. Having held former pastorates in Elmira, New York, and Huntington, West Virginia, he brought along with his youth adequate experience to succeed in the position. He did not come to take Dr. Rose's place; no man could have done that. His aim was to lead the church into new avenues of achievement in the field of human betterment.

The highlight of his ministry is undoubtedly the liquidation of the church debt, accomplished after four years of cooperative effort and loyal participation on the part of the entire membership. After the retiring of the burdensome mortgage of \$24,000, appropriate ceremonies were conducted on Sunday evening, December 14, 1947. Dr. Benjamin Mays, President of Morehouse College, was the speaker and the mortgage papers were burned by James E. Rose, Jr., D.D.S., son of the former pastor.

Baptists felt freer to express themselves. Under the leadership of the late Dr. James E. Rose, Mount Olivet Baptist Church held many rallies to protest lynchings in the South. In his efforts to awaken the apathy of the white community, Dr. Rose was joined by Dr. Charles T. Lunsford, M.D. and Dr. Van Tuyl Levy, D.D.S., both of whom had their offices in the Third Ward.

At his church, Dr. Rose instituted services where those persons who had achieved success in the community were asked to sit on the dais where they could be easily seen and heard. Dr. Anthony L. Jordan, M.D. and Dr. Samuel A. Lindsay, D.D.S. were two such

participants among many.

Non-white youth needed role models. They did not attend segregated schools, but they were excluded from the mainstream in every other way. After-school employment included such jobs as mother's helper or grocery bagger. High school proms had little meaning for the average non-white.

As a tribute to the ministers and laity of that time, it should be said that they tried to provide compensating activities. Clustered in the Clarissa Street area were the Clarissa Street YWCA, the West Side YMCA, and the Olivites (the Mount Olivet Youth Group). On Clarissa Street, too, there sprang up Dan's Tavern, an after-five gathering place for drink and small talk; Elks IBPOEW formed a youth marching band, the Junior Herd Drum and Bugle Corps.

The activities geared to provide its youth with socially healthful alternatives appeared to pay off in dividends. At Howard University in Washington, D.C., it was noted that there were about twenty-four young persons enrolled there from the Rochester area in the early 1940's.



High School Graduates of 1939

As was the case in many parts of America, the climate in Rochester in the '30's and '40's was not conducive to improving the minds or the economic and social status of non-whites.

Tom Walker passed the Civil Service test in the 1920's to become the first black police officer, but he was not appointed. He moved to Chicago and achieved the rank of detective. In 1934 Arthur Williams, Jr., a Madison High School basketball star, did not attend ceremonies at the hotel where his team was to be honored for winning the sectionals. Negroes were not welcome in the hotel. Madeline Blake was a Rochester Business Institute graduate who could not get a secretarial job that she wanted because of her race.

Many blacks did achieve success. Following are the achievements of some of the members of Trinity Presbyterian Church (formerly at Reynolds Street and Bronson Avenue):

Mrs. Elizabeth Walls - Daughter of Jesse Stevens, owner of one of the two stores owned by black people in the 1920's. In the 1920's, Mrs. Walls was considered Rochester's only "colored" teacher.

Captain Charles H. Price - Grandson of Jesse Stevens and Adann Price, a New York Civil War Veteran. Captain Price was the first black appointed to the Rochester Police force.

Robert Bennett - West Side Y Secretary.

Walter Meyers - One of the two colored morticians in the early 1920's.

Benjamin R. Harrison - First photographer.

Members of Mount Olivet Baptist Church:

Aurelia Wells Heatley - Physician.

Mary Elizabeth Langford Taylor - N.R.A. Supervisor for Youth Services. As a social worker, greatly

aided India in Planned Parenthood program.

Katherine Logan - Former elementary school principal (School #23).

Deacon George Hicks - Principal of School #4.

Doris Hicks - Director of Library Media for City Schools.

Deacon Louis Kellam - Landlord.

Thomas Godden - Proprietor of Gibson Hotel

Truman Coles - First black Assistant District Attorney.

Alex Peyton - Republican candidate for School Commissioner.

Mrs. Christine Smith - President, Democratic Women's Club.

Stanley Thomas - Director of Sanitation, 1962-66; Assistant to Commissioner, 1966-68; Director of Personnel, 1968-70.

Millard E. Latimer, Jr. - Funeral Home Director.

Moses Whitley - Domestic Science Instructor, W.P.A. Adult Education Unit from 1934-1937.

Mrs. Warwich and Mrs. M. Byrd Holloman - Hand Laundry.

Lloyd Hurst, Esq. - Church attorney and unsuccessful in Republican bid for judgeship.

Edgar Poles - Shop Chairman, later Vice-President, United Steelworkers'-C.I.O. Mr. Poles moved up from Shipping Foreman at Symington's to Inspector of Railroad Equipment; he was an employee there from 1920 until 1948 when they closed.

Additional Third Ward businesses were Stamp's Cleaners and Smittey's Birdland. An entrepreneur we don't want to forget who provided jobs for our residents, although it was located elsewhere, was Roe Window Cleaning Services, John Roe, proprietor.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was started in 1796 in New York, New York, and the first church was built in 1800. The church was incorporated in 1801 by the name, "The African Methodist Episcopal Church in New York" but was revised by adding the word "Zion" in 1848. This was done in order to reduce an identity conflict with the separate and different African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church. James Varick, a black man, the predominant leader in the church's formative years, is considered the founder and first bishop of the church and was the pastor of the "Mother" church.

The Third Ward is the home of two African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E. Zion) churches--Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church and the New Corn Hill A.M.E. Zion Church.

The members of the Memorial Church 126th Anniversary Historical Committee of 1953 provide us with a good starting point for looking at the church's early history:¹

"When Colonel Nathaniel Rochester moved from Hagerstown, Maryland, into the country of the Genesee at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, he brought with him ten Negro slaves to whom he subsequently gave their freedom. (Although slavery was legal in New York State, he evidently did not wish to be involved in the institution any longer.) Other Negroes were holding regular meetings for religious worship at various homes on Ford, Sophia, and Favor Streets. These meetings, as a matter of law, were unofficial, since such gatherings were forbidden until the Emancipation Act was passed by the State of New York in 1827. (It took New York State fifteen years to follow Rochester's lead.) In this year, a Sunday School for Negro children was operated on Favor

Street, and a religious group was organized in a schoolhouse on Ford Street. The records of this period are indistinct, but it is certain that one or more Negro congregations with Methodist doctrines have met regularly in Rochester since 1827, the year accepted as the founding of Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church."

"In the early years, services for an adult congregation had been held at intervals in a small brick building at 11 Ely Street, on the corner of Minerva Lane. This building was owned by Elisha Ely, and either leased or loaned to the worshipers. By 1831, under the leadership of the first regular pastor, the Rev. Thomas James, a church site at the northeast corner of Spring and Favor Streets had been obtained, and a small one-story, wooden structure was completed and occupied as a church edifice."

"The first church structure was replaced by a second building on the same site in 1879, and in 1907, after a building campaign initiated by the late Bishop J.W. Brown of New York City who was then pastor of the Rochester church..."

The old Favor Street edifice served as the congregation's house of worship from 1907 to 1975. In addition, the Favor Street building served as an important black historical landmark. A case in point is the fact that the church served as a station for the historic Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad, led by Harriet Tubman (she was associated with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church also), served as a transportation and leadership medium providing shelter for Negro slaves of the South seeking freedom in the Northeast and Canada. Members of the congregation whose type of employment took them into the streets i.e. porters, drivers of horses and mules on the canal and boatmen, were particularly useful as "conductors" seeking out and directing lost-looking individuals before the authorities might pick them up, but all served in some way, as "station-masters" or "ticket agents" (fund-raisers).

The church was associated with the early women's rights

movement. For example, Susan B. Anthony gave one of her last public addresses in Memorial Church. When one views the old stained glass windows in the new Memorial Church building, one sees a window which pays tribute to Susan B. Anthony.

Another important historical fact regarding the Memorial Church is that it served as the publishing site of The North Star, Frederick Douglass' famous anti-slavery newspaper. The late Bishop W.J. Walls cites the following in this regard:²

"Douglass soon made up his mind to move to Rochester, New York, where he founded the famous anti-slavery newspaper, The North Star, in the winter of 1847. The very first issue of The North Star carried the news that its editor was already involved in the operation of the Underground Railroad. He was assisted in the critical days of his newspaper by a number of outside friends, and by the church, who aided him, for a brief period, in operating the paper from the church basement."

The Memorial Church played an important role in the fight for improved education for early black citizens (circa 1831). The late Bishop W.J. Walls again provides us with historical documentation:³ "...Slavery had been abolished in some of the northern states, and blacks continued to get a meager amount of learning. Some ardent students among them became proficient. The only facility which the Board of Education of Rochester, New York, for instance, offered for blacks was the basement of the A.M.E. Zion Church."

As was previously stated, the old Favor Street church building served as the congregation's house of worship until 1975. In 1975, the congregation moved into a newly built edifice located on Clarissa Street.

When one close to the day to day activities recollects the church's early history up to the present, the view will not only be Christian but also social action and public service. To this day the church, from a

group and individual member's perspective, continues to play an important part in the Rochester community. To highlight this we offer just a few contributions that current and past members have made:

Mabel McIntyre - One of the area's first Negro nurses. Mrs. McIntyre was known to "encourage Negro youngsters to take up nursing and other professions."⁴

Mr. & Mrs. James Hamm - Developers of the Ralph Bunche Scholarship Fund.

John D. Walker - Boarding Home proprietor and hay dealer.

Dr. Charles T. Lunsford - The city's first black doctor, civil rights activist, friend and classmate of the late Dr. James E. Rose and Mordecai Johnson, past President of Howard University, past President of the NAACP. Over the years, he has been active in improving the quality of life and education for black Rochesterians. School #19 is named in his honor.

B.J. Hawkins - Twentieth century barber.

Alfred, Russell and Harvey Robinson - Ben Franklin basketball stars. Alfred is now a practicing dentist in the city.

Edwin A. Robinson - First black graduate of the U of R Medical and Dental School.

Charles W. Frazier - For 43 years, an employee of Eastman Kodak Co.

Mrs. Audrey Bell Frazier - Adult Service Librarian, the Extension Dept., Rochester Public Library.

Eunice R. Bullock - Recreation teacher, W.P.A.-Adult Education Division.

Robert Edwards - Switchman for 31 years at the

Rochester Telephone Co., now retired.

Mrs. Lula Meadows - One of the first parents to provide a home to abandoned and orphaned children.

Walter Derham - Self-employed car mechanic, now 97 years old.

Evelyn Brandon - Through Ms. Agnes Kidder, Ms. Brandon became the first black professional on the YWCA "downtown" staff as Assistant Director of Programs for the Young Adult.

Rev. Andrew Gibson - Pastor of the Memorial Church since 1961. He is known to be a fine minister, historian, proponent of education, community worker, and to have made significant contributions to improving race relations in Rochester.

Ruth Scott - Black City Councilperson.

The Honorable Reuben K. Davis - Rochester's first black elected State Supreme Court Justice.

Rev. Thomas James - The founder of Memorial Church. He was active in helping runaway slaves and was a lecturer on anti-slavery. He is also known to have been influential in convincing Frederick Douglass to move to Rochester. A bust of Rev. James sits in the Hall of Justice.

This is just a brief list of some of the contributions that members of the Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church have made to the Rochester community. It is not intended to be all-inclusive. There are many others that could be listed; we hope we have not offended anyone by the exclusion.

The other A.M.E. Zion church in the Third Ward was organized as a result of the old Corn Hill Methodist Episcopal Church building being donated to the A.M.E. Zion denomination in 1969. The Rev. Noel V. Christian of New York City subsequently moved to Rochester with the task of organizing the new church. Rev. Christian

arrived in October of 1970 and after a few months of recruiting new members, the first worship service was held December 19, 1970. The church continued to grow in the service of Christ during the four years Rev. Christian was here. But, the building was plagued with vandalism and fires and was destroyed by fire in 1971. Yet, the stalwart Christians at Corn Hill didn't let this incident prevent them from building God's kingdom in the Corn Hill neighborhood. The members rededicated their efforts to rebuilding the building and were able to accomplish their task by 1973. The structure, utilizing the remaining walls from the old historic landmark building, was rededicated on September 16, 1973. It received an award for the masterful reuse of the original structure. During the time when the church was being rebuilt, the members worshiped in the auditorium of the Immaculate Conception School, thanks to the help of Rev. Kreckel.

Since the church's rebuilding, it has continued to grow and has hosted church conferences in its fourteen year history. Its current pastor is the hard-working, dedicated, family man, Rev. James McCathan.

Rochester blacks were appearing to have achieved some success in the 1950's and early '60's. There were, by this time, bus drivers, salespeople, telephone operators, civil service employees, skilled factory workers, and bank tellers.

Constance Mitchell of Grieg Street was part of a social club who sought ways to express their concern about the people removal in the Seventh Ward. In 1952, that community thought they were getting the Baden-Ormond area redeveloped. Instead, residents of the Third Ward felt increasingly cramped by the flight of Seventh Ward residents to this neighborhood in search of homes as theirs had been razed in mass bulldozing.

Mrs. Mitchell accepted her cohorts' challenge to run as Monroe County Board of Supervisors' Democratic candidate from the Third Ward and was elected to that position in 1961. A good deal of the work of building up a democratic base in the ward was done by Bill and

Christine Smith. He was a Third Ward Committeeman and, later, Ward Leader. In those early years, some Republican party leaders in the Third Ward were Roy King and Alex Peyton.

The Human Relations Commission and a S.C.A.D. office were created to correct racial problems in the late '50's. The City Historian wrote in 1961:

"Rochester is already engaged in...efforts to clean out a ring of blight that surrounds the downtown district...to apply neighborhood planning principles to the inner city. Its park and playground surveys already embody such concepts, and if it can resolve the integration problem (make Rochester a symbol of equality, as the Human Relations Commission has put it) it should be able to redevelop the old Third Ward and other fringe areas as wholesome communities."

There was great discontent in the black community. Both in the Seventh and the Third Wards, there existed the feeling that blacks were being forced to give up their ability to vote as a bloc through "Urban Removal". Too, the blacks' frustration in respect to securing additional meaningful jobs spilled over. The resentment flared into the 1964 Rochester riots.

The summer of 1964 was known as "The Long, Hot Summer". People gathered in the streets for relief from the heat. A policeman trying to arrest a young man at a street dance was surrounded by an angry crowd. Headlines across the nation calling it a "Race Riot in Rochester" sparked dozens of imitators. Watts, being in Los Angeles, was of course the biggest. In a tiny town in Connecticut, a town meeting was called hastily to debate the cost of "necessary riot equipment". The town constable usually didn't even wear a gun. After listening for two hours to hysterical demands for immediate protection from the mobs which were feared from the nearest city, twenty-five miles away, a black man in the audience rose to point out that there were only "six of us in the whole town and four of us are children. We're not planning a riot."

While the world watched and worried, windows were smashed and stores were looted on commercial streets like Clarissa; but on the residential side streets black people told their white neighbors to stay indoors in tones of protectiveness and concern. A half block off Clarissa, 69-year-old Mrs. Button was unaware anything had happened until she heard it on the radio. Some of her black neighbors came to sit on her porch steps in case anyone should try to threaten the little old white lady but nothing disturbed the peace of the side street. When the police helicopter went down with loss of life on Clarissa, all the residents could see was a column of smoke. They had to gather around their television sets to find out what had happened. On the third day the National Guard arrived and calm was restored. Some say the wide space between Clarissa and Ford was bulldozed clear and left that way so the National Guard could get their tanks in the next time, because the narrow streets had made them unuseable in 1964. The high-rise apartments in the Seventh Ward provided instant crowds and fueled rumors. However, the ward was due to change so radically, "next time" would have to happen somewhere else.

In retrospect, some blacks attribute their getting job training programs at Kodak and Xerox to the riots and the creation of some newer community agencies more attuned to black needs. The truth is, the riots made many more training positions and jobs available to blacks. Circa 1945, as more employers learned of the Fair Employment Practices Act, they hired some Afro-Americans, but in very small numbers. Friends told friends and/or relatives of job openings and training opportunities. In the 1970's, more active efforts were made to provide such opportunities. The riots also claim credit for the birth of the architectural style called "Riot Renaissance". Bars and liquor stores were the principle victims of rioters. Owners called in masons to have the plate glass windows replaced with cement blocks. The ward had changed since the day when Mrs. Fitch, owner of one of the first telephones, called out the window to a passing stranger to please open her front door, come in and answer the phone downstairs because she was not dressed

to receive callers.

The twentieth century had caused many of the changes in the Third Ward. In 1946, Virginia Jeffrey Smith, an old warder, wrote, "The traditions of the ward were shattered by the coming of the automobile." She was referring to Mr. Selden's device (the first gas engine patent) and the second car in the whole city, a Locomobile owned by Mr. J. Foster Warner. Even in 1946, the auto had not taken over so much of the ward, although it had destroyed its sense of isolation. The auto had helped the trolley extend the suburbs and prevented congestion. The ward had few row houses, three-deckers or tenements. Crowding was evident in the practice of building houses in the rear or between two larger ones, however.

The architecture was its saving grace. In 1829, at the age of 77, Colonel Rochester was asked to be the first president of a club called "The Athenaeum". The organization gathered a library together, invited speakers to give lectures, collected dues, and generally tried to improve the minds of those who sought self-improvement. In 1836, the Mechanic's Institute under William A. Reynolds followed. In 1837, Henry O'Reilly formed a similar organization called "The Young Men's Association" and, within a few years yet another wardian, Dr. Chester Dewey who was Rochester's first scientist and married to a Brewster of the Brewster-Burke House family, had the job of finding lecturers for the association. The three were finally combined under the name "Athenaeum and Mechanic's Institute". The lecture courses were very popular. One given in 1857 on astronomy by Dr. Ormby Mitchel of Cincinnati had to be repeated by popular demand in 1858. After alternative periods of success and decline, the institute was renamed "The Rochester Institute of Technology". It commissioned wardian Claude Bragdon to design the Bevier Building. RIT purchased many of the ward's old homes to be used for dormitories and classrooms. In so doing, it preserved many of the fine old houses which might have disappeared through neglect. The school prospered to the point where it was forced to

search for larger space in 1969. The timing was unfortunate. The ward didn't need a lot of suddenly empty buildings too large for poor families and in the inner city where those who could afford to care for them wouldn't live. The general opinion was in favor of "tearing everything down and starting all over new". The school was not that eager for change but it did need newer, more efficient, buildings and was opposed to historic designation which inhibited its right to demolish, if necessary, to build new quarters.

A group opposed to demolition was growing in influence. In 1937, a gathering of former wardians and lovers of history and antiquities met to express their shock at seeing the decay of one of Rochester's first and finest Greek Revival mansions on the corner of Troup and South Fitzhugh. Built in 1835-36 by another of the ward's many millers, Benjamin Campbell, and owned after 1852 by Frederick Whittlesey, a lawyer and civic leader, the house deserved to be protected. By the 1930's, the truth could no longer be ignored: the Third Ward was heading downhill. Something had to be done. The ladies and gentlemen banded together to form "The Society for the Preservation of Landmarks of Western New York" (later shortened to the Landmark Society of Western New York), got up a fund, purchased the house, searched their attics for appropriate furnishings, and created a museum. Not having glass cases, they put



Campbell-Whittlesey House

the attic finds in place as if the family had just stepped out and would return at any minute. House museums were rare then but, with the creation of Colonial Williamsburg, they were about to become popular. The Campbell-Whittlesey House ranks among the country's finest.

Flushed with success, the society viewed their neighborhood with dismay. They realized the museum could not stand alone in the midst of neglect, overcrowding, empty lots and cheap replacement housing. By the 1950's, many old residents of the ward had not left and continued to maintain their property as if nothing had changed. Many lower income blacks, whites and immigrant families maintained their property with love and care rather than money but with the same result. The operative words seemed to be "maintained their property". Neglect was the quickest road to decay.

The society knew they could not, and did not need to, buy up the whole ward to protect the museum's surroundings but perhaps they could influence others to follow the path of those who had been investing "sweat equity" all along. A survey was made in 1964 and the Genesee Landmarks Foundation was formed. The foundation bought some neglected properties, fixed them up and sold them to obtain the money to do the same again. City Hall and Urban Renewal were willing to follow the route of historic renovation, where possible, instead of mass bulldozing.

The only house designed by Lewis Comfort Tiffany in Rochester, and one of two in the whole world, had decayed to the point of demolition. The only log cabin left in the ward had been replaced by low-rent housing down the street from vacant lots where the low-rent housing could have been built without destroying a landmark. When the city was planning the route of the Inner Loop, a professor of architecture from Columbia University advised that Livingston Park, South Fitzhugh and South Plymouth had the "finest collection of Greek Revival architecture in one place in the United States." In

1950, there were 750 houses built before 1910 in the Third Ward. By 1975, there were only 250 left.



Buell-Button House, Tremont Circle

In 1969, a partial list of houses in the ward showed 15 in excellent condition, 29 in repairable condition and two in serious but still savable shape. Only one could not be saved out of this sample list. The Genesee Landmarks Foundation had already bought and renovated eight properties and persuaded others to buy fifteen more. Horror stories came out with the purchases. What should have been a top-rated landmark was owned by a slumlord who crowded eight families into twelve rooms on the same block with seven small, abandoned, empty, but savable homes. The crowding wasn't necessary, nor was the abandonment.

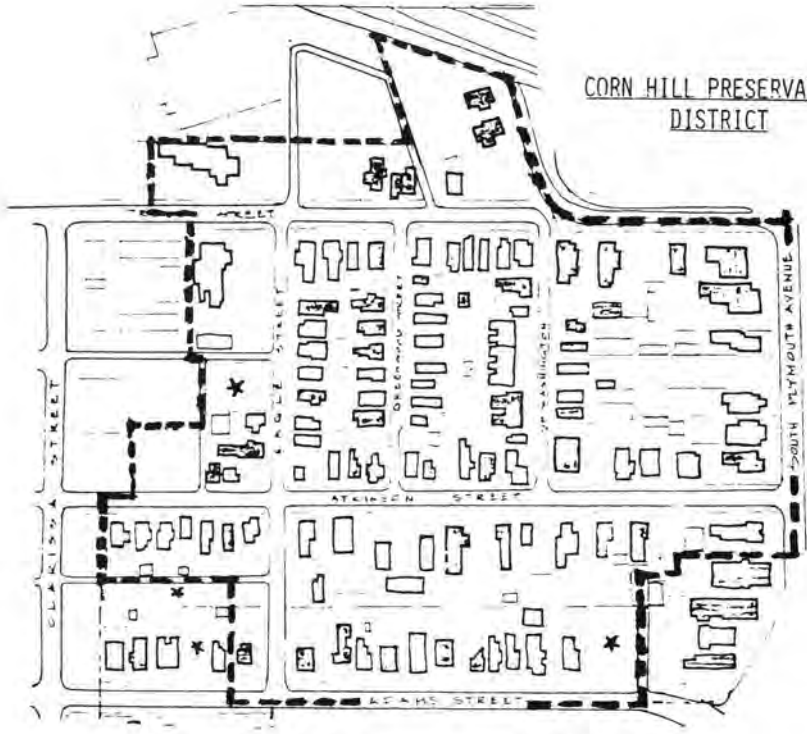
The ward was, by this time, 50% black and many families, both black and white, feared historic designation, dreading the cost of having to improve their property according to rigid rules. This is a misconception. Historic designation does not impose rigid rules or police-state mentality on the property owner. Paradoxically, the proof of this is a neighbor of the Campbell-Whittlesey Museum who steadfastly refuses to do anything about a fine mansion which once housed a founder of Western Union. The building continues to decay because the owner wishes to replace it with a parking lot. Many houses were completely modernized

on the inside. One contains bare brick walls, a cathedral ceiling created by ripping out the second floor, and a slate kitchen floor made from blackboards salvaged from the old yellow-brick Number 3 School. The school was demolished to create a soccer field for the new Number 3 School. The only rules are: keep it clean and don't destroy or alter the character of the outside of the building. And even those rules aren't rigid.

Many of the new owners, moving in from the suburbs, spoke in youthful enthusiasm of being modern pioneers. They found their neighbors somewhat puzzled by this attitude. Those who had been here all along never thought of their neighborhood as a slum. They just didn't want it to become one. An area doesn't just stagnate at any one level. Either it deteriorates into a South Bronx or it must be made to rise in value. Brick homes in the ward were appraised in the thousands and wooden ones in the hundreds 150 years ago. A brick house on South Plymouth was assessed at three thousand in 1836, fifteen thousand in 1894, five thousand in 1965 and one hundred fifty thousand in 1983. Another which sold twelve years ago for a few thousand because of its poor condition has just been re-assessed at \$79,000. "Sweat equity" has paid off in increased property value. Complaints about increased tax assessments have hidden the fact that the ward is definitely not a slum.

While the preservationists' desire had been to make the whole Third Ward a preservation district (to be named Corn Hill after the tract which forms a belt across the center of the triangular shape of the ward) the City Council allowed only Troup, Atkinson and part of Adams to receive the designation. For that reason, the Corn Hill Preservation District does not include much of the Corn Hill Tract. However, it is hard to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. What the Landmark Society hoped has come to pass. The effects of TLC are catching. There is definitely a sign of spillover. The rest of the ward is benefiting from the efforts of the twentieth

CORN HILL PRESERVATION DISTRICT



century pioneers; both those who came back and those who never left because, as one old resident tartly informed a reporter who asked her how it felt to live in a has-been neighborhood, "It's better to be a has-been than a never-was."

Since 1968, when 38 visitors attended the first Corn Hill Arts Festival, the festival and the Landmark Society's annual tour of houses in the Third Ward have drawn increasingly larger crowds. The work of both is mostly done by volunteers. The tour has sold out on occasion since it must limit its ticket sales, but the 1983 festival drew 160,000. In all those years, no serious problems have marred either occasion, traditionally held on the second weekend of July. The sun always shines on that weekend. The previous residents would not be surprised.

For the Third Ward, as well as Rochester in her 150th year, this cannot be

THE END

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The files of the Corn Hill Neighbors Association, particularly the Corn Hill Gazette

The library and files of the Landmark Society of Western New York

The collected works of Blake McKelvey

The collected works of Arch Merrill

The 1926 Negro Business Directory

The historical files of the Rochester Institute of Technology

The Rochester Public Library's pamphlet series, "Rochester History"

The files of the Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library

Reference notes:

¹History prepared by members of the Historical Committee for the Anniversary, from material in the Rochester Public Library and in possession of older members, October, 1953: Mrs. B. Hamm, Miss M. Pedgeon, Mrs. P. Coleman, Miss E. Brandon, Mr. J. Lee, Mr. R. Sprague, Mr. W. Stockman, and revised by Mrs. A. Frazier, May 1960.

²Walls, W.J., The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church--Reality of the Black Church; A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, Charlotte, N.C., p. 151.

³Ibid, p. 301.

⁴This quote was extracted from a newspaper clipping housed in the church library. It is assumed the clipping is from the Democrat & Chronicle.

The authors wish to note that so many reminiscences of the Third Ward have been published, particularly those of Mr. Peck, Mr. Pond, Miss Chappell and Miss Smith, that it would be difficult to include them all in this short booklet if it were five times the size. Preference has therefore been given to material not previously published and material which relates to the Third Ward's present condition, as well as material found in sources not devoted to the Third Ward's history. Some may be disappointed that their favorite story does not appear and others may find some facts distasteful. Our history, disappointing or charming, regrettable or in the finest taste, makes us what we are today.



Neighborhood History Project