

*A Sesquicentennial Tribute To Rochester Women
by the Women's Council of the
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Rochester, New York*



*Women Of Rochester Who Made
A Difference!*

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To Rochester Women
(1834-1984)*

Between the passing of the New York State frontier in the 1830's and the present day celebration of Rochester's Sesquicentennial stretched an age of exciting national drama. It was a time that saw new trails blazed on many fronts, a time of vast expansion, of new inventions and new machinery, the burgeoning of revolutionary new ideas in a mobile society. It was a period of aggressive capitalism and speculation in which fortunes were made and lost.

In this new order, two booming cities rose on the banks of the "Clinton Ditch," Buffalo and Rochester, overshadowing the older communities of Canandaigua, Bath and Batavia that were the seats of the pioneer land companies.


It was a momentous, as well as a slightly mad and sometimes merry time — the time of the pioneer who cleared the forests and lived in log cabins was over — but the men and women of this Upstate land never ceased to pioneer. The first wearing of the Bloomer costume on the streets of Seneca Falls, cradle of the feminist movement, sym-

bolized women's revolt against the status quo and her demand for her rightful place in a changing order. History was made by Rochester women, whether native or adopted Rochesterians. Many who became famous, such as **Emma Goldman**, the **Fox Sisters**, **Clara Barton** and **Susan Brownell Anthony** (and her sister abolitionists), had much written about them; but what about some other women who created an "image" and blazed new trails for the people of their time? This is their story. Here, we attempt to acquaint you with some of these women who have made significant contributions to the quality of life in Rochester and, in many instances, women who helped shape the country's destiny.

Even as the Village of Rochesterville was incorporated in 1817, there were women who were making history. **Huldah M. Strong**, at age 22, began a pioneer school in the village in 1813 where she gathered the children of the surrounding area, meeting part of the time in the room over Jehiel Barnard's tailor shop. It was small in number (sometimes up to fifteen students) but was the foundation for education in Rochester, as this school was properly the forerunner of all organizations for the intellectual and moral advancement in the community. Her idea was appealing enough to the villagers to elicit their support for beginning the construction in late 1813 of a schoolhouse, and formation of the first school district in December 1813. She later married Dr. Jonah Brown, Rochester's first physician. In 1822, she was a superintendant in the Charitable School that was established in 1821. By the 1850's, she employed her energies as a directress on a board comprised of three ladies who controlled the affairs of the Rochester Female Reform Society (organized in 1836). She was recognized in *Who's Who in American Women*.

Lydia Strong Reynolds, Huldah's sister, was married to one of Rochester's original pioneers, Abelard Reynolds. She is believed to have borne the first white child in the community. She not only had to deal with knife-wielding Indians barging into her home, but managed her husband's enterprises successfully when he became ill with Genesee Fever. Abelard was the first postmaster of Rochester and operated a tavern. They had been the first to complete a frame house on Rochester's 100-acre tract where Abelard operated his saddlery and opened the village post office. This site was later occupied by the Reynolds Arcade, near the Four Corners, which he also had built in 1828.

The first fair was held in Monroe County (which had been created from Genesee and Ontario Counties) in 1823. Although the village became officially a city in 1834, Col. Nathaniel Rochester, who died in 1831, did not live to see his namesake officially swear in the first mayor.

orn in Connecticut, **Polly Sibley Holt** came to Webster in 1823. Having a background and familiarity for raising mulberry trees and the silkworm, she was responsible for the beginnings of a major industry in North Penfield. She started a large mulberry orchard and raised silkworms, constructing shelves on the walls of her home to store the silk cocoons. She spent a great deal of time reeling and making silk thread and twist which she sold along with mulberry seeds. Later, other mulberry orchards sprang up around Gravel and Klem Roads in Webster. Eventually, a blight affected the trees and ended the industry which Polly had begun.

In 1832, the same year a cholera epidemic broke out in Rochester, **Sarah T. Seward**, graduate of Mrs. Willard's Troy Female Seminary established her own seminary in Rochester on Alexander Street. When the bill to incorporate her seminary was passed by the New York State Legislature in 1839, she stated that this "rendered it still more worthy of the reputation it had gained." (At that time, her female seminary was one of three in the city; Rochester Female and Miss Allen's were the others.) There was one teacher for every twelve students, and it was ranked among the best in the country, establishing a reputation for female enterprise. Apparently for reasons of health, she discontinued it in 1841.

In December 1847, Frederick Douglass published a four-page weekly, *The North Star*, in Rochester. He had picked this city because of its liberal attitude and its location midway between New England and the West. Two Englishwomen of independent means, the sisters **Julia** and **Eliza Griffis**, came to Rochester to help Douglass with his paper and to live in the Douglass home. The spectacle of the two white women walking arm-in-arm down Main Street with the black editor aroused some gossip. Julia not only helped Douglass with his writing and with putting the paper on a sound financial basis, but was a great aid to Douglass' underground railroad activities. Rochester, located on Lake Ontario facing Canada, was a key point in the system that carried so many black fugitives to liberty.

Many stories of the Douglass years in Monroe County abound. His first wife, Anna, was a shy woman, who could not understand the close association the Griffis sisters had with her husband. In 1884, when Douglass (then a widower) was appointed minister to Haiti, he married his former secretary, **Helen Pitts**, who was a descendant of the first white settlers of Honeoye. She had first seen Douglass when she was a child and he came to the home of her abolitionist father, Gideon Pitts, who sheltered fugitive slaves in the time of the underground. When Douglass died in 1895, his widow brought him back to Rochester for burial. She was instrumental in forming a Frederick Douglass Memorial Association before her death in 1903.



These mid-1800's became a turning point in a very long women's struggle for equal recognition. The Bloomer costume (a new fashion reported by **Amelia Bloomer** of Seneca Falls in her paper, *Lily*) revolutionized women's dress and was dubbed as one of their "newest quirks of rebellious womanhood";


“Heigh! Ho! The carrion crow,
The Bloomer now is all the go.
Twenty tailors take the stitches;
Twenty women wear the breeches.
Heigh! Ho! In rain or snow,
The Bloomer now is all the go.”

Hardly more than “twenty women wore the breeches” during the four years of their vogue. Then, the strong-minded female reformers, one by one, went back to skirts. Susan B. Anthony gave one of the reasons for abandoning the costume, “I found it impossible to hold a man’s attention to my talk while he was completely occupied in gazing at my ankles.” Dress reform was only a side issue in the long struggle for women’s rights. But the bloomers made good propaganda for the cause that had begun with the first women’s rally held in that same village of Seneca Falls. The second rally, dubbed “Hen Convention,” was held on August 2, 1848 at the Unitarian Church on North Fitzhugh Street in Rochester, expanding that geographical area between Seneca Falls and Rochester as the “home of the women’s revolution.” The suffragettes became champions of reform.

It has been historically noted that Rochester women were the first to respond to the women's movement by entering activities outside their traditional circle of home, society and church. It was a natural thing for as early as January 1818, Rochester's women had formed societies for the betterment of their village. They had been going about their work so "womanly and reverently" that it was said, "When the clock of time struck the women's hour, Rochester women had heard it on their knees." These women were making that long, hard breakthrough in the professional, social and vocational fields so long dominated by men.

Antoinette Brown, a native of Henrietta who was educated at Monroe County Academy, was a firm believer and active supporter of women's rights; but she alone of the suffragettes refused to wear bloomers. After graduating from Oberlin College in 1847, the quiet, determined Miss Brown applied for entrance in the theological course at Oberlin. Women preachers were rare, but reluctantly the officials finally yielded and Antoinette was graduated with the Class of 1850. Her name, however, was omitted from the published list of graduates. (Oberlin belatedly granted her A.M. in 1878, and in 1908, an honorary D.D.) In 1853, she was ordained a minister of the First Congregational Church in Butler and Savannah, Wayne County, becoming the first ordained woman minister of a recognized denomination in the United States. She stayed for only one year because her congregation couldn't accept her concept of a compassionate Deity. She then spent a year as a volunteer in the slums and prisons of New York City, and studied mental and social disorders among the poor (especially women). Upon her marriage to Samuel Blackwell in 1856, she had a contract agreement that would allow her to continue her professional work. She had a successful career as a lecturer and writer on women's rights, anti-slavery, temperance and social injustice. The mother of seven children, she was remarkable in the pattern of productivity, labor and social involvement she sustained as a wife, mother and professional woman for 65 years after her marriage. At age 75, she began a fifteen-year pastorate in an Elizabeth, New Jersey Unitarian Church. She journeyed to the Holy Land when she was 78, and two years later visited Alaska. After fighting for suffrage since girlhood, she cast her first ballot in the presidential election of 1920 when she was 95.

The mid-1800's also found many trail-blazing women opening schools for educating other women, preparing them for taking their "rightful" place in society. **Cathro Curtis** established a boarding school first known as the Fitzhugh Street Seminary (later as the Livingston Park Seminary for Women), graduating its first class of women in 1858. This seminary was a family school for young girls where arithmetic, geography, grammar, physical geography, algebra and historical readings were taught. Cathro Curtis not only had a great influence upon the lives of the students who knew her, but she left a small legacy in her authorship of poetry.

 select boarding house operated by **Maria A. Porter** became the headquarters for all who were leaders in the exciting events of the period. It was one of the well-known stations of the underground railroad that carried slaves to the North while keeping them in concealment. "Aunt Maria" probably harbored more fugitive slaves than any other person except **Amy Post** of Rochester, an ardent women's rights advocate and abolitionist. Only a few weeks before Maria's death, an aged black woman named **Harriet Tubman** (who became known as the "Moses" of her people for her part in smuggling slaves from the South), called upon Miss Porter and recalled the time when she used to stop at her house with fugitives. Sometimes Maria would have as many as ten or twelve of these unfortunates in concealment at a time. And in the rest of her boarding house would be guests who were among the wealthy and aristocratic of that day.

Many women in that period were involved with the underground railroad. One of them, **Dr. Sarah Adamson Dolley**, after refusal by thirteen colleges because of her sex, became the second woman to receive a medical degree in the United States, graduating in 1851 from the Rochester and Syracuse Central Medical College. In May of 1851, she became the first woman intern in the Philadelphia County Hospital. Although born in Pennsylvania, she spent her entire professional life in Rochester practicing with her husband, Dr. Lester C. Dolley, until his death in 1872. She became a prominent woman leader in the country in the promotion of social and civil reform, especially in health and hygiene. One of her best works in medicine was the organization of a free dispensary in Rochester for women and children in 1886. There was scarcely a department of reform for women she was not active in, in addition to her mem-

bership in practically every women's medical society of prominence. She became honorary president of the Women's Medical Society of New York State; and the Rochester Academy of Science made her a life member in 1907, the only woman this honor had ever been bestowed upon. She was made an honorary member of the Rochester Academy of Medicine, the highest honor which could be bestowed on her in this city. She was the founder of the Practitioners Society, an organization of women physicians, the first of its kind comprised entirely of women. A friend of Clara Barton, she was instrumental in organizing the Rochester Red Cross. Her ideal was that women were to become a power in the medical profession, and she labored for this during the 50 plus years of her practice. She became a factor in the progress of women in medicine by precept, counsel, guidance, high spirit, energy and unceasing and intense inspiration. When she died in 1909, she was the oldest woman physician in service in the United States and had worked longer than any other woman physician.

The same year (1857) that William Lloyd Garrison and Susan B. Anthony spoke at an abolitionist meeting in Corinthian Hall, St. Mary's Hospital opened with its first patient, **Sister Hieronymo O'Brien** (a native of Washington, D.C.) came to Rochester that year and presided over its growth from a two-room cabin to a building that housed as many as 700 Civil War soldiers for care. She went on to establish a Home of Industry in 1873 (next to the present Corpus Christi Church), incorporating in this home for young, needy girls all that she had learned as Superior at St. Patrick's Asylum for Girls in Rochester. Mother Hieronymo taught these girls useful skills and then placed them in respectable jobs. She devoted her life to others; and her dying words, "Let me alone, I can help myself!" were in sharp contrast to her lifetime of saying to others, "Let me help you."

Out of the Millerite movement in the 1840's came a woman who would become a successful and widely read freelance journalist, **Jane Marsh Parker**. Millerites believed in an imminent and definite date for the world's end and were widely scorned. Her parents became followers of this movement, and this experience with religious hysteria and sense of impending doom impressed young "Jenny." When she was old enough, she converted to ritualism and orthodoxy, devoting much of her early years to church work and religious writing. In her 18th year, she produced more than 25

articles, tales, poems and stories. In 1860, her novel, *Barley Wood*, was a tale of a girl's conversion from sectarianism. She continued to write many fine novels, and wrote several volumes and articles on the history of Rochester and Central New York. Her book, *Rochester, A Story Historical* (1884), was a literate and readable contribution to the Semi-Centennial. She was a woman of great personal energy, involving that energy in women's clubs, patriotic societies, civic movements, and anti-suffragette work (she became an ardent anti-suffragist in the 1890's despite her high regard for Susan B. Anthony and other women's rights leaders). She was particularly interested in the problems of delinquent children. In 1889, she traveled with Frederick Douglass to Haiti to write on its problems. In 1881, she founded the Women's Ignorance Club with Dr. Sarah Dolley.

It can be said that the famed Rochester clothing industry sprang from a small shop on Front Street. Until the period around 1840, there were only custom tailors in Rochester, when **Elizabeth Baker** from Greece opened a shop where she made boys' trousers and sold them for 25¢ a pair. This was the beginning of Rochester's development in later decades (1853-1931) as the quality center of men's clothing industry in the United States. She later married another tailor on the street, Myer Greentree, who took over the pants business and subsequently went into the general manufacture of men's clothing.



Women of Rochester seemed to keep making historical marks not just in our region, but all over America. **Mary Jane Holmes** was a remarkable woman and a remarkable author, having the largest following for the longest period of any American author of that era. More than two million copies of her books were sold. Over a span of 51 years, she wrote 38 full-length novels and hundreds of magazine stories. And most of them were written in an old-fashioned brown house in Brockport. There was a time when on the bookshelves of almost every home you would find *Lena River*, *English Orphans*, and other ultra-sentimental, yet immensely popular love stories by Mary Jane Holmes. In 1860, one of her articles was credited with saving the *New York Weekly*, a business newspaper, from bankruptcy.

The novelist took a lively interest in her community. Early in her literary career she vowed to give a tenth of her income to religious and charitable causes and she exceeded that pledge. She established a free reading room in the village, helped build St. Luke's parish house, educated two Japanese girls she had met in her travels, and supported a dozen needy families in the village, leaving funds with her rector to carry on her benefactions while on world tours. She was president of the church guild, head of the Union Benevolent Society, active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and a regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She is remembered as a grande dame in white ermine coat and expensive jewelry – but never too much of it. There was never any scandal in Mary Jane's private life. She was, like her books, eminently respectable and proper.

The year after Abraham Lincoln passed through Rochester (1862) en route to his inauguration, **Ellen Williams** ("Little Nellie"), at age thirteen, took over the weekly family newspaper, the *Penfield Extra*. She was editor, proprietor and compositor. From 80 to 100 subscribers, the paper grew to over 900 before the cost of publishing rose beyond its resources in 1866. She filled her four-page, 8" x 12" tabloid with exchanges from papers other editors sent her, bits of news about the weather, informative comments on politics, puns and jokes, history and advertisements. She interviewed an early resident and his reminiscences have furnished excellent background on Penfield's development. She was a shrewd business woman. . . in 1864, she wrote this opinion on advertising, "You might 'bout as well go a fishing without any bait, as to undertake to do a large paying business at this day and age of the world, without advertising, and the cheapest way of advertising is in a local newspaper." She was 15 years of age. Her journalistic career was cut short only 11 years later when she died of the "family scourge," consumption, leaving behind a husband and two small children.


In the period of mid to late 1800's, the Guernsey sisters of Pittsford established reputations not only for their literary talents, but for their good works. Educated at the Rochester Female Academy by Miss Araminta Doolittle, the girls were strongly influenced by the relationship their father established with the Indians. When the Indians used to pass through the Pittsford settlement, they always stayed in the Guernsey barn, leaving their rifles in the house as a mark of courtesy. **Clara Guernsey** maintained that


interest, especially in the Seneca tribe. A well-known author, she began writing at an early age (fourteen or fifteen), writing many articles about the Indians and doing much to aid the tribe, especially during the famine on the reservation. She was formally adopted as a daughter of the tribe in gratitude for all she had done for them. Her mind stored a wealth of English literature, but her views (literary or social) bore the stamp of originality.

In contrast to her sister spending so much time on the Seneca reservation, **Lucy Ellen Guernsey** spent most of her time in the city. From 1858 to 1896, her pen was busy producing volumes of stories and many articles that found ready acceptance and wide circulation. Many of her works form a series of historical stories for young people. She was a woman of great beauty of mind and soul, using her voice and pen for the weak and oppressed. She started the first sewing school in Rochester for the poorest of street children which was later turned over to the Home of the Friendless, and she continued to teach there. She believed in personal service for charity and was a woman of uncommon attainments, energy and power of mind. She spoke many languages and many of her works were translated into Chinese. She was a devout Christian and devoted the latter and best years of her career as editor of the *Parish Visitor*, a religious paper sent to hospitals and homes. She was chosen as deaconess by Bishop Coxe of Western New York, but could not be publicly ordained because of illness.

Another Rochester native who was to become a popular author of religious literature and as ardent a church worker as Lucy Guernsey was **Isabella MacDonald Alden**. She began writing at age eight, and her first article was published when she was ten years old. Her first novel, *Helen Lester*, was published in 1866 and won first prize in a writing contest. A slim volume with a child heroine, it had a narrative form, a didactic purpose, and a simplicity that were to remain characteristic of her literary work. For a time, she was a constant "sufferer of headache," and was limited by her physician to three hours of literary work a day. Yet for over four decades she carried on, along with her domestic duties, a remarkable program of religious writing, editing and organizing. It was as author and editor that she was best known. Writing under the pseudonym "Pansy," she turned out over 75 books in the course of five decades, from *Ester Ried* (1870) to *An Interrupted Night* (1929), the majority aimed

toward children. Between 1874 and 1896, she edited the popular Sunday school children's weekly, *Pansy*, from which stemmed the Pansy Society, enrolling young readers who pledged themselves to work to overcome "faults of conduct." She became involved in the Chautauqua Movement in 1874 as a speaker and organizer. Her story, *Four Girls at Chautauqua* (1876), gave impetus to the success of that experiment. During these years, she and her family lived in a succession of pastorates all over New York State where she lectured on temperance and woman suffrage.

et well back from the street in the shadows of the business block in Churchville is an historic house with a marker in front proclaiming that here was born on September 28, 1839, **Frances Elizabeth Willard**, a dynamic leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, one of the world's most famous women. She by no means originated the temperance movement which goes back to colonial times, nor did she found the W.C.T.U.; but over her 19 years of leadership, it soon became a strong women's movement with new objectives and methods. Her name became synonymous with the cause and no leader was more idolized by her followers. She found in the W.C.T.U., of which she became national president in 1879, a receptacle for her energy and organizational ability, but it was only one expression of her desire to advance and promote reform in many fields. She was a great orator, swaying audiences to her ideas and purposes. Her early years were spent as a teacher, culminating in 1870 with her being named president of the newly founded Evanston College for Ladies in Illinois. In 1873, the college was absorbed by Northwestern University and she was then named dean of women and professor of English and art. Bitter disputes and friction over her authority, which had begun earlier when her former fiancé became president of Northwestern, intensified in petty and exasperating ways, leading to her resignation in 1874, thus ending her academic career. But for this, she might have remained in academia, and today there would be no marble statues of the great temperance reformer and women's rights advocate in two halls of fame.

hen **Addie DeStaebler** was appointed police matron in 1887, she was the second woman in the state to hold such an office, Rochester being one of the pioneers in establishing this

most necessary and useful office which had been tried first in Buffalo. Through the influence of the Ignorance Club, the Rochester office was created and Addie was their candidate. She proved her qualifications by a civil service examination and, as the first incumbent, served long and faithfully. Prior to the establishment of a police matron, all women prisoners had been received and attended to by male officials. Addie's duties were to carry out all searches of the female prisoners and to have general charge of them during their incarceration. Born in Nunda, she was educated in the Rochester public schools and taught in the Union School at Niagara Falls. She served until June 26, 1903, residing in the police headquarters building.

Perhaps the last example of the grande dame of the Victorian era in Rochester was **Caroline Erickson Perkins**, a woman of gracious personality. Growing up on East Avenue in what is now the Genesee Valley Club, she gained an intimate knowledge of growing things which was to be one of her major interests all her life. She climbed trees, helped the gardeners and took special interest, at age fifteen, in the building of the grapery which was the finest in New York. She was educated in private schools and was sent to New York City for "finishing," growing into a beautiful young lady who loved to travel. When she married Gilman Perkins in 1856, they traveled for two months, coming home only after repeated pleadings from their families. She opened her home, playing able hostess for much of the social life of the period. Throughout her life she was never oblivious to the needs of the less fortunate. She spent a large part of her time and energies in philanthropic efforts. She founded the Rochester Industrial School (later the Children's Nursery School), doing much of the "begging" for funds herself. She was instrumental in the founding of the Rochester School for the Deaf in 1876 to provide education for her daughter and other deaf children. In December 1887, she held an organizational meeting to revive and develop the Rochester Historical Society. (In 1861, it was originally incorporated by Lewis H. Morgan, but the Civil War delayed the actual start up. It did not actually function until Mrs. Perkins revived it.) She was elected life honorary president in June 1914. With her love of horticulture, she formed the Rochester Garden Club in 1915.

In the late 1880's, Rochester's women continued to make their marks in history alongside those made by the better known women of

the region. In October 1881, Susan B. Anthony helped Clara Barton of Dansville found the second chapter of the American Red Cross in Rochester. Miss Barton had organized the first chapter in Dansville in May of 1881. The first "Bloomer Girl," **Elizabeth Smith Miller**, who designed and wore the first costume, had gone to Geneva to live with her banker husband in 1868. She became instrumental in founding William Smith College for Women there. To the last, these women retained their interest in women's rights.



One of Susan B. Anthony's fellow suffragettes and warmest and most valued friends was Rochester-born **Elizabeth Price Hall**. She became instrumental in organizing the first professional women's club in Rochester in late 1880 called the Ignorance Club. Its goal was to "write what we could not answer, but which we must not let remain unanswered." But most notable in her life, Elizabeth became identified as a woman whose community work brought sunshine to those who had been saddened by care and misfortune, and her good deeds were known to everyone. A woman of rare executive and literary ability, she was a prominent member on the board of managers of the Rochester Orphan Asylum, one of the managers of the Exchange Street Industrial School, one of the founders of the Humane Society and a manager and life-long member. It was said, "She brought them to a state of usefulness that made them the pride of every citizen." For a long time, she upheld the banner of the Humane Society (for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Animals) almost single-handedly. "This is my religion," she was often heard to say in those days when support was far from liberal, and many looked at the society as a sort of parade of cranks and sentimentalists.

Dedicating more than 50 years of her life to nearly every phase of Rochester's community life, **Edwine Blake Danforth** was one of the city's great ladies. There were few causes of benefit to Rochester and particularly to women in which she was not interested, often through personal participation. She worked with Susan B. Anthony and Mary Gannett to secure funds to open up the University of Rochester to women. The dining hall in the Women's Residence Hall bears her name. Although a leader in the cause of equal rights, she was opposed to increasing the number of women on the Board of Education. convinced that control should remain in the hands of men.

Born in Buffalo, she married Henry G. Danforth in 1888; and as a young woman of charm, beauty and intelligence, she became Rochester's leading hostess. She was involved in helping launch enterprises that blossomed into important, enduring institutions, doing much in the development of Rochester as a city. She was a brilliant civic leader, art lover and socialite. She was an organizer and president of the Public Health Nurses Association (Visiting Nurses), ex-officio member of the Rochester Library Board, charter member of the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks of Western New York, and the first chairman and charter member of the Women's Industrial and Educational Union. For twelve years, she served on the Rochester Board of Education. She was also a charter member of the parent TWIG at Rochester General Hospital, a member of the original board of managers of the Memorial Art Gallery, and a member of its Art Committee that had a hand in shaping the permanent collection. She became involved with the educational aspect of the Gallery, supporting the idea of free admission and scholarship classes. She served on the organization to save Mt. Vernon as a National Monument, and acted as a hostess in 1939 when the King and Queen of Great Britain visited. She exemplified the proposition that one's usefulness does not decline with age as her activities increased as the years passed, and she was one of the first to enroll in Civil Defense in 1942 at age 78. At age 92, she was more active than citizens half her age. In a life that overflowed in a host of roles, she believed that causes were more important than persons, and she participated not for applause, but out of a deep conviction. Her statement, "I'm really not so important," was said with honest humility, which was the secret of her grace.

Education was an important growing tool for women, as well as men, and those women who played a part in that era in developing the present standards for teaching should be recognized. When she retired in 1914, **Mary Crennell** was the oldest teacher in point of service in the public schools having served 33½ years without interruption. Beginning as a very young woman, she took her place among the pioneer teachers who did such valiant work in developing those teaching standards. Her first appointment began in January 1882. Many of the local business and professional men and women were her pupils, and there were few who came in contact with her who did not become fond of her. She had a pleasing personality and was an inspiration to her students.

A woman who helped the school system to become first rank was **Helen Barrett Montgomery**. She was the first woman school commissioner, winning election to the Board of Education in 1899, and served for ten years. She was not only concerned with teaching but with all matters relating to the physical well-being of the child's school life. She was the first president of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, organized in 1893. Under her forthright leadership the Union helped safeguard the interest of working women and newcomers to the city, working in areas that had generally been designated as a "man's world," modernizing the school system, introducing sewing, and experimenting with manual training which resulted in the formation of a vocational school. As she helped raise the funds to open the University of Rochester to women, she became a champion of social reform. She became Rochester's most distinguished, versatile and prolific lecturer, and was one of the few Rochester women listed in *Who's Who in American Women* at the time.

A satisfactory solution to the problem of segregated schooling in Rochester was elusive, so in 1850 the Board of Education established one school for black children. This school stayed open until 1857, when **Lucy Newhall Colman**, unaided, brought about its abolition, removing educational discrimination in Rochester. Lucy, born in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, endured many years of tragedy through the death of two husbands. Her second, Luther W. Coleman (she later changed the spelling), was killed in circumstances causing Lucy to become embittered and intensified in her sympathies with the cause of women's rights. After much effort, she came to Rochester for a meager salary as teacher of the "colored school." After its closing, she secured another teaching position and publicly used her influence against corporal punishment in schools. She then abandoned teaching to fulfill a long-standing desire to strike at slavery, becoming an anti-slavery lecturer. She championed for the rights of blacks and women enduring many hardships and determined opposition. She became a matron of the National Colored Orphan Asylum and served as superintendent of other "colored schools" in Washington, D.C., instructing in morals and cleanliness and substituting kind treatment and sanitation for mismanagement. A small woman, her face reflected her intelligence, independence and determination.

“Ending the feeling with women that they must have a man to preside at their meetings,” was an action that took place as **Abigail Bush** of Rochester won election as president of a Rochester convention held in the late 1840’s. She conducted all of the meetings, a true departure from tradition, and she became the first woman to preside over a public meeting attended by both men and women.

Another champion of women’s rights in Rochester was **Mary Thorn Lewis Gannett** who was one of the outstanding leaders in the progressive cause in the late 1880’s. She was a marvelously energetic spokesperson with a keen civic conscience who actively and constantly championed liberal causes and worked for social betterment with the full support and encouragement of her husband, William, a minister. In 1889, Mary set about organizing the Woman’s Ethical Club for the purpose of “the discussion of questions in ethics and philanthropy of practical interest to women . . .” She was also a catalyst in the Political Equality Club (later the Woman’s Suffrage Party of Monroe County) as well as many of the other women’s alliance clubs. She engaged in many battles in the suffrage movement including requesting the removal of the word “male” from the State Constitution. She was very instrumental in Helen Montgomery’s election to the School Board. During her 34 years in Rochester, she was influential in securing equality of rights for all citizens, regardless of sex or color, helping to found the Legal Aid Society.



From the luxurious, pampered, protected embrace of a devoted Rochester family came the woman who would one day lead the crusade for public health nursing, and be the catalyst in developing child labor laws through the creation of the children’s bureau of the Federal Department of Labor. Giving up the carefree existence of a debutante in 1889, **Lillian Wald** enrolled in New York Hospital’s Nurses’ Training School. After graduation, she worked for a year at the New York Juvenile Asylum, an experience that both horrified and motivated the impressionable young woman. She established the position of school nurse which was unheard of until that time. Working in the teeming slums, she saw the need for public nursing and adequate enforceable child labor laws. In 1893, she began a career in public nursing by establishing the Henry Street Settlement House in New York City and later a Visiting Nurses Ser-

vice. She was an effective innovator of child labor laws; she recognized that children have special needs and rights. In 1902, she served on a Neighborhood Child Labor Committee. She was soon joined by other leaders of the child rights movement to form a National Child Labor Committee in 1904. It took seven long hard years of struggle against almost insurmountable odds before a Federal Children's Bureau became a fact in 1912. Lillian's resolutions eliminated child labor as a factor in American industry, and established minimum age and wages and maximum working days for minors. She inspired loyalty and support by her own unwavering allegiance to her beliefs and will always be remembered "as one of the great American's of her time."

One of the first women doctors to follow in Dr. Sarah Dolley's footsteps and locate in Rochester was **Frances Fidelia Hamilton**. Born in Tompkins County, she had studied medicine in Boston and at Women's Medical College in New York City (class of 1874), and set up her practice on Jefferson Avenue. She was a charter member of the Practitioner's Medical Society of Rochester and a member of Monroe County Medical Society and Western New York Medical Society. It was a battle, but it would seem by the late 1800's, they "had (indeed) come a long way."

Around the turn of the century, there were still few women medical doctors. One of the most prominent women physicians in Rochester was **Evelyn Baldwin** who came here in 1892 and practiced medicine in Rochester with her aunt, Dr. Frances Hamilton, until she set up her own practice at 476 West Avenue. Born in Wellsville, she attended the old Rochester Academy and Vassar, graduating in 1892 from the same medical college as her aunt. Her specialty was obstetrics and she was an ambitious student, demonstrating her skills and ability by her handling of a number of complex medical problems. She was a member of practically all the medical associations, and was president of the Blackwell Medical Society in 1907. She was endowed with ready sympathy, conducting the clinic at the City Hospital, and took an active interest in practical charity. She gave liberally of her time and skill to those in need.



pioneer in the movement to establish a professional organization for nurses was **Sophia French Palmer**. She was one of the founding members of the American Nurses'

Association (1900), and served as editor-in-chief of their official publication, the *American Journal of Nursing*, editing it from her home in Rochester until her death. Before becoming the superintendent of the Rochester City (General) Hospital and Training School in 1896, she administered training schools for nurses at St. Luke's Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts, and the Garfield Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C. She will always be remembered for her beliefs in setting standards of training and practice for such an essential part of the medical industry.

Maud Humphrey, known as "Bogey's mother," is remembered in her hometown of Rochester as a celebrated illustrator of children. She was born in the "ruffled shirt" district (Third Ward), began studying art locally, then moved to New York City and Paris, France for art training - a very extraordinary move for a woman alone at that time. She did drawings for children's stories and magazines in addition to magnificent color work for books. She also did original calendars for upstate newspapers. A successful talent, she was nicknamed "Lady Maud" due to an impervious manner that belied her sweet, sentimentalized depictions of little boys and girls. Her color plates were always printed on finer paper than the rest of the book, signed and copyrighted so they could be sold separately as prints or reproduced as calendars and posters. Her son, Humphrey, posed for her, and her cherubic sketches of him were the basis of the myth that he was the original baby on Gerber baby food labels. Maud died in Los Angeles, very proud of her movie star son, but she was not forgotten by her hometown which exhibited her work in 1952.

Around the turn of the century, Rochester was blessed with many women who became known for their involvement in philanthropy. One of these women was **Hattie Marie Strong**, born in Connecticut, whose early life was made into a novel which was published in the late 1920's. In 1897, after the death of her first husband, she went to Alaska with the gold rush, taking along her five-year old son. She experienced many hardships, including a shipwreck off the Alaskan coast. She met and married Henry Strong, the co-founder of Eastman Kodak Company, in Seattle in 1905. She never lost the human touch or sympathy for others when she had large wealth at her command. Giving was her forte and she regarded her fortune as a stewardship. Her special interest was in education and in helping young people. She provided many buildings for educational

institutions, and in 1928 founded the Hattie M. Strong Foundation for worthy students in need of financial assistance to help in obtaining a college education. She gave much time and money to the Rochester YWCA, serving as president for many years. Hattie was a world citizen, a friend to youth through education and to the worthy in need through benefactions which were international in scope. She built dormitories, schools, recreation halls and homes all over the world, providing aid to the handicapped, youth and the aged. One of the few women in the world who was made a chevalier of the French Legion, she also was awarded the cross of the French Legion of Honor for her gift of a home to the Union of Face Wounded Veterans of France. She left Rochester for Washington, D.C. in 1926, and in 1938 donated the Hall of Government at George Washington University – the only building in the country devoted to the preservation of the constitutional form of government. From the age of eight when she raised \$100 among her well-to-do playmates to buy dresses for girls in an orphanage until her death at age 86, she lived her philosophy: “I don’t care about big houses, I don’t care about jewels, I do care about giving . . . I’m purely selfish. I’m doing exactly what I want to do with my means.”



A highly individual personality to contribute her time and talents to her community was **Margaret Harper Sibley**, wife of Hiram Watson Sibley. She was named honorary president for life of the board of supervisors of Genesee Hospital in 1929, and was a member of the board for 45 years. She was the first president of the Nurses’ Training School and continued in that position until elected president of the board in 1904. She built the first children’s ward and furnished it, and the first nurses’ home. She took a great interest in the training school and its pupils that continued long after she resigned as president of its board. She often made a practice of becoming personally acquainted with young women entering the school.

M **audie Motley** came from a family who contributed steadily to the economic development and cultural growth of the Rochester community, and the very roots of her being were sunk in the life and institutions of the city. An unassuming person, she contributed to the culture of Rochester in a quiet way, giving her time and abilities to many civic activities, taking particular interest in musical affairs. Miss Motley took a great deal of pleasure in books,

and had a notable collection of first editions, as well as book plates. She wrote occasional articles, including a chapter on "The Romance of Milling: With Rochester the Flour City" for part of the first volume of the *Centennial History of Rochester*. This was a scholarly and factual, yet entertaining history of the milling industry in Rochester, her family business. She called the business of milling "a great chance game." She also collaborated in preparing *A Living Church*, a history of the first 100 years of Brick Presbyterian Church. In a tribute to her life and achievements she was praised as having attained unusual distinction through the loveliness which she created and attracted in every sphere of life into which she entered. It was said that hers was another highly individual personality.

Another philanthropist during this time period was **Marie Atkinson Willard**, a descendant of two of Rochester's "first families." She was the daughter of Robert F. Atkinson, business leader and banker, and Louise Sibley, eldest daughter of Hiram Sibley, founder of Western Union Telegraph. She endowed a Red Cross fund which for years furnished shoes and mittens to school children of needy or borderline families not on relief rolls. Other funds were given for people needing small amounts of money for rent, food or warm gloves. She was elected to the board of managers of the Episcopal Church Home in 1903, and served as vice president of the executive committee from 1903 until her death. During her lifetime of involvement, she served on the board of supervisors at Genesee Hospital, presented the first horse-drawn ambulance, and financed the building of an ambulance barn behind the hospital.

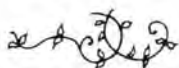
One of the "belles of Rochester society" in the early 1900's was **Jessica "Judy" Weis**. She founded the Chatterbox Club and became one of the dance stars of the first Chatterbox Revue. Although born with a silver spoon in her mouth, she was not content with social prominence and a life of ease and luxury. A mother of three, she was active in Rochester civic and charitable affairs; but it was in politics she found an outlet for her considerable energies. In 1935, she became vice chairman of the Citizens' Republican Finance Committee. She was involved with the candidacy of Governor Alfred M. Landon the following year, and was named an alternate delegate to the Republican state convention. She rose rapidly through the ranks of the GOP committees, county, state and national, and was a delegate-at-large at six national conventions. Her rise to GOP prom-

inence can be credited to her proficiency in human relations as she was a valuable organizer, an able speaker and a capable vote getter. She was elected to the House of Representatives in 1958 where she served two terms. She was the first woman to serve on the House Science and Astronautics Committee. She felt that feminine charm, along with the ability to fight for rights when necessary, were political assets for women. She was once described as having beat the United States Senate over the head with a bunch of roses. She instituted weekly radio broadcasts, believing that her prime responsibility was to keep her constituents "as fully informed as possible on the important issues and events which develop in Washington from week to week." She also authored a book, *Politics, U.S.A.*

"Angel of Front Street" was the title bestowed on **Bertha Servis** by countless Rochester young men and women who, in one form or another, looked forward to a better future through her efforts - often at a great sacrifice on her part. For years she was in charge of the Front Street playground. The old Haymarket site was a "tough spot" when the municipal enterprise was launched there. But through her skillful handling, potential gang leaders became play leaders and the sometimes boisterous Front Street experienced a transformation. Following her retirement, what had been her vocation became her avocation and found her the dynamic force behind putting a little sunshine into the lives of pupils at the Rochester School for the Deaf in 1934. Through her efforts, seven girls (some from extremely poor backgrounds) had a summer vacation in the beauty of the Adirondacks. Card parties, dances, voluntary contributions and a rummage sale provided the necessary funds. Her mission in life was aiding other people to enjoy their lives.

Known as the "Tomboy of the Air," and the "Susan B. Anthony" of the mechanical age, **Blanche Stuart Scott** was in 1910 the first woman to drive an auto cross country (6,200 miles, 217 of them paved, taking 69 days). Turning her energies to more exciting ventures, this 5'4", 100 pounds of dynamite was the first woman flyer in the United States (she would have been the first woman flyer in the world, but was beaten by a French woman by two weeks). Taught by Glenn Curtis, she was the first and only female he instructed. All of this had its beginning in Rochester when at age thirteen, the Rochester City Council unsuccessfully demanded that she stop driving an auto about Rochester, but there were no laws at that time to

prevent her from doing so. The "problem" finally went away when she went to finishing school. Although she was never a licensed pilot, she was the first woman test pilot, and in late 1910 the first woman ever to fly in an exhibition in the United States, continuing to fly in commercial exhibitions all over the country. In 1911, she made the first long distance flight by a woman (60 miles, one hour in the air). At that time, few aviators, male or female, had attempted any flights further than the field they took off from. This gained her the position of headliner in the Great Western Aerial Circus and she won acclaim as the "first woman flyer of the Pacific slope." In 1913, she lost interest in flying and pursued other interests such as operating a motion picture studio, writing for Hollywood movies, becoming a successful author of books and short stories, and a radio personality, broadcasting in Rochester in the late 40's under the name "Roberta." Lured back to flying in 1948, she was the first woman in America to ride in a jet plane which was piloted by Captain Charles E. Yeager. This was the first time she had been enthusiastic about an airplane, stating that "In three years the transports will all be jets." In 1949, she made the first Rochester rooftop helicopter landing with a Gannett newspaper pilot. In 1954 she was the public relations consultant for the U.S.A.F. Museum in Dayton, Ohio with the task of selling the museum to the general public and encouraging their visits. Her portrait is part of the National Air Museum Smithsonian exhibit, and she was commemorated in 1980 by an air mail post card. She believed women should be self-sufficient, stating, "Women should wake up and take serious, intelligent, articulate interest in what makes the world tick."



In the early 1900's, another Sibley, **Emily Sibley Watson**, joined the line of art patrons and philanthropists. Educated in Rochester and European schools, she was a collector of many art types and had a keen appreciation of the best in art. Believing that Rochester needed a permanent center for its art activities, she established the Memorial Art Gallery in 1913, and presented it to the University of Rochester for the people of the city in memory of her son who had died in 1904. In 1926, she and her husband erected a wing which doubled the size of the original building. She made many gifts of paintings, rare tapestries and sculptures over the years to the gallery's permanent collection. She was particularly interested in

making the gallery "a place for living art," and was active in many of its activities, including the children's art classes. Mrs. Watson established the Rochester School of Music in memory of David Hochstein, and continued to support it during her lifetime. She was one of the founders of Homeopathic Hospital (later the Genesee Hospital), and contributed the Watson Wing. Emily used her wealth for the enrichment of Rochester and for the alleviation of the distress of poverty.

Sy 1913, the women of Rochester were entering other fields untouched by women, as did **Nellie L. McElroy**. She was the first policewoman in New York State under Civil Service, and tenth in the nation when she was appointed to active duty on the Rochester police force. She started as a missionary field worker with the Monroe County Christian Endeavor Society. Being a woman on the force presented a few problems . . . should she be given a uniform? . . . allowed to swing a stick? . . . carry a revolver? . . . or carry handcuffs? But Nellie wore conventional women's dress and was a success at the outset. She was a regular constituted officer and won commendations for her efficient work. Girls found her a steadfast friend. Her official journal, which she kept from the first day on "the beat" to early 1916, outlined her duties which included patrolling dance halls and theaters looking for vagrant women. All recreation places where young people gathered came under her supervision. She developed her work from the prevention aspect, counseling those in need. "To rehabilitate families that are drifting apart and to find employment for both men and women is a great work, and we have been singly successful in our efforts in Rochester."

Katharine Bement Davis, who came to Rochester from Buffalo in 1877 and graduated from the Rochester Free Academy, became a leader and innovator in the application of practical natural science as a solution to human, social and economic problems. After teaching for eleven years in Dunkirk, New York, she attended Vassar where the 1890's atmosphere of reform-mindedness, labor and social reorganization strongly influenced her career. She resumed her career in teaching and continued studying nutritional science. As a member of New York Board of Women Managers, she became responsible for the most ambitious domestic exhibit at the Columbian Exposition (World's Fair) in Chicago in 1893. Through the turn of the century, she continued to study. In

Berlin and Vienna, she gathered data on the condition of "European Bohemians." After her 49th birthday she became a reform-minded prison administrator and a pioneer sexologist. She was appointed the first superintendent of the New York State Women's Reformatory at Bedford Hills, the first college woman to enter the field of corrections, and was assumed to be a "woman of questionable character" by those who thought no other woman would take such a position. In 1914, she was appointed commissioner of corrections for New York City, the first appointment of a woman to the Mayor's Cabinet. The *New York Times* called the appointment appalling for, "handling the hardened criminal is a man's job." Following a political turnover in 1918, she joined a division of the Rockefeller Foundation as secretary of the Bureau of Social Hygiene. She began a series of studies on female sexuality. Preceding the Kinsey studies by decades, her work contributed significantly to modern understanding of sexual behavior. The League of Women Voters named her one of the twelve greatest living American women of her time, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. called her the "cleverest woman I have ever met." Retiring in 1928, she visited Rochester frequently, making keynote speeches to civic groups.

One of Rochester's great poetesses was **Adelaide Crapsey**. Her father was a minister at the Trinity Church in Brooklyn, but later became the rector at St. Andrews Episcopal Parish in Rochester. She attended Vassar, and taught literature after graduating. Eventually, she studied in Rome at the School of Classical Studies. She was responsible for popularizing the HAIKU form of poetry which is presently taught in elementary education. Illness struck after she returned to her Rochester home when her father, tried for heresy in 1906, was deposed from the ministry. She died in 1914 at Saranac Lake in a sanitarium for tuberculosis.

Many Rochester women became involved in the theater, such as **Jessie Bonstelle**, the "greatest stock actress Rochester ever knew." Her name was synonymous with all that was glamorous and romantic in the theater of the late 1800's. But, she achieved her greatest distinction as a director and theatrical manager, showing a marked ability to recognize and develop talent. Her significance in American theater was the establishment of a successful civic theater in the 1920's called Bonstelle Playhouse (later Detroit Civic Theater). It was a unique accomplishment. A leader in the civic

theater movement, she directed and managed the first civic theater in the United States in Northampton, Massachusetts, and organized several stock companies in the early 1900's. She was a hard-headed businesswoman as well as an idealist with qualities of tolerance and high standards. She was beloved among actors, directors and authors. Among her earlier proteges were William Powell, Katherine Cornell, Frank Morgan and Melvyn Douglass. She was remembered as a friend-one quick with sympathy and understanding, with a kindly hand and a very long memory. She was a great power for good in the theater, always eager to learn, to experiment, and to pass on the knowledge gained. She formed contacts with schools and clubs, giving free advice and aid in staging amateur productions, also organizing free entertainment for orphanages, sanitariums and hospitals for crippled children.

In 1915, **Adelina Ritter Shumway** and her sister took over their father's business, Ritter Dental Manufacturing. The two sisters conducted the business until the firm was incorporated in 1919. Mrs. Shumway became president and a director. She served as president for seven years until 1926 when she became chairman of the board. She retired in 1953 after 34 years as an officer of the company. At that time, she was named honorary chairman. During her tenure, the company's annual sales grew from \$875,000 to more than \$11 million. The company also acquired a foreign subsidiary under her leadership.


Another Rochester "business daughter" who helped her father in his business was **Kate Gleason**. The company was later to be called Gleason Works. She worked as her father's bookkeeper, later becoming secretary and treasurer. She was also chief sales representative and opened up new markets in the United States and abroad for the beveled gear planer which her father had invented and developed. She was the first woman president of a national bank (1917); the only woman member of the American Concrete Institute which was awarded for her sponsorship of poured-concrete fire-proof houses built in a subdivision in East Rochester; in 1914 the first woman member to be elected to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in recognition of her technical attainments in gear design; and the first woman receiver in bankruptcy in the state. Her work in post-war reconstruction following World War I earned her a citation from the French government. She left over half of her

estate to educational and charitable purposes. Included was an endowment fund which the Rochester Public Library still uses for the purpose of purchasing history books and other materials.

Clara Louise Ward, "Clayla" as she was affectionately called, was in addition to being hostess, homemaker and mother, a leader in Rochester's social life. She was a founder, leader and participant in numerous community organizations and a most durable, lively and dedicated patron of the arts. Clayla contributed to the Fine Arts Collection (Steigerwald-Ward-Watson Collection of Fine Arts) at James Madison High School – the first of its kind in the United States at the high school level. Her prudent planning led to the acquisition of several valuable works by successful local artists. She helped create the John Lentine Memorial Art Room, supporting up-and-coming young artists. She was marvelously theatrical, a mezzo-soprano, piano player and skilled on the tuba and cello. A friend of the Philharmonic, she was the spark plug of the Civic Music Association. Clayla was Sibley's public relations counselor for 23 years, fostering the Scholastic Art Exhibit and was its guiding spirit for 31 years. She was saluted as the "Lady of the Century" at Sibley's 100th year celebration. The Ward Gallery at Sibley's is dedicated to her memory. A film, "Living History," was produced for the Rochester Museum and Science Center on her life and reminiscences of Rochester. Rochester's "Grand Lady," she had the innate ability to make people feel at home. If a project needed doing, the by-word was, "Just ask Clayla - she'll do it." Her versatility knew no bounds; for instance, she taught French and German to soldiers in World War I. Her home on Grove Place was donated to the Landmark Society of Western New York in 1967 in memory of her husband. The home had been built in 1831 and she wished it to be maintained as an example of a pioneer family home. For her 80th birthday, she restored the home's belvedere (widow's walk). In 1958, she was the only woman commissioner of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences, and was the second woman to win the Civic Medal of Rochester. (Her sister, Caroline Gannett had been honored previously along with her husband.)

Caroline Werner Gannett, Clayla's sister, was a devoted welfare and cultural worker, leaving her feminine historical mark as one of the remarkable women of Rochester. During World War I, she was an active worker with the Fuel Administration and also served


with the Rochester Red Cross. She was married in 1920 to Frank Gannett and served Rochester, New York State and her country in many areas during her long and useful life. She received many honorary degrees through the years for her work with crippled children and migrant workers, and her seventeen years' service on the State Board of Regents. As a couple, she and her husband received many awards, such as the Fairbank Citation (given in recognition of their service to higher education and the youth of the country), and the 14th Civic Medal from the Rochester Museum and Science Center, both first joint awards. In 1958, she was saluted by the Associated Press as an outstanding woman here and abroad, and was praised for her deep concern for the "big bloc of fine children" who were neither whiz kids nor mentally retarded. In 1959, she received Monroe County's Citizens Civic Achievement Award in recognition for her enlightened services that enriched so many lives.

nother Rochester woman prominent in civic activities and social work was **Alice Wood Wynd**. In 1931 she was Lincoln Republican Club's nominee for school commissioner. She was a graduate of East High School and Wellesley College. In 1933, she was named to the Home Relief Division of the "General Welfare Committee of Eight" by city manager Briggs. A former newspaper woman on the *Times-Union's* editorial staff, she also reported League of Nations' meetings in 1923 for the newspaper, and was an advocate of world peace. In 1937, Governor Lehman nominated her to the New York State Board of Welfare and, in the same year, as member of the State Board of Welfare, she supervised the activities of the State Board of the Seventh Judicial District visiting institutions and sitting in on the meetings of the Board. In 1956, she served as the first woman president of the Council of Social Agencies, and in 1962 was honored for distinguished service in education, social welfare and as founder of the Rochester Association for the United Nations. She was at one time a member of the faculty of the University of Rochester, as well as a member of the New York State Board of Social Welfare. She was also a member of the board of directors of the Rochester Council of Social Agencies for 15 years.

Rochester's first radio station began in a home in Irondequoit in 1920. **Grace Hickson** and her husband improvised with a 100 watt DeForest transmitter hooked up to an antenna atop a windmill in their backyard. And this was only the beginning for Grace, Rochester's first lady of radio. She and her husband proved radio was a fact by holding a demonstration in their front yard for the public, some of whom had come from Buffalo to see, hear and marvel. Their station, **WHQ**, had the 26th license granted in the United States; and in December 1920, they broadcast the first musical entertainment here. They also explored the potential use of two-way radios in police cars showing that portable radios were practical. In 1922, **WHAM** was on the scene, and later, the Hicksons founded **WHEC**. Along with her interest in radio, Grace was active in many charities, especially the Red Cross.

Two sisters followed their father, from the 1920's through 1962, to become part of the direction and development of the Memorial Art Gallery. **Gertrude Herdle Moore** first became responsible for the development of the Gallery's educational programs, lectures, school visits and the Saturday creative art classes in 1918 as her father's secretary. Upon his death as director of the Gallery in 1922, she became acting director. In 1924, she became one of the nation's youngest art gallery directors and the first woman ever to hold membership in the Association of Art Museum Directors. To her was left the task of obtaining funds to make "it" grow, to put precious life blood into "its" veins - and this she accomplished. Gertrude sparked the crusade among Rochesterians; developing a membership, encouraging gifts, creating an art fellowship, hiring teachers and instituting classes. She was responsible for obtaining visiting art displays, gifts of money and many of the fine art pieces, and helped further the career of many artists. She was the one person who did much to focus the nation's artistic eye on Rochester, and to develop the Gallery's close link with the city. **Isabel Herdle** became her sister's assistant, developing "Gallery Notes," giving lectures and securing and setting up exhibitions. The two traveled extensively for the identification of pieces of art "to put them on the map - an exciting purpose." Believing that an art gallery must be a living, breathing thing, Gertrude states, "Our most important collection is made up of the people who come to the gallery and who participate in our workshops and classes."

In 1930, the insurance world felt the impact of petite, dynamic **Ellen Putnam**, when she became the first woman designated a member of the American College of Chartered Life Underwriters (C.L.U.). In the 1930's she was denied membership in the Rochester Life Underwriters Association because they didn't take women, but that was soon changed; and in 1933, she was elected president of the group, the first woman to serve as president of such an association. In 1934, she helped organize the Rochester Life Insurance and Trust Council, the second of its kind in the United States, and was elected their first woman president in 1953. In 1970, she was the first person to receive the Rachel May Swaim Memorial Award (given by the Rochester Life Underwriters Association), and in 1978, the first woman to get the "Oscar" of the life insurance business – the John Newton Russell Memorial Award – the highest individual honor of that business. She was also the third woman to serve on the board of trustees of the National Association of Life Underwriters. Graduating from Mechanics Institute (now Rochester Institute of Technology) in 1915, she had been working as a dietician at Rochester General Hospital when she went to France in World War I with the Army Nurse Corps. Intrigued by the idea of sharing risk, Ellen changed her career in 1919 to selling insurance. Appalled that there was so little formal training for people selling insurance, she decided then and there she would "devote my life to bringing better education to insurance." Her pursuit of this ideal has led to the many awards and recognitions she has received. An annual award is given to an outstanding local woman in her name by the Women's Council of the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce. Having been a founder of the Women's Council in 1932, she is still an active member. A recipient of a treasure chest of awards and honors, she remains modest, living her credo, "Life is a trust, so live to make the world a better place because you've lived."

 pioneer in fields once considered daring and controversial, **Margaret Hays Baum** championed birth control and later euthanasia. Born in Rochester, she graduated from Smith College in 1922. A founding member of the Planned Parenthood League of Rochester (in 1932), she has held many offices in that group, including its presidency. She was also active in the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and served as its first vice president in 1955-56, and as first vice president of the Margaret Sanger

Research Bureau. Her interest in humanity and her zeal for human dignity has led her to many activist pursuits for the betterment of womankind. She is an active participant and member of the board of directors of the Euthanasia Society and the Euthanasia Educational Fund (known presently as Concern for Dying), and is founder of the Rochester Chapter of the Educational Fund. Margaret Baum, "Miggie" as she is known to her friends, has been a vital and moving force in her community. Her energy and quickness of mind place her in the enviable position of community leader.

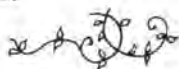
Another woman of vision was **Margaret Woodbury Strong**, daughter of a wealthy, prominent Rochester family. An only child, she traveled all over the world with her parents, collecting "miniatures" which was to become an interest for the rest of her life. She excelled in everything she put her hand to – golf and flower arranging – to name just two. That excellence is reflected in her many collections – dolls, book plates, stamps, linoleum-block prints, miniatures, etc., now housed in the museum named in her honor. Despite an impression of "stinginess," she gave a donation to Genesee Hospital in the 1930's to help endow an x-ray unit, gave generously during World War II to the Red Cross, gave annually to the Community Chest, and donated houses to the Kennebunkport Beach Association and to a Junior College in Portland, Maine. She left bequests to nineteen charities, the bulk of her estate going to the museum, leaving Rochester a legacy of incalculable historical and cultural value.

The progressive problems in housing in Rochester caught the attention of **Helen Jones**, who became "the irrepressible champion of city planning and better housing." She earned the respect and gratitude of a later generation, although the enmities she stirred up denied her full recognition from her contemporaries. She was president of the League of Women Voters when she reopened the question of the urgent need for government action on housing in 1937. After a first-hand survey of some wretched Seventh Ward houses, she secured a League resolution favoring the appointment of a housing authority in Rochester. She was appointed to the Housing Advisory Committee in March 1938 to explore the deplorable situation and recommend action. Frustrated by the lack of action by the city manager on the Committee's report urging at least one housing project, Mrs. Jones and friends of public housing met in March 1939 and organized the Rochester Housing Council. Due in large to a petition

signed by 2,598 residents, the City Council voted down further action on public housing. With the outbreak of World War II and the ban on non-war-related construction, it soon became evident that any solution to low-cost housing would require the formation of a revitalized planning commission. Again, Mrs. Jones took the lead in October 1940 by drawing friends of city planning, business leaders and supporters of her Housing Council into a new Citizens' City Planning and Housing Council which tackled the dual problem of low-cost housing and housing rehabilitation. There were many difficulties getting the recognition they were fighting for with post war planning until 1944, when the City Council adopted an amendment reorganizing the old board as a commission. Gratified by this, the CCPHC voted in 1945 to disband, but she and others formed the Better Housing Association to carry on the fight. She also participated in urging the city to proceed with the construction of a central library (now Rundel Memorial Library), the battle for a city-manager charter and for smoke abatement.


The fourth generation of a Rochester family of skilled painters, **Virginia Jeffrey Smith** became one of Rochester's most talented and well-known artists. When she was young, she was known as the "girl who paints dogs," using water color, crayon, pastels and pencil, doing covers and illustrations for "dog" magazines. From this she developed into painting canals, bridges, landscapes, houses and buildings on her annual trips to Europe specializing in the medium of opaque water color. She had a real love for and appreciation of the fine quality of ancient things and brought much of herself to her interpretations. At one time, she traveled some 2,500 miles in Spain painting. She stated "You can't paint a country when you first go, you must stay around awhile to get used to changes in light and atmosphere and to capture the feeling of the country." In addition, she wrote travel articles which complemented her work. She developed her painting of interiors, a difficult specialty, to a high degree with real distinction, and they attracted considerable attention in the United States. A student of Rochester's Columbia Preparatory School, and Mechanics Institute (Rochester Institute of Technology), she graduated from Smith College and studied in Philadelphia and Paris. She had many one-person exhibits in several large cities; and in the early 1950's to mid-60's, she was the *Times-Union* art writer/critic. In 1937, she donated 250 objects that had been collected for her by her mother, Mary Jeffrey Smith, to the Rochester

Museum of Arts and Science as a memorial to her mother to create a museum an “inquiring little girl would take delight in.” In addition to her painting, she taught dancing to two generations of young Rochesterians from 1914 to 1941.




In the early 1930's when **Jean Walrath**, a graduate of Keuka College, joined the *Democrat and Chronicle*, newspapering was a man's world. Women on newspapers (usually no more than two) wrote wedding stories. But Jean was of a different mold – when serving with the *Buffalo Times*, she had put on overalls, dirtied her face, and crawled down a manhole to shatter the tradition barring females from the city sewers. In 1934, she slipped into the USSR with only her toothbrush and handbag, avoiding detection from the secret police to bring back vivid accounts of the regimentation and oppression of the Stalin regime. At the D & C, Jean quickly moved from the society desk to general reporting, covering crime and general assignments, to education writer/editor. She was the first reporter in that capacity to cover more than the sports activities of the city schools, writing in 1948 a series of articles on progressive education for which she received in May 1949 an honorable mention in the annual “outstanding articles” awards of the Education Writers Association. In 1947, she served in Albany as public relations director for the New York State Teachers' Association, during the campaign for higher salaries and increased aid to education. She wrote a book, *The Teacher and the Press*, which had distribution in every state. In 1950, she was appointed to the State Board of Regents Council on Readjustment of Secondary Education, and in 1951 was named vice chairman of the Regents' Council on the Adjustment of High School Education. During a post-war trip to Europe, she wrote on economic and social conditions. Her trips abroad whetted her interest in art, and in the early 1950's she gradually slipped into the position of art and theater reviewer (which she preferred to critic). In this position, she was more eager to encourage young talent than to pan their mistakes. She encouraged the artist, buying local work and personally supporting many. In conservative Rochester, she was legendary in her support of struggling young theater groups such as the Catholic Theater (now Blackfriars), University of Rochester Summer Theater, and the JYM & WA Drama Center. In 1970, she won the Matrix Award from Theta Sigma Phi society for women in

journalism and communications (now Women In Communications, Inc.). In her reporting, she was devoted to accuracy and completeness, and presented her stories objectively with eloquence and clarity. Jean has a great breadth of experience. In 1944, she was the unsuccessful candidate for the 40th Congressional District, she was a founder and board member of the Rochester Association for the United Nations, member of several liberal political groups, served on numerous local civic committees, and once undertook a one-woman poll of slum families for the Council of Social Agencies when Rochester officials were denying that slums existed.

orn in Whitinsville, Massachussets, into a world of elegance, **Hildegarde Lasell Watson** was a beautiful, artistically accomplished person who shared her privileges generously and quietly. She was a first lady of the arts, and an accomplished dramatic soprano who sang in the concert halls of Europe winning unreserved praise but was rarely heard in Rochester, though she would sing benefit concerts. In 1916, she married James Sibley Watson, Jr. (a physician and a man of scholarly pursuits), and was a hostess of distinctive style. A patron of the arts, she was a longtime friend of poets, presented concerts at her home, promoted generously the work of artists, and brought to the public view the paintings of unknowns. She starred in two films her husband produced (highly regarded works of avant-garde silent cinema) which were filmed behind their home. She was prominent in the social and cultural life of Rochester, but shunned public attention and the press. But in 1974, as a leader in the fight, she appeared on television to plead the cause to keep the Eastman School of Music on its present site. A talented artist in her own right (one of her paintings hangs in the Memorial Art Gallery), she was named a Fellow of the Rochester Museum and Science Center in 1972 in recognition of her contributions to the arts. She had an intense concern for the preservation of "things that are good," worked to preserve landmarks, and was a director of the Rochester Historical Society beginning in 1941 and its principal benefactor. During the last ten years of her life, she wrote articles of her New England childhood which were published in *Yankee* and the *New England Galaxy*. The response to these articles prompted her to write *Edge of the Woods*, which was published by her husband in 1980. She also wrote a history of the Rochester Historical Society's headquarters, the mansion Woodside. A most cultured and well-read woman, she had a great spiritual resource and understanding of great


depth. "Living is knowing how to let go and do things wherever you feel the aura of your life to be. I feel so strongly about things."

Georgiana Farr Sibley (Mrs. Harper Sibley) was in the vanguard of women who advocated human rights and racial justice not only in the Rochester area but throughout the world. While she was identified by *Life Magazine* as one of the grande dames of the social elite, her life was more devoted to social issues than the social whirl. Until she left Rochester in the late 1970's, she was an active board member of the YWCA of Rochester and Monroe County. She also served on the United States National Board of the YWCA, and was an honorary member of both at the time of her death. She was also active in the World YWCA. Mrs. Sibley was a strong participant in the YWCA's efforts toward social justice in the area of fair housing, education, racial justice and women's rights, being especially responsive to the needs and rights of youth. She was also active in creating the Rochester Association for the United Nations, and a moving force in the creation of the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries which brought together clergy and lay persons of the Catholic and Protestant faiths, and in the creation of the Black Ministries associated with that organization. During the 1960's, she participated in the creation of a Rochester's Women's Forum which brought together leading women's organizations to study issues and advocate for women's rights and racial justice in the community. Her credo, "There are people who love things and use people, and there are people who love people and use things. We must love people and use our resources to help others," is an inspiration to many Rochesterians today who remember her strong conviction and gentle persistence in moving the community toward positive social change.

 unique, rare, multi-dimensional individual is **Hattie Harris**. Known as a maker of political leaders, she advises candidates and leaders, and her home became known as an "unofficial political headquarters." But this aspect was only the tip of the iceberg, for Hattie is a humanitarian in the fullest sense of the word. She fights for causes and people she believes in. She has fought for the rights of young and old, spearheaded the battle to preserve Goodwin Park in the city and for the expansion of the Methodist Home on East Avenue. Through her efforts, senior citizens' housing was built on the corner of East Avenue and Strathallan Park. And later, when it went bankrupt, Hattie (always appropriately and

magnificently adapting to the changing world) supported the proposed luxury hotel currently there, believing it would help build a better neighborhood. She has fought for women's rights, from getting an abortion rights bill passed in 1970, to encouraging Jessica Weis to get into politics. She was directly involved in World War II in expediting the immigration of 500 refugees from prison camps. Hattie only speaks the truth, as truth and trust to her are the most serious and sincere bonds. The recipient of many awards, she always returns to her quiet simple life until another opportunity to make the community a richer and better place presents itself.

There have been numerous women of Rochester recognized for their contributions during World War II and in military service in the years following the war. One of these is diminutive 4'11" **Helen Maloney**, known as "Peewee" to her WAC mates, who, because of her size, needed a waiver to join the WAC's in December 1942. But before a year had passed, she became the first woman to ever receive the Soldier's Medal for heroism in the African theater of war. In Algiers, "without hesitation or thought of danger to herself," she had rescued a young soldier from a pool of flaming gasoline, covering his burning clothing with her body and beating out the flames with her bare hands. Helen received severe burns on her legs, face, hands and arms, and spent six weeks in a hospital. She received her medal in November 1943. Her courage had saved another soldier's life.

hen **Elizabeth H. Gilbert** enlisted on July 20, 1942, she was the first Rochester woman to enlist in the WAC's, and was a member of the first Officer Candidate School to be graduated from the training center in Des Moines. Moving rapidly up the ranks, she became the first WAC to attain the rank of major in the First Army Air Force East Coast Command which extended from Maine to Florida, in command of over 2,000 women.

When she retired in 1982 after a 30-year career in the Army, **Mary Elizabeth Clarke** was the Army's highest-ranking woman and the first woman to achieve the rank of major general. A 1943 graduate of West High School, General Clarke was the former commanding officer of Fort McCellan in Alabama. She presently resides in Jacksonville, Alabama.

Even when severely ill, Rochester women take their place in history. Stricken by a rare and progressive muscle disease which confined her to her home, **Mae Miskimmon Johnson** founded the World Inside Club for Shut-In's in the early 1950's, an organization bringing cheer, comfort, inspiration and friendship to ill people confined to their homes or hospitals. At the time of her death and only two and a half years after its founding, the club had over 2,000 members in the United States, Canada and Great Britain. Members were kept in touch through a monthly club bulletin and a weekly radio program which Mae conducted from her bedside. She was cited for her work by many entertainers, notably Kate Smith and Bob Hope, in addition to many organizations which honored her. Before her illness, she had been a speech and art director at Harley School, directed school plays, was a fashion model, writer and publisher of poetry, a radio personality, and performed with the Community Players. She was also a Red Cross volunteer and active in the American Association of University Women.

Tracing her lineage back to John Quincy Adams, **Martha Taylor Howard** was patriotic to the tips of her toes, a defender of patriotism and of the people. She was a vigorous campaigner when it came to the merits of others, and a tireless toiler to perpetuate the historical significance of people, places and events. Born in Massachusetts, she moved to Rochester in 1939. Eager to serve civic, moral, patriotic and cultural causes, she was active in many organizations and in 1959, she was the first "Woman of the Year" ever chosen by a woman's club in Rochester. In 1944, when she was president of the Federation of Women's Clubs, she began the effort to acquire and preserve Susan B. Anthony's home on Madison Street. It was through her efforts that Susan B. Anthony was moved up to her rightful place in American history. She was the founder and president of the Susan B. Anthony Memorial Inc. for which she obtained the charter. She was also responsible for securing many of the original effects of Ms. Anthony and moving them to Rochester for preservation, making the house a shrine. In 1960, she was the first woman to receive the good citizenship medal from the Rochester Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, and in 1961 she received the Medallion of Honor at the Women's International Exposition in New York City for outstanding achievements, notably for her efforts in the Susan B. Anthony homestead preservation. (Previous


recipients had been Eleanor Roosevelt and Senator Margaret Chase Smith.) She was the author of many brochures and magazine articles. Calling herself a "hydro-headed publicity chairman," she wrote numerous letters to the editor regarding historic events and people. She is listed in *Who's Who in American Women*, *Who's Who in the East*, and the *Honor Roll of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs*.

Living quietly as her fortune grew, **Daisy Marquis Jones** was a shrewd investor and her goal was to help others. Born in Pennsylvania, she came to Rochester in the 1920's. She married a Yates County dairy farmer and they operated the farm in the 1950's. She was known to her neighbors as an astute business woman who "knew her cows." She and her husband gave towards the construction of and supported the Yates County Day Care Center which was named in their honor (Nelson and Daisy M. Jones Day Care Center). She gave her Himrod farmhouse to the fledging volunteer fire department and continued to support them in building a firehouse and purchasing equipment. After her husband's death, she returned to Rochester and lived on Wilmer Street where she was virtually unknown until after her death when she left a multi-million dollar estate to the foundation she had set up three years before. Although the largest grants were to Monroe County hospitals (including Highland and Park Ridge), the foundation has a broad scope. The name Daisy Marquis Jones was no longer unfamiliar to those in need.



The Olympics have even felt the impact of the women of Rochester. **Doris Fuchs** competed in two Olympics (1956 and 1960) on the U.S. Gymnastic team. She entered the first gymnastic competition in Rochester in 1955, and the next year was participating in the Olympics at Melbourne, Australia along with her sister Ingeborg. Doris won the Mid West Gymnastic Championship in 1958, and also was a three-time all-American gymnast in 1958, '59 and '60. During this time, she had to train in Buffalo due to the lack of facilities in Rochester. In the 1960 Olympics in Rome, Italy, Doris had a fractured toe, but competed anyway. She placed eighth out of 234 in the uneven parallel bars, and was the first American to break into the top-ten finishers in the overall standings. In 1963, she received the Rochester Amateur Athlete Award. At the Pan-

American Games in Brazil in 1964, she won four gold medals, the only American gymnast to win gold medals while competing against Russians, Czechs and the Japanese. At the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan, amid much controversy, Doris was demoted to an alternate and did not compete.

nother Rochester woman to enter sports history was **Janice Smith**. She became interested in speed skating in kindergarten, winning her first title in 1957 at the age of 12. This was just the beginning . . . from there, she went on to win practically every local, regional, national and international speed skating title in both juvenile, junior and intermediate girls' events. At the North American Indoor Speed Skating meet in 1961, she set records in the 220 and 880 yard events. In 1962, she was the first girl to win the grand slam of the nation's top four intermediate girls' events, repeating that feat in 1963. In 1964, she was a member of the Olympic team at Innsbruck, Austria. She took seventh place in the 1000 meter event, but fell at the finish of the 1500 meter race, not placing. In 1970, Janice became a teacher in the City School District's Project Unique. A person of principles, she gave her Olympic ring to the city school board president, stipulating that if the reorganization and desegregation plan for Rochester public schools was turned down by the board, "I won't wear it again unless I can see that equality, freedom, brotherhood and justice are being upheld here."

Born in Brighton in one of five houses then standing between the Twelve Corners and Cobbs Hill, **Mildred W. Johnson** made social activism her way of life, helping Rochester's blacks find jobs, housing and a better life. Her home became a refuge to parolees, alcoholics, unwed mothers, fire victims and the poor. In 1960, she founded the Negro Information Center, renaming it the Virginia Wilson Interracial Helping Hand Center in honor of her mother who died in 1963. (It was incorporated in Monroe County in February 1969 as the Interracial Information and Helping Hand Center, Inc.) She has provided food and temporary shelter for hundreds of poor, has worked in court and on welfare cases for the less fortunate, and visited them in prison. Governor Nelson Rockefeller named her "Ambassador of the Inner City" in the early 1970's after she criticized him for not making the problems of the poor a state priority. In the 1930's, she helped establish the black community newspaper, *The Voice* (later renamed *The Frederick Douglass Voice*), and

wrote a monthly column. She has been honored by the Rotary Club and the Urban League, and has also received the Golden Cup Award. A Rochester institution, down-to-earth, with an often unorthodox approach described as abrasive, flamboyant, direct, blunt, and honest, she states, "There's so much to be done and so few people see the need for doing it." Her biography, *Millie the Hellraiser*, was published in 1980.

In 1966, at the age of 73, **Bertha Moot** was the only woman in a group of fourteen ordained at the Eastman Theater in the Western New York Conference of the United Methodist Church. She was one of the first woman ministers and was an early leader of women in the United Methodist Church who blazed the trail in bridging the gender gap. After retiring as a librarian at Cornell Law Library, she decided to enter the ministry full time. She had served as a substitute minister in Cayutaville, also supervising the Sunday school and the church choir. She enrolled in Wesley Theological Divinity School in Washington, D.C., attending three summer sessions and completing the fourth by correspondence. Beginning in 1961, she served for twelve years in Fowlerville and East Groveland, preaching two services each Sunday, one in each church, along with all the other ministerial duties including taking the youth on camping and fishing expeditions. She retired again at age 80 in 1973, and spent the last ten years of her life at the Rochester Methodist Home where she served Communion, led Bible study and other study groups, helped other residents adjust to their new life, and served as an inspiration to all.



This booklet has been an attempt to spotlight some of the women of Rochester who have made their mark. This is only a representative listing, and there are many other notable women from the Rochester area who have and are making significant contributions. We are proud and happy to be living in a city so rich in a history reflected by so many special women who should be included with other Rochester women such as Susan B. Anthony and Clara Barton. We dedicate this work to them, and the women of today who will add their pioneering spirit to assure the continuation of the quality of life in Rochester.

Index

	page
ALDEN, Isabella MacDonald (1841-1930)	12, 13
ANTHONY, Susan B. (1820-1906)	4, 6, 9, 10, 15, 23, 38, 41
BAKER, Elizabeth (m. Greentree), (18??-1895)	10
BALDWIN, Evelyn M.D. (1860-1917)	19
BARTON, Clara (1821-1912)	4, 9, 15, 41
BAUM, Margaret Hays (1901-)	31, 32
BLACKWELL, Antoinette Brown (1825-1921)	7
BLOOMER, Amelia	6
BONSTELLE, Jessie (1871-1932)	26, 27
BROWN, Antoinette (m. Blackwell), (1825-1921)	7
BUSH, Abigail	18
CLARKE, Mary Elizabeth	37
COLMAN, Lucy Newhall (1817-1906)	17
CRAPSEY, Adelaide (1878-1914)	26
CRENNELL, Mary (18??-1919)	16
CURTIS, Cathro M. (1852-1892)	8
DANFORTH, Edwine Blake (1864-1961)	15, 16
DAVIS, Katharine Bement (1860-1935)	25, 26
DE STAEBLER, Addie (1844-1912)	13, 14
DOLLEY, Sarah Adamson M.D. (1829-1909)	8, 9, 10, 19
DOOLITTLE, Araminta	11
DOUGLASS, Helen Pitts (1838-1903)	6
FOX Sisters	4
FUCHS, Doris (1938-)	39, 40
GANNETT, Caroline Werner (1894-1979)	28, 29
GANNETT, Mary Thorn Lewis (1854-1952)	15, 18
GILBERT, Elizabeth H. (1912-)	37
GLEASON, Kate (1865-1933)	27, 28
GOLDMAN, Emma	4
GRIFFIS, Eliza	5
GRIFFIS, Julia	5
GUERNSEY, Clara (1836-1893)	11, 12
GUERNSEY, Lucy Ellen (1826-1899)	11, 12
HALL, Elizabeth Price (1819-1895)	15
HAMILTON, Frances Fidelia M.D. (1833-1893)	19
HARRIS, Hattie (1897-)	36, 37
HERDLE, Gertrude (m. Moore), (1897-)	30
HERDLE, Isabel (1905-)	30
HICKSON, Grace (1890-1980)	30
HOLMES, Mary Jane (1828-1907)	10, 11
HOLT, Polly Sibley	5
HOWARD, Martha Taylor (1877-1962)	38, 39

	page
HUMPHREY, Maud (1868-1943)	20
JOHNSON, Mae Miskimmon (1909-1955)	38
JOHNSON, Mildred W. (1911-)	40, 41
JONES, Daisy Marquis (1887-1971)	39
JONES, Helen (1886-1947)	32, 33
MALONEY, Helen (1917-)	37
MC ELROY, Nellie L. (1875-1937)	25
MILLER, Elizabeth Smith	15
MONTGOMERY, Helen Barrett (1861-1934)	17, 18
MOORE, Gertrude Herdle (1897-)	30
MOOT, Bertha Rev. (1893-1983)	41
MOTLEY, Maude (1873-1933)	21, 22
O'BRIEN, Sister Hieronymo (1819-1898)	9
PALMER, Sophia French (1853-1920)	19, 20
PARKER, Jane Marsh (1836-1913)	9, 10
PERKINS, Caroline Erickson (1835-1919)	14
PITTS, Helen (m. Douglass), (1838-1903)	6
PORTER, Maria A. (1805-1896)	8
POST, Amy (1802-1889)	8
PUTNAM, Ellen (1894-)	31
REYNOLDS, Lydia Strong (1784-1886)	4
SCOTT, Blanche Stuart (1886-1970)	23, 24
SERVIS, Bertha (1882-1961)	23
SEWARD, Sarah T. (??-1850)	5
SHUMWAY, Adelina Ritter (1876-1969)	27
SIBLEY, Georgiana Farr (1887-1980)	36
SIBLEY, Margaret Harper (1852-1939)	21
SMITH, Janice (1945-)	40
SMITH, Virginia Jeffrey	33, 34
STRONG, Hattie Marie (1864-1950)	20, 21
STRONG, Huldah M. (m. Brown), (1790-1875)	4
STRONG, Margaret Woodbury (1897-1946)	32
TUBMAN, Harriet	8
WALRATH, Jean	34, 35
WATSON, Emily Sibley (1855-1945)	24, 25
WATSON, Hildegard Lasell (1888-1976)	35, 36
WALD, Lillian (1867-1940)	18, 19
WARD, Clara Louise (1889-1973)	28
WEIS, Jessica M. (1901-1963)	22, 23, 37
WILLARD, Frances Elizabeth (1839-1898)	13
WILLARD, Marie Atkinson (1864-1940)	22
WILLIAMS, Ellen Therressa (1849-1875)	11
WYND, Alice Wood	29

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*This Book is Dedicated to all Women of Rochester,
Past, Present and Future*

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Note: It was not our intention to create a scholarly work in publishing this book, but to highlight some women of special interest to serve as an inspiration to all women in our community .

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