

A Shopkeeper's Millennium

*Society and Revivals in
Rochester, New York,
1815-1837*

PAUL E. JOHNSON



American Century Series

A
SHOPKEEPER'S
MILLENNIUM

SOCIETY AND REVIVALS IN
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
1815-1837

Paul E. Johnson

AMERICAN CENTURY SERIES



Hill and Wang · New York

A DIVISION OF FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
1. ECONOMY	15
2. SOCIETY	37
3. POLITICS	62
4. IMPASSE	79
5. PENTECOST	95
6. CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS	116
AFTERWORD	136
APPENDIX A: OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS	142
APPENDIX B: ROCHESTER CHURCH RECORDS	152
NOTES	162
INDEX	205

Tables

1. Church membership and persistence, 1830-34	34
2. Partnerships formed by churchgoers and non-churchgoers, 1821-29	35
3. Church membership and occupation, 1825-31	103
4. Church membership among selected proprietors, 1827-34	104
5. Church membership and household composition, 1827	106
6. Changes in household composition, 1827-30	107
7. Distribution of occupations within assessment deciles, 1827	143
8. Households headed by skilled workmen, 1827	145
9. Manufacturers in assessment deciles 1 through 5, 1827	147
10. The Evangelical Churches of Rochester, 1815-38	157
11. Annual turnover in three congregations	159
12. Church membership and listings in city directories	160
13. Occupations and method of admission in two churches	161

Maps

Rochester in 1838	ii
Rochester Neighborhoods in 1827	49
Rochester Neighborhoods in 1834	50

The religious revival that flourished in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and changed American life found its most spectacular expression in Rochester, New York. The revival, in Rochester and elsewhere, made the United States the most militantly Protestant nation on earth and had an enormous influence on many Northern antebellum reform movements, including abolition and temperance. But although many historians have discussed its profound and wide-ranging effects, we know very little about its causes.

Although grounded in primary source material, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* is a literate, crisply argued narrative history which not only explores the interconnections between economic, social, political, and religious changes but presents an evocative picture of a rapidly growing frontier city.

PAUL E. JOHNSON is Assistant Professor of History at Yale University, where he teaches American social history, specializing in the history of popular religion.

"Johnson's book is indispensable for any understanding of the evangelical revival and related reform movements in New York's 'burned-over district.' No less important, Professor Johnson has brilliantly fused the quantitative methods of the 'new social history' with a sparkling style and an imaginative reconstruction of social reality. Both in substantive conclusions and as a model for future regional studies, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* is one of the freshest and most exciting books I have read in the past few years."—David Brion Davis, *Yale University*

"This is far more than a study of local history, and more even than a provocative interpretation of the social sources of religious revivalism. It is a brilliant pioneering assault upon the most important unaddressed problem in American historiography—how our society and very personalities were transformed by the rapid advance of the capitalist market in the earlier nineteenth century."

—Charles Sellers, *University of California, Berkeley*

Cover design by Nanette Stevenson