THE COMMON GOOD OF CIVIC AND SOCIAL ROCHESTER

KNOW YOUR CITY

THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN THE CENTER OF THE FOURTH WARD

"Oh! if those who rule the destinies of nations would but turn aside from the wide thorough-fares and great houses and strive to improve the wretched dwellings in bye-ways where only poverty may walk—many low roofs would point more truly to the sky than the loftiest steeple that now rears proudly up from the midst of guilt and crime and horrible disease, to mock them by its contrast."

—CHARLES DICKENS IN THE "OLD CURIOSITY SHOP."

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The COMMON GOOD

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PUBLICITY IS EDUCATION. *EDUCATION IS PREVENTION.*

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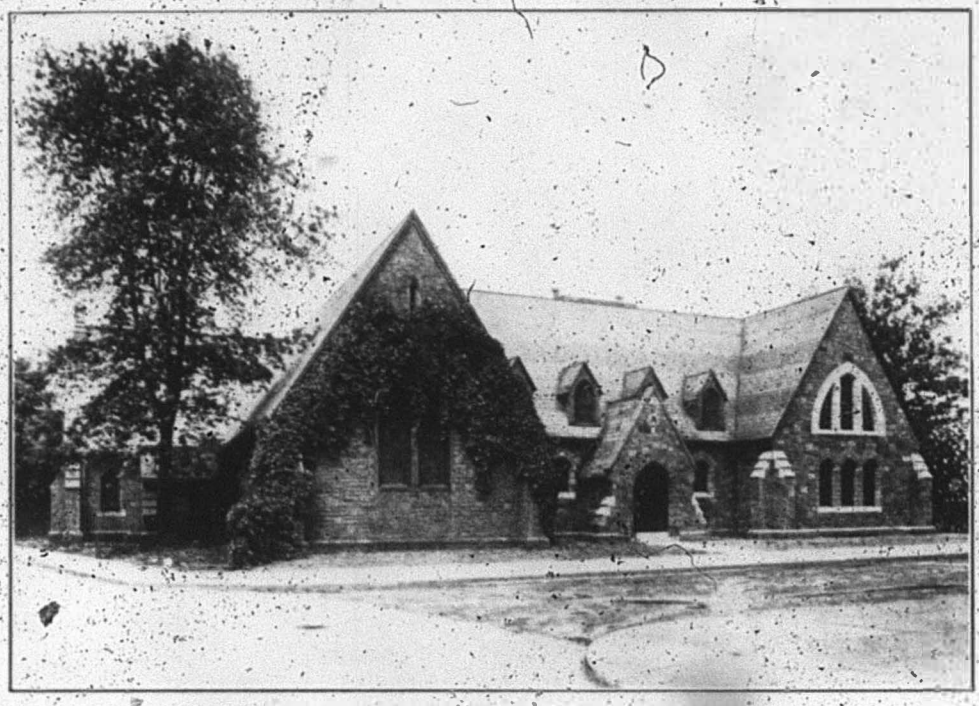
EDITORIAL

The National Municipal League announces that for the William H. Baldwin prize, consisting of two parallel prizes of $50.00 each, college and university students are invited to compete. The subject suggested is "The Best Sources of City Revenue." High School students of either sex are entitled to take part in the other essay contest, for which one prize of $30.00 and another of $20.00 are offered. These essayists will discuss "The Milk Supply of Our City."

Vice will never be eliminated by raids and arrests, investigations and reports. We have reported and raided for the past three thousand years. We are making the old, old mistake of trying to get rid of bad results without stopping detrimental sources. We are striving to clean the public river of morals at the mouth, while allowing the wells and springs which make the river to remain poisonous. Society can rid itself of nine-tenths of its vice if it will change fundamental social conditions. Society cannot rid itself of ninety-five one-hundredths of its vice if we remain satisfied with dealing with results instead of causes. Reports do not reform, and arrests do not stop. Society is selfish and sordid at the bottom, and so vice creeps out at the top. Stop vice? Where shall we start? Give every girl who works a sufficient wage to support herself. Give every man of mature age a sufficient wage to enable him to marry. Clean up our sordid tenements with their overcrowding and lack of privacy. Eliminate child labor. Give the young people wholesome and sufficient recreation. See that a "living wage" is paid for all work, so that body and soul may be well nourished and nourished well. Above all things, stop building "rescue" homes and "reform" schools. We can build a hundred rescue homes in every city, and vice will still be with us. We can increase our reform schools a hundred-fold, but vice will be ever present. Vice will be with us until we remove the causes of vice. The main causes of vice are economic and social. Morality depends more on a living wage than on rescue homes. Will vice—or virtue—be victorious?—*The Butterfly.*



DEDICATED TO THE CHURCH AND THE CITY

GANNETT HOUSE MINISTRY

By

Rochester Unitarian Social Service Committee

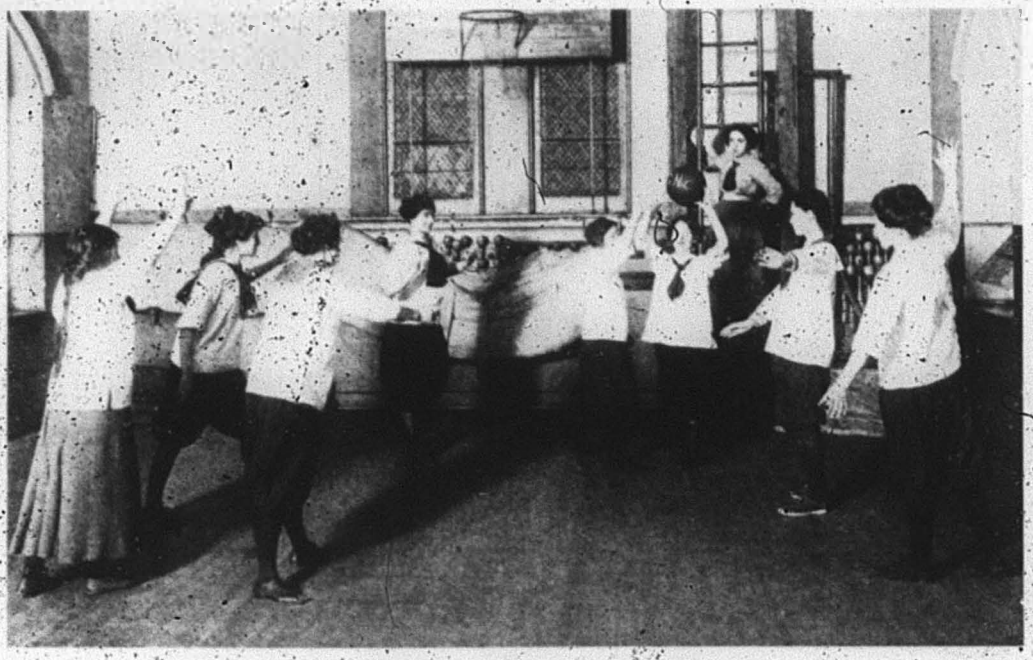
Nearly twenty-five years of such ministry and this is the first generally published report of a year's work. The lonely years are over and the day has come when such a story is welcomed and its message can bring inspiration to thousands of fellow workers. The story of a year's work has surprizes even for ourselves. We have been busy with our separate tasks; we have known our own joys and felt our own discouragements, but we should not have felt these last as much as we did if we had known the triumphs of other comrades. It is only during the last year Gannett House activities have been unified under the supervision of one committee and the strengthened purpose which each worker has had in meeting the other has not been greater than the joy we have had in each other's work. If we seem too happy as we tell our story, it is not because we are proud of *ourselves* but because we are proud of *each other* and the task we are privileged to do. We have been helped when others have told their story. We dare to tell ours to help others.

The work of Gannett House should be told in half a dozen separate stories. First, its work as the Rochester Boys' Evening Home; second, its work as the Unity Club; third, its work as the Neighborhood Friendly for Girls; fourth, its work as the Gannett House Girls' Club; fifth, its work as Gannett House Dances; and last of all its General Social and

GANNETT HOUSE DANCES: GOOD FRIENDS ON A GOOD FLOOR.

Relief Work in the Fourth Ward and the City at large. From the very beginning these tasks have been strictly kept undenominational. Some churches with the opposite policy might count it evidence of failure, but we count it among our successes that in all these years we can hardly point to a single boy or girl, man or woman who has been drawn to the church as the direct result of our Social Welfare work. We have tried to enter this work not for what we could get but for what we could give. We are one of the small churches of the City, having less than two hundred families in our congregation, but we have always been generously numbered among the three or four leading churches when a reckoning is made on the basis of service to the community.

The Rochester Boys' Evening Home is the oldest boys' club in Rochester and one of the oldest in the country. In looking over the card index record of the boys who have passed through the Home since 1889, we found the names of nearly 3,000 different boys. Each winter from November till April, every Monday and Thursday evening, an average of 130 boys gather for recreation and class work. Some months we have the care of over two hundred boys a night. While we give them opportunities for recreation and teach them Shorthand, Basketry Clay-modelling, Carpentry, Drawing, Metal Work and Gymnastics, our first purpose is to make them our friends so that wherever in life they go, the Helpers they have met at Gannett House will be as standards with which to measure themselves in ethical and social efficiency. This means we have to care for ourselves even more than we care for the boys. The Helpers in this part of our work are mostly voluntary. This winter we had about twenty-five Volunteers and six paid workers. The kind of boy we have under our care has changed very little in recent years, but he is very different from the needy unschooled youngsters that came twenty odd years ago. Most of our boys are Jewish boys of Russian parentage, but full of the material which is making proud and desirable Americans. This feature in this part of our work early called many men and women connected with the Temple Berith Kodesh to our aid and



GANNETT HOUSE GIRLS' CLUB

each year we have to thank them for good financial and personal service with us.

The Rochester Unity Club has a very different emphasis from the rest of the work, or is rather a more direct effort to provide things which we count fundamental in life. It meets throughout the winter in the study of modern literature and ethics. The men and women who come to its discussions come from all levels of society, finding in the general thoughtfulness over the great individual and social problems the common level of culture. In past years studies have gathered about Emerson, Dante, Browning, Ruskin, and others and in more recent years an average of about forty to fifty people have studied together the prose and dramatic writings of Maeterlinck, Shakespeare and William James. Under the general heading: "William James: Thinker and Life-Helper" the following twelve evenings of discussion and study were spent this winter:

"William James as he may be Known by those who never met him."

"The Essay on 'Habit': that 'Ten times Nature.'"

"'The Divided Self' and 'Conversion.'"

"Saintliness: the Best Word for all its Flavor of Sanctimoniousness."

"The Moral Equivalent of War."

"William James: the Teacher of Teachers."

"'The Energies of Men' or 'Getting your second wind.'"

"The Essay on 'Will' the Mountain crest of James."

"William James and Psychical Research."

"Pragmatism: the New Name for some Old ways of Thinking."

"Pluralism, which heals a certain blindness in Human beings."

"William James and the Philosophy of Henri Bergson."

Without losing any effectiveness in our direct social work we feel that the Rochester Unity Club points the way towards satisfying a very real need of modern social workers. Frederic Almy, a Unitarian Social Worker of Buffalo said in a recent address the following word which we quote with warm approval. "The social gospel is being preached today from every sort of pulpit. It is preached from the church, from the stage, from the pages of the novel, from the magazine and from the public press, until it is a wonder that the public will stand so much of it; but there are some signs of reaction, and I fear for the future unless social work becomes less utilitarian. It is attacking the old enemies of mankind —ignorance, disease, sin—with such sledge hammer blows that they are weakening visibly; but its agencies are too material, and social work needs unspeakably the poetry, the passion, the inspiration and the interpretation of its message which the church is able to give."

BOYS' BASKETRY CLASS.

BOYS' EVENING HOME.

After the Unity Club the next oldest activity and still one of the most important is partly illustrated in this report by the pictures of Sewing and Cooking Classes: the Neighborhood Friendly for Girls. It meets every Saturday morning and sometimes after school hours during the week. Here many a girl who is now a mother of children has learned to make her dresses and cook the meals. With the help of students from the Mechanics Institute, fifty and sixty girls are introduced to those virtues which, however poor their lives may have to be, help make the poverty a little easier and the chance for getting away from it a little better. Story-telling and Folk-dancing guided by kindergarten teachers and others brighten the time with the needle and the saucepan and make Gannett House a place a child likes to run away to. At Christmas they invited the children from Front Street Playground to a Santa Claus Party and when Santa came in dragging a stocking more than ten feet long after him full to overflowing with toys, Gannett House was just another faery palace for scores of the little ones fortunate enough to be there.

In connection with this part of Gannett House work baths are given during the spring and summer months to the little girls. Mothers in the near-by tenements where there are no bathing facilities bring their small children to be tubbed at a cent apiece, each family bringing its own soap and towel. As the City baths only provide showers and a plunge this tub is greatly prized by the mothers. Last summer we had an average of fifteen each day the baths were open; the heaviest day was twenty-four baths. One little girl said she had not had a bath in six months. One other said, "The Open Air School is now closed so we want to come here

for our bath. We wish that Public School No. 12 in our ward would install some tubs and showers, it would meet a real need and inculcate a very necessary education.

The Gannett House Girls' Club is one of the recently added activities. It is planned to meet the needs of girls who after the tasks in store and factory are over find in the Club all kinds of good fellowship and recreation. Basket ball and dancing, reading and music and other quiet and happy ways of spending the time fill in every Wednesday evening. A number of the girls like to come direct from work, this they may do, supper being provided for them at ten cents each. Scattered throughout the year are all manner of special occasions: Talks on Sex Hygiene by one of Rochester's finest women doctors; summer automobile trips to the Lake; short vacations for a few of them on a small island of the Thousand Islands group, where factory can be forgotten and health restored; a concert or two during the year which girl friends in the University help plan, all make the Club night a very bright spot in every girl's week.

SATURDAY MORNING COOKING CLASS.

NEIGHBORHOOD FRIENDLY FOR GIRLS.

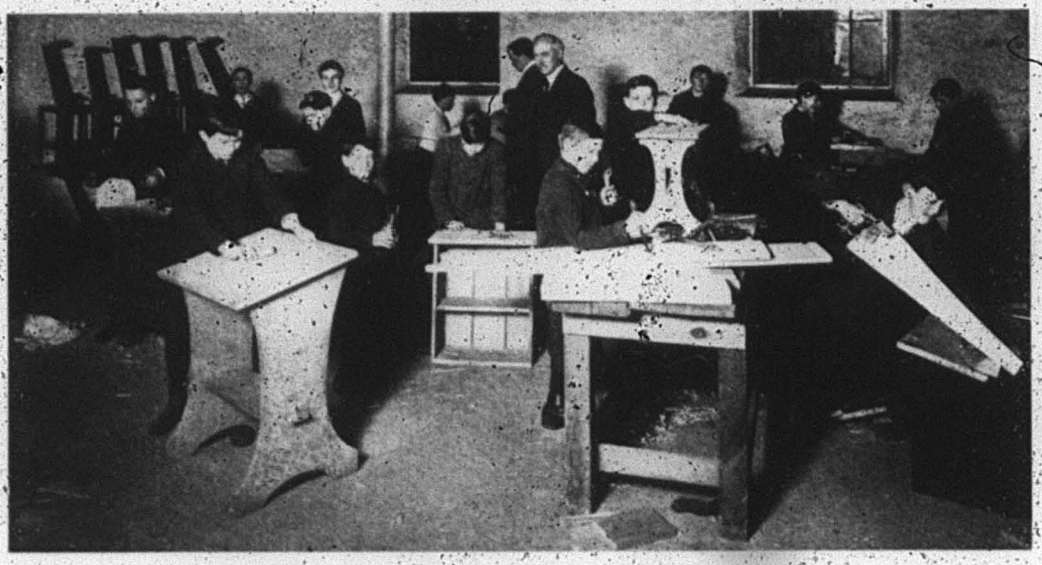
Also meeting the needs of some of these girls and others who do not attend on Wednesday, we have on Tuesday evening a regular down-town dance hall. Chief Quigley has granted a license to the Gannett House to be a Dance Hall and with a small charge of 25 cents for boys and 15 cents for girls, many good friends meet on the good floor for the kind of time that most modern young people desire and should have under good conditions. We try to have good music and supervision and improper dancing is quietly excluded. We have had very little excluding to do, the environment seems to provoke only good dancing. As this side of the work grows more popular we hope to open on more than one evening a week.

The last of the six departments of work which we enumerated at the beginning of this report was the general social and relief work of the Fourth Ward and the City at large. When Gannett House was dedicated it was dedicated "to the Church and the City." While all that we have at present noticed might justly be called civic work, there are a number of things for which Gannett House is responsible which are not performed directly under its roof. Two years ago it was largely instrumental in making "The Fourth Ward Survey" which was a pioneer attempt to know our neighborhood in the center of which we are planted. It is not needful to detail that work here as it has become very well known in the city from the 32 page illustrated report which was issued afterwards by the Common Good Publishing Company. Directly arising, however, from the needs shown in that Survey have come two things:

SEWING SCHOOL: NEIGHBORHOOD FRIENDLY FOR GIRLS

the Fourth Ward Playground and the School Nurse at Number 12 School. The playground is not yet as large as we hope it may be nor in the best position, but the Mayor in response to a petition twenty feet long which we drew up full of names and had carried to him by children from the ward, at once placed the Bath House lot on South Avenue in the hands of the Children's Playground League with full equipment. Last August over 1,400 children were in attendance there. On the general assumption that every child should have about 50 square feet for play on a playground, the South Avenue lot will only accommodate about 100 children at a time. We know that the Fourth Ward alone has more than two hundred children without back yards or anywhere but the street for play. The Playground Circle Map of Rochester at the Child Welfare Exhibit showed that this district was the only down-town district of the city without adequate playground space and yet it is the most congested down-town section.

After the Ward Playground was obtained we bent our energies to obtain a school nurse at No. 12 school. Our Survey had shown that in the Fourth Ward alone some two hundred children had lost in one winter over 2,000 school days in sickness. We tried to get the Department of Public Safety to appoint a nurse for the school, but the City's inadequate financing of the Health Bureau would not permit it. We therefore obtained the co-operation of the Board of Education and permission was given to us to place a Graduate Nurse in the school at our own expense. It would be utterly impossible to give here an account of the splendid character of the service which is thus being rendered. Each week the nurse makes about 30 calls to the homes of the children, and each day is filled to overflowing with examinations of eyes and ears and throat. Hundreds of parents with children in that school have been saved untold trouble and anxiety by the work of this nurse in sending home again the cases of fever and measles which she has detected. Scores of children are doing their work with zest and joy today because the nurse has found

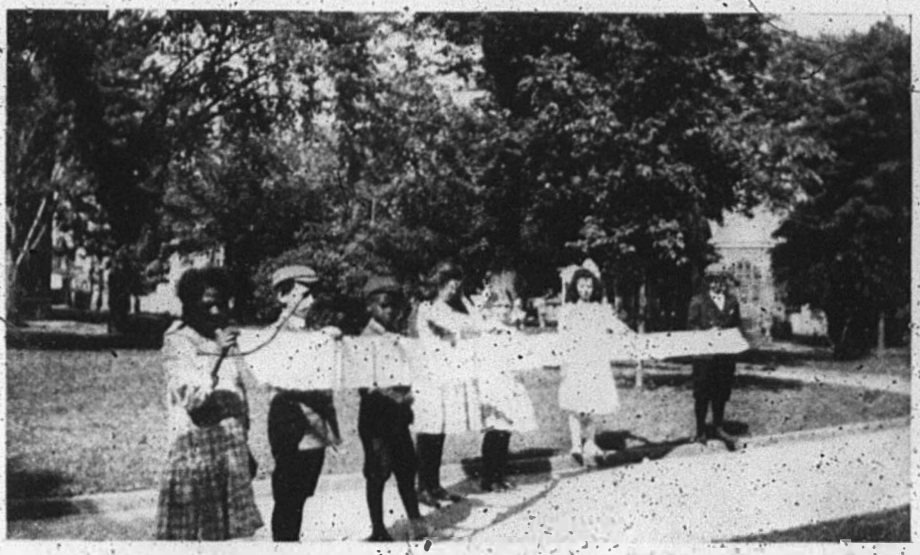


THE CARPENTRY CLASS: BOYS' EVENING HOME

out the physical trouble that was stopping their progress. Of course, many an adenoid operation costs more than the parents can afford, and at times the spectacles for the child with bad eyes must be paid for by someone or the money loaned, and without display or publicity these things we have met with the continual generous co-operation of such other agencies as the Homeopathic Hospital and its doctors, the Public Health Association and the Infants Summer Hospital. Through the work of the School Nurse and other Friendly Visiting which is done a number of cases of need are brought each month to our attention, each one being checked up with the Confidential Exchange of the United Charities. Every Thanksgiving we are able to distribute some thirty hampers but all through the year rent has to be paid or loaned to tide over a bad period, often work has to be found, frequently boots and clothing must be found for the children, milk must be bought for the baby and many other things draw on our ever decreasing bank account. To neglect meeting these calls only increases social poverty and discouragement and a man or woman without hope is the worst menace which the coming better order of society could have. In our modest way we want to increase social wealth by spreading hope and helping the faltering purposes of men.

But what we have done is not our whole story, what we want to do is also a part even if only the last part. Briefly then, we want next winter to have the City of Rochester be wholly responsible for the salary of the nurse at No. 12 school and other nurseless schools too, for that matter. We urge the use of our reader's influence to this end. We want to see bath and playground near the same school as we have already indicated. Then in Gannett House we want to be able to furnish one of our rooms as a girls' parlor where every evening in the week, books and music and quiet can be supplied and friends met under good auspices. We also want to buy one of Bausch & Lomb's $100 Combined Balopticons for some educational and entertainment evenings during the winter. Then as soon as we can we want to have a regular home near one of the small lakes for vacations for some who badly need them among the girls and mothers of the neighborhood. A little extra help will also be wanted for

the English School for Immigrants which we have just opened to help some of the men and women who attend Evening Schools, till the Schools open again next fall. We know that all these things cannot come at once, it meant many years waiting to possess the good things that we have today, but we want to see Gannett House with an income which shall surely permit the gradual acquirement of all things that we feel to be needful for the work. There is nothing so humiliating, so disheartening as to see the holes in the shoes, the family ejected for want of rent, the child backward and ill for want of an operation or glasses and girls with nowhere to go evenings but the streets. A great deal of the work pays for itself when the building is given, and nearly 50 men and women give volunteer service, but every year about $700.00 is wanted. If we have to continue the nurse for another year we should have to raise twice this amount. But it is the kind of ministry which counts as a good investment in these days of civic pride and not many need a second urging to share with us the responsibility and happiness which it brings.



FOURTH WARD CHILDREN CARRYING 20-FOOT PETITION FOR A PLAYGROUND TO THE MAYOR

Whenever would a kitten learn to purr if it had to unsheath its claws over every scrap of meat, every drop of milk, every moment of fire-warmth?

And why should we expect to have souls in our bodies till our hearths are built with the labor of free men and our cellars are stocked with unstolen goods?—The Masses.

My Experiences as an Immigrant

By B. S. of Rochester, N. Y.

Chapter III.

SINCE I CAME TO ROCHESTER.

I realized that the most ignorant person of Rochester then was smarter than I was. The picture of a young immigrant that came in this country at an early age, and lived among strangers, had to work every day for his living, with a small wage, is the picture of my appearance in dressing, manners, etc. For instance, some of the Italian boys going to work here in Rochester, wear neat collar, nice clothes, and most carry a newspaper in their pocket. As I consider myself not of the lowest class, I thought I was at the same level with these. But it was different indeed. I had to look further down, and so I had to classify myself with the street laborers which in their dressing, and in their talking, in their way of walking, and in their manners were exactly like me if not better.

Before I came I learned that Rochester was a great manufacturing center, and so I had in my mind to secure employment in a factory, or better if possible. All this I had to give up when I found the contrast above explained. Understanding that everybody who wants to get a job in excavating should own a shovel, I was forced to buy one. Going on the street with a shovel on my shoulder, as usually laborers are seen, I found that in Rochester there were a number of men of the excavating class laying around. It is remembered that in 1905 the season started very late; it was very difficult to find a job. I had been a shoemaker in the old country, and learning that there were many shoe factories here, I thought I would try them. I was told they didn't care for an old-country shoemaker, but only experienced hands in American factories. I tried a good many places, but the only job offered would pay $5.00 a week. As I was eager to progress I did not want to accept a smaller wage than I had been getting. After having found out that the hod-carriers were earning $1.84 a day for eight hours, that seemed good to me, and I secured a job at that. Although the pay was pretty good, in four months I was able to save only $10. The reason was that city life was so expensive.

Being a stranger in the city, and not knowing anybody beside my friend that I came to meet, I had a difficulty in finding a boarding place. At that time the Italian colony was a good deal smaller than it is today, outside of Hartford street there were very few Italians on the North side. At the house where my friend was boarding there was no room for me, but the landlord told me he could make room if I secured my own bed. Being very anxious to live with my friend I accepted the offer and bought the bed with my own money. We had very little room in the house, less room outside, no place to sit besides the alley. It was miserable to sit out in the alley after coming home tired from work and get blackened from smoke, and deaf from noise of the trams. So most of my leisure time I spent in a pool room and at the Corinthian theatre and such places. That consumed most of my earnings.

As I said, there was no room in the house; it was because the house had only two good rooms, a small kitchen, and a small room say 10 feet by 10 feet. It was very warm some nights; the kitchen being small there

was not room to sit there. In the small room there were three single beds, and nine made four, so we could hardly walk around. Besides this the room was very dark, one small window only against another house. In one of the big rooms which was about 12 feet by 12 feet, the man and his wife and two children slept. The other room was for his own use, and the boarders were not allowed there.

Besides all the opportunity I had of spending my earnings, winter was approaching, and as it has been my custom to look ahead I realized that the outside job wasn't any good for the winter. During these five months I had refined my outside appearance a little, although my moral condition was somewhat worse than before. There was hope in me though, that I would try to reform as soon as possible. To do this I understood that I would have to have a steady position, because I would be occupied during the day, my chance of spending the earnings would be reduced, and finally having a sound financial basis I could start with courage to climb the stair to civilization.

So taking advantage of some rainy day when I wasn't working I would go around and look for a factory job. It was the 15th of October when I got a job in a wood-working factory. On the start I was offered $1.30 a day for nine hours but was promised advancement as soon as I would improve in doing my work.

As winter was at hand, that gave me good opportunity to stay home at nights. I didn't know at all how to read and write in English. When I came to Rochester I boasted I could speak fluently in English, but the truth was that I knew very little because my English was of the slang style, that generally is heard from most all Italian immigrants. Now that my knowledge of American things is hundreds of times greater than then, I understand that one of the principle reasons that our Italian immigrants speak only slang style is because they only come in contact with the inferior class of Americans who speak slang themselves. Besides, they enjoy making fun of the Italians and imitate their talk. People of this class laugh at an Italian who speaks grammatically. For instance, it happens to me, even at this very day, that if I use the word "lie down" they laugh at me, and if I ask why, they say the proper way is to say "lay down" which phrase I do not accept.

My first step in my upward climb was sending to New York $5.70 to an Italian bookstore, and acquiring an Italian grammar, an arithmetic, a reader, a history, and different instructive voulmes. With this amount I got many, because they were paper-bound. I believed if I reviewed the Italian thoroughly, I could start in English more easily. It didn't take me long to review this work. I bought an Italian-English grammar, for I wanted to learn the English correctly. Now that I was back again on the right road, I felt again the need to become acquainted with music. It is generally known that we Italians have a natural inclination to music. So I secured a musical instructor and I studied music for the mandolin commonly played by Italians. For three years I continued studying music and literature. I did quite a little reading, not of it being of the instructive kind.

About four years ago I thought it would be wise to try evening schools. I did not try it before because it wasn't popular among Italians, they felt that there was not much benefit in it. Living in the neighborhood of No. 18 School I enrolled as a student in the class of Mrs. Lamb teaching grade work. For two weeks I had tried almost every foreign

class in the school, but all other classes were too simple for me. In entering school I could read quite a little English, but when I come to write I would be confused even in spelling the word "cat."

I could not attend every evening of the three each week, for I was engaged in rehearsing a play, namely "The Passion Play" given by a number of the Italians. It first was given at the Lyceum with failure. Later it was given at Concordia Hall under the management of several American ladies, and it was a great success, for what we needed was only help and co-operation from the American people.

At the end of the evening school season, I was surprised at the great progress I had made. I must be thankful to Mrs. Lamb for whom I have much respect today, because in my judgment she was a devoted teacher, and she applied such a method that was of great help to me in learning how to write. The method was that we would get ten words spelling at each lesson, and the following evening we would have to bring written down identically as in the dictionary the meaning of every word. From that I got such a liking for evening school, and I believe they are so beneficial that even now, although I am married, I am going to school yet, and besides I take my wife with me. I am not satisfied with that yet, and I do my best in advertising among our people the benefits derived by going to evening school, although I think the school could be bettered, and be less discouraging to the great number of foreigners who enroll at first and then leave it, because they cannot learn enough to pay them for going.

In my work I progressed quite a little. I almost have doubled my pay. I would like to make it clear, however, that it was not with the free will of the firm that I doubled my pay. I had to argue and bring up very strong points before I got it. My advantage of arguing with the boss was that I was single, and did not fear to lose my job. More than once I had to make threats of leaving the job if my demands were not met. A married man with children to support, I doubt if he can do this, because a good many times it is very hard to get another job. Even if it isn't, it's positively sure that at the beginning, in no factory they will pay a decent salary unless the workman has some speciality. A decent salary I regard as $15.00 a week, as the lowest average every week all year for a married man, more, however, if he has children.

Although Italian people live on a smaller amount than that, the result is they have to crowd themselves, and so live in unsanitary conditions, which make them sick. So they long to return to their native land, and they blame this country for physical sufferings. Some even go so far as to curse the day they came here. I am not excluded from the number of the sufferers, for we are four brothers here, and two are sick, one has tuberculosis, and the other is sick right along, and the doctor now says to me, a married man, expecting to have a child, that the factory dust has made a sore spot in one of my lungs, and I may have to give up my job.

In conclusion: the Italian immigrants, except those that make a big fortune in ways I will not mention, the benefit they derive by coming here is to ruin robust health that they bring when they come, in the most dangerous and unsanitary jobs which they do and which others will not do. In regard to the financial question, if they do go back, it is true they take money, which money is not a good reward for injured health. This is a fact that a good many of the Italians I have met here and abroad (as I went back two years ago for a visit) do not live long, for they have

acquired the most dreadful diseases, which are results of unsanitary and immoral ways of living.

It seems strange to me why the Americans spend much time in making laws, organizing campaigns, lecturing, but very few visit the Italian colony or where they work, so what do they know about us? Taxes, that the Italians pay as much as others, are not spent for their benefit. I would like to see taxes used for better cleaning of streets, not letting ashes and garbage stand waiting several weeks for collection. Some of the lights shouldn't be off half the time, not repaired just because the Italians live there, and I think more playgrounds, social centers and particularly a public bath-house we should have with proper courteous attendant who don't treat us as if we were animals. And then I can safely guarantee that a good many if not all of the Italians in this city would love America, and would have more respect for American laws. Considering the way Italians often are treated, the bad environment where they have to live, it would be abnormal if they were better than they are. But we are not as bad as we are thought of, and I would refer people to the few Americans called social workers who know us, and to Italian history, where if they will but read they will find we have the same courage and virtues that are praised in the stories of American history.

GOD IS NOT ASLEEP

He was our landlord in San Diego. Over six feet. Straight as a young man despite his seventy-six years. A veteran of the Civil War. Wise in council, mighty in prayer, he spent six out of seven nights of the week a listener at the revival services in the little church hard by. His religion was no pretense.

As we talked on the sidewalk, a lady occupying one of his apartments came out carrying a grip as if starting on a journey. "I've had a telegram Mr. ——, and I'm leaving; I can't very well afford to sacrifice the rent I have paid in advance (two weeks), but it can't be helped. I must go. It is not your fault and I suppose it is the rule everywhere."

"It is not my rule," he said, handing her the two weeks' rent. "I never keep money that I don't think rightfully belongs to me."

"What do you think of present conditions in the United States?" I asked; "business conditions, the unrest of workers everywhere, and what will be the outcome?"

His usually cheerful countenance grew very grave, and into his eyes came a far away anxious look. "There's a lot of men in these United States that need killing," said he, "and it ain't far away. When a man is willing to get richer by starving helpless women and children, and is more willing to pay money to men with guns to hold down their fathers and brothers, than he is to pay living wages to his men, he is heaping up trouble for himself as well as for other folks, no matter how good a man he claims to be, or what the law says he may do. God isn't asleep. I saw that in slavery days. When we were marching on Richmond through the Wilderness, God wasn't asleep. He was dealing with the slave and the slave owner and the people who had been looking on comfortably and didn't care. And it's coming again. It's the same sin, and the punishment will be the same. It's the same God, and he isn't asleep." And with bent head and sorrowful face the old soldier walked away.

Such men are terrible in the day of battle, when demonstrating that their God is not asleep. The pages of history bear witness how often they have proved it. Will they be called on again and in the United States?—*The Public*.

The History of the Libraries of Rochester

By William F. Yust

Librarian of the Public Library

Rochester has a population of 234,000. It is 25th in size among the cities of the United States. It is surrounded by the finest agricultural section in Western New York. Winding through its center is the picturesque Genesee River with falls and rapids rivaling those of Niagara. The water power thus created caused the founding of the original Flour City just 100 years ago.

The steam railroads and electric trolley lines, the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes provide the best of transportation facilities. In numerous branches of manufacture it leads the world. As a residence center it is unsurpassed, having a healthful climate, an abundance of pure water, excellent public schools, a splendid college and other educational institutions. Its flower seed and fruit tree industries, its carefully kept lawns and well lighted streets and its beautiful parks have caused it to be rechristened the Flower City.

That such a place has hitherto been without a free public library supported by the municipality is one of the anomalies of the day. In most cities of this size the public library is a well established institution with a history of growth and development extending over a quarter to half a century. But the subject was not entirely neglected as will appear from the following sketches.

Rochester Literary Company.

In April, 1822, Jonathan Child, afterwards the first Mayor of Rochester, and eleven other men were elected the first trustees of the Rochester Literary Company. This company consisted of "such persons as have in writing signified their consent and desire to associate themselves together for the purpose of procuring and erecting a public library." Nothing further is known of this first recorded effort except that it left no results of a permanent character.

Franklin Institute.

The Franklin Institute was organized for literary and scientific purposes October 13, 1826. During this same month the completion of the Erie Canal was celebrated and the publication of the first daily paper, the Rochester Daily Advertiser, was begun. In that year, Professor Eaton of Troy delivered a course of lectures here on chemistry. These were so well supported that at the close of the course the managers had a surplus of two or three hundred dollars. With this as a nucleus they began a public library and opened rooms on the southeast corner of Main and Water Streets in a building then known as the Johnson building but formerly occupied by the Eagle Bank.

This institution passed through many vicissitudes and changes of location until in 1836 it became blended with the Mechanics Literary Association.

Mechanics Literary Association.

The Mechanics Literary Association was founded February 10, 1836, by sixteen practical mechanics. Their object was "their own mutual advancement in scientific and literary knowledge and the mental and moral culture of apprentices and poor young men."

Their library began with donations amounting to 500 volumes from citizens generally. This was afterwards increased by the proceeds of several annual fairs. Their association flourished for six or eight years: their library expanded to 2000 volumes and some of their debates were chronicled as great gladiatorial combats. Then they failed gradually until the number of members was reduced to 20. In its declining days the library developed a migratory character, moving four times in ten years.

Rochester Athenaeum.

The Rochester Athenaeum was organized in 1829 with 60 members who promised to pay the Treasurer an annual fee of five dollars for three years. Their number was afterward increased to 130. Their object was to collect books and pamphlets and disseminate useful knowledge. The organization commenced operation in the Reynolds Arcade. Its first president was Col. Nathaniel Rochester, founder of the city. At the time of its incorporation February 12, 1830, it possessed 400 volumes. It was popular and successful for a time. But at the end of the three years the trustees declared it to be "languishing for want of support." Its pecuniary embarrassment became so great that for a time it maintained a merely nominal existence.

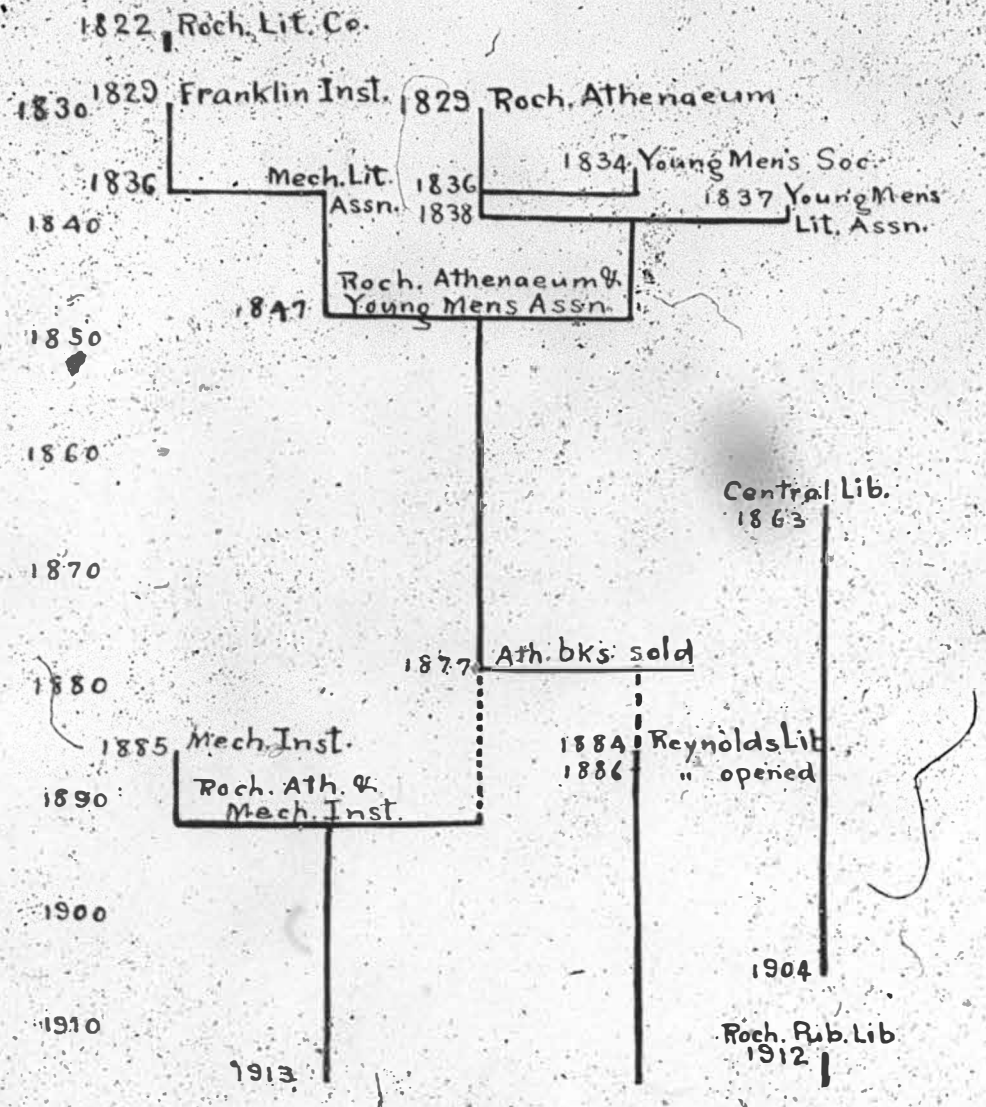
Its lack of support was due in part to two other organizations of young men who regarded it as "behind the progressive spirit of the times." These were the Young Men's Society, formed in 1834, and the Young Men's Literary Society, formed in 1837. By enlisting the interest of the most active and energetic men they eclipsed the Athenaeum and caused its temporary retirement.

Th origin of the latter is unusually interesting. "An offense of the deepest dye against the laws of God and man in 1837 directed public attention particularly to the necessity of establishing institutions for presenting intellectual and moral attractions to counteract the vicious allurements to which the young men of the city were largely exposed." The crime referred to was murder, the first in the history of the city, and it led to the first capital punishment inflicted in Monroe County. Thus the curse of Cain has played a part in the library development of the city.

Although public feeling was aroused to a high pitch, the Young Men's Literary Society began with less than a dozen members. Henry O'Reilly was its first president. Its beginnings were further embarrassed by the fact that the whole country was at the time in the throes of a financial panic. It had also "to contend against the prejudice and doubts occasioned by the repeated failures of former societies of kindred character."

Nevertheless it grew to prominence and power and in 1838 a union was effected between it and the Athenaeum, which became popularly known as the Rochester Athenaeum and Young Men's Association. This combination prospered for a time and in 1844 had a library of 2700 volumes. But owing to bad financial management and an apparent decline in public spirit it also dwindled to inconsequence.

Meanwhile the Mechanics Literary Association continued in a similar impoverished condition. Through their many migrations in search of shelter and support the two associations had drifted close together on the west side of State Street. In this "languishing condition they began to make overtures to one another with a view to uniting their forces. After much wooing a union finally took place in 1847 under the Athenaeum charter but designated



THE ROCHESTER ATHANAEUM AND MECHANICS ASSOCIATION.

The first president of the combined societies was William A. Reynolds. During the first two years after this union the membership fell from 125 to 55, "the books were little read and the class chiefly perused were works of fiction." Then came the "revolutionary" proposal "to establish an institution in the support of which every class in the community should be enlisted; which should offer the best advantages and

the highest attractions to every citizen and should bring them within reach of every man, woman and child in our city who can read the English language. Its aim should be to create a desire for knowledge where it does not exist; to diffuse information where otherwise it would never go; to supply an abundance of books which the poor man could read by his fireside."

When this proposal was adopted the president declared "Thus the association is adapted to the spirit of the age. It recognizes the equality of all classes of citizens. It makes no distinctions; it gives no preferences. The rich man and the poor man come together on the same terms; and they enjoy together the same rights. Each pays his one dollar and is admitted to all the privileges of the association. The grand object is the mental and moral improvement of all."

With the inauguration of this policy the association entered on a period of unprecedented success. In the course of time the membership rose to 1200, a high standard was established and a momentum developed which carried the association forward and upward for 20 years with only an occasional lapse, even through the dark days of the Civil War. In 1864 it had 12,000 volumes and a circulation of 29,317 volumes. A "Department of juvenile publications" was introduced in 1857.

The association had two leading lines of activity, the library and the rostrum. That was preeminently the day of the public lecture. The publication of the annual lecture course aroused the most gratifying enthusiasm. Corinthian Hall was regularly filled to overflowing and many had to be turned away. And well might they clamor for admittance when in a single year the program included J. G. Holland, George William Curtis, Moncure D. Conway, Ralph Waldo Emerson and John B. Gough. Within a few years a perfect galaxy of literary lights illumined the throngs in Corinthian Hall, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Louis Agassiz, Henry Ward Beecher, James Russell Lowell, Bayard Taylor, Wendell Phillips, and many others. George William Curtis appeared thirteen times.

It is impossible to measure the value of these courses. The Lecture Committee in its report of 1857 wrote "Our lecturers affirm that our library and reading rooms and Corinthian Hall are perfect models and moreover that Rochester audiences are the most attentive, discriminating and appreciative in the Union." Again "Rochester sells more books, circulates more periodicals, pays more postage and has a greater number of taxable inhabitants than any other town of equal population in the Union."

After making due allowance for the enthusiasm and local pride of the committee, the student of today realizes that the high standard set by these famous scholars, poets and orators has had a permanent influence on the Rochester character, while the addresses themselvees in printed form have become lasting legacies of mankind.

Nevertheless the annual membership fees and lecture course tickets were an uncertain quantity, depending on the sentiment of the people and the aggressiveness of the committees. There was a constant ebb and flow in its resources even during the years of its greatest prosperity. But a steady decline began at the expiration of its favorable lease in 1871, when on account of the increasing rental value of Corinthian Hall the library was moved to the second floor of the Rochester Savings Bank. Several years later it moved again and then again.

During these years of wandering in search of a home the city directory reports 20,000 volumes in the library for six consecutive years, which even in those days was unmistakable evidence of stagnation. In May

1877 the commissioners of the permanent fund, which amounted to $1800, were authorized to call a meeting of citizens and friends of the Institution to devise ways and means for placing it on a permanent basis. It was proposed to turn it over entirely to a few reliable and influential citizens to conduct it as they saw fit, only guaranteeing a good and permanent library for the city. When this proposal found no response the commissioners proposed to visit in a body those who might afford aid.

This plan also having failed, it looked as if they would have to allow the library to be sold and the institution to perish. Then its purchase was considered by the Board of Education with a view to uniting it with the Central Library. Finally it was advertized for sale by the sheriff to satisfy a number of creditors whose combined claims were less than $2000. The deplorable state of affairs was well summed up in the poet's line "This sleeps the pride of former years."

But before this sale took place the claims were settled by two public spirited citizens and the library passed into their hands. These were Mortimer F. Reynolds and George S. Riley, who later disposed of his interest to Mr. Reynolds. For five years the books disappeared entirely from public view. The small permanent fund in possession of the commissioners was however kept intact. In 1885 Mechanics Institute was founded by Henry Lomb, a member of the Athenaeum. In 1891 the Institute "absorbed the shadow of the old Athenaeum and took its name for the purpose of obtaining its charter, which was so liberal as to be highly advantageous." The Athenaeum fund of $3644 was also transferred to the Institute. Thus the Athenaeum continues to this day in the corporate name "Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute," but its activities have become entirely instructional and are very popular.

We have seen how 55 years after the election of the first library trustees the seventh organized effort came to an inglorious end. Beginning with the Franklin Institute they were all logically or chronologically connected. They never suffered through the improper use of their funds or the unworthy motives of their friends. As population grew and books accumulated the building up of a large library under competent management should have been a natural development. On the contrary the whole movement is a history of "disappointments, discouragements, and failures."

Why? First there was a lack of continuity of management. Changes in the personnel of the board of directors and officers were too frequent and extensive. Practically every effort at some time or other had the active support of some of the foremost citizens, but their activities were spasmodic. This weakness might have been lessened by the employment of a long term capable executive but for such methods the funds were not sufficient.

Second, the income was too irregular and uncertain. The two sources were membership fees and lecture course tickets. Both of these had to be renewed every year. Hence too much depended on who constituted the board of directors and the membership and lecture committee. One of these reported "the personal solicitation to dispose of membership tickets always an irksome and disagreeable duty to perform." Thus the financial resources of the library even in times of great prosperity were subject to such extreme fluctuations that regular and systematic expenditures were impossible. As the officers had to pay certain fixed charges, they repeatedly ran behind in spite of the "most unremitting and untiring efforts."

Third, the libraries were not free to the public generally. Their appeal was therefore of necessity limited to those who had the ability and the willingness to contribute to their support. The president's report of 1868 says "It is unfortunate that the association has never reached that standard of popularity which would secure a spontaneous and voluntary support from the public." It is surprising how many people will be debarred from participating in such an enterprise by the imposition of a small fee. Frequently it excludes those who have the greatest need of such help and who would profit most by its advantages.

The same difficulties beset the early advocates of public education until the problem was solved by making the schools free to all and requiring all to share in their maintenance. Obviously the same principle should apply to libraries. In fact the evolution of the modern public library has followed closely the path of the public school. Its claim to support rests on the theory that it is an integral part of a complete system of popular education. Its recognition as such is now practically universal.

The history of the association libraries in Rochester can be duplicated in almost every large city in the United States. With few exceptions they have all led the same precarious existence and met with the same fate. But this does not impair the value of their contribution to progress. Not only did they supply a want of their own time but they fostered the library idea and through their very failures emphasized the needy of something better. In this way they educated the public mind and prepared the way for the modern democratic institution.

Another type growing out of the association library is the endowed library. Numerous efforts had been made to induce men of wealth to establish such a foundation for Rochester. A hope of this kind was cherished more than ever in the dying days of the Athenaeum.

Reynolds Library

When Mr. Mortimer F. Reynolds bought the Athenaeum books in 1877 he did so with the intention of providing for their use by the public. He had been closely identified with the library movement and was familiar with its ups and downs. His brother William A. Reynolds had been the library's chief benefactor at Corinthian Hall and had given it quarters when it was moved away from there.

In 1882 after the books had been stored for five years the directory begins to list the Reynolds Library in the Arcade. In 1884 it was incorporated and received from Mr. Reynolds as a gift the old Athenaeum books, then said to be about 12,000 volumes. It opened its doors to the public in January, 1886.

For six years it was maintained entirely by cash donations from Mr. Reynolds amounting to $10,000 as a beginning and $3000 annually. At his death in 1892 he left to the library in accordance with its charter a large portion of his estate valued at over $650,000. In addition to the books the property now consists of the "Arcade," a large office building situated on Main Street in the heart of the business district, and a superb lot and the former residence of Mr. Reynolds at 150 Spring Street in which the library is housed.

From the beginning the library has enjoyed two essentials of good management, a sure and steady income and trustees of eminent fitness. The property has been carefully managed so that the rental income from the "Arcade" has maintained the library and provided for regular additions to the shelves. Many changes have been made, all for the purpose of enlargement and improvement.

In 1897 a serious cut was made in the income of the institution by the enactment of a law abolishing the previous exemption from taxes of library property when it is in the form of real estate. Since that time the library has paid over $96,000 in city and county taxes, which has eaten up one third of its income. The city is therefore in the unenviable position of taxing an institution which exists solely for the benefit of the public. While other cities have been taxing themselves to maintain public libraries Rochester not only has collected nothing for this purpose, but has actually been imposing a heavy tax upon the only public library within its borders. Although the library has flourished in spite of this handicap, it has had to curtail its expenses and limit the sphere of its activities.

From the start it has laid its chief emphasis on the department of reference. The aim has been that it "should be by way of eminence a reference library, and that the circulation of ordinary books should be only incidental and subsidiary to this main purpose." In spite of frequent suggestions that more stress be laid on circulation the Board has consistently adhered to its original "policy of collecting those works especially which have a distinctly reference character and of permitting their loan so far as not to encroach upon the needs of those who use its materials." This does not mean that the books do not circulate but that there is a very large number of those which by their very nature exclude themselves from popular home use.

Under this policy an unusually fine collection of books has been brought together. It has paid special attention to bound files of periodicals and has the most important Poole sets complete. It has many of the transactions of learned societies, numerous complete works of standard authors, as well as a choice selection in practically all the leading departments of knowledge. It has paid more attention to the wants of the general reader since the dispersion of the Central Library in 1904.

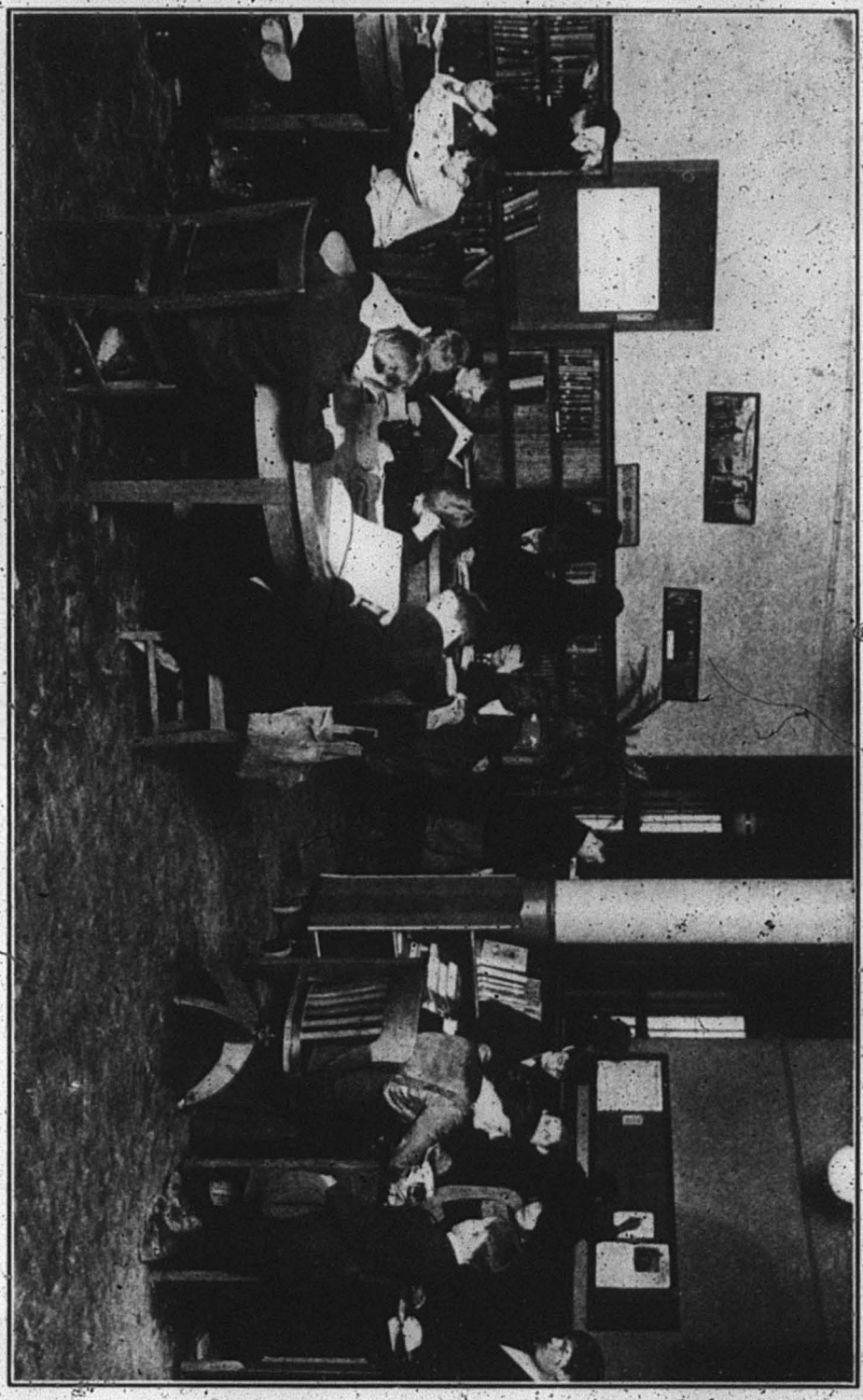
The entire collection of 72,574 volumes is in good condition, is carefully classified and catalogued and fully equipped to give prompt and efficient service. Last year 16,315 volumes were drawn for use in the library, for home use 42,274. A reading room containing newspapers and magazines is maintained on the second floor of the "Arcade," where the attendance last year was 67,163; at the library it was 59,653.

Mortimer Fabricus Reynolds was the first white child born in Rochester. Like the Father of his country he left no children but he has reared himself a noble and lasting memorial which has endeared him to all Rochesterians as the father of the only permanent library here in a history of a hundred years.

Central Library.

In 1863 the school libraries from 17 schools were consolidated. By selecting the best of these volumes and purchasing a few more a foundation of 1000 volumes was established, which became known as the Central Library. In 1875 it was moved from Bakers Block to the Free Academy building. Here it grew in size and popularity until it reached the age of 41 years.

It was started originally as a school library and as such received regular grants from the State Education Department amounting in later years to $1000 annually. This plus the $2000 locally raised in compliance with the state terms constituted the regular book fund. As the



CHILDREN'S ROOM IN THE EXPOSITION PARK BRANCH OF THE ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

library grew it gradually came to be used as a circulating library by the people generally, especially during the time between the closing of the Athenaeum and the opening of the Reynolds Library. For ten years it was the only library open to the people for reference and circulation and its popularity continued even after the opening of the Reynolds Library because of the large amount of fiction on its shelves.

But it was the intention of the law that the literature purchased with the funds thus provided should be used chiefly in the public schools. Its use by the general public was therefore declared to be a diversion, and in 1904 upon the order of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction the circulation was discontinued and the books were again distributed among the schools. At this time it had increased to 47,000 volumes and the yearly issue for home use had reached 136,054 volumes. This was the end of the Central Library and the beginning of the grade libraries in the class rooms of the public schools.

ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY.

This event left unsupplied a demand which had been cultivated for a generation. Naturally it caused a renewal of the agitation in favor of a public library. The Reynolds Library signified its willingness to change its policy to meet the changed conditions by supplying more fully the wants of the general reader for home use, provided its revenues were increased sufficiently. It was pointed out that this could be done either through relief from taxation or through a city appropriation or both. There is no record that either was granted.

Henceforth it became customary for speakers in eulogizing the city and for reports on civic needs to call attention to this lack. In 1904 a report of the Y. M. C. A. on the moral and social conditions of Rochester said, "It might be the part of wisdom to set our wash tub under the spout while Andrew Carnegie still lives to rain libraries." To which "The Rochesterian" in the Post Express replied "Rochester does not deserve the gift of a library. It allowed the Athenaeum to die for want of support, it cripples the Reynolds Library by a heavy tax and the School Board wiped out the Central Library before the people knew it was doomed."

Superintendent of Schools Clarence F. Carroll in his 1905 report says "No man can be said to have a complete education who has not learned to use a public library. This delayed public necessity is the most serious defect in our educational system and retards relatively the intelligence and culture of the entire community."

Mayor James G. Cutler spoke of the need of a municipal library building in his 1907 message and expressed confidence in the possibility of co-operation with the Reynolds Library. The report of this library the following year says "A municipal library generously planned and supported and wisely conducted is a desideratum and will undoubtedly be established in due time. It would be a grand achievement if such a library development were undertaken by private initiative and munificence as a matter of civic loyalty and pride in advance of the city's readiness to act."

At this stage of the discussion the Hon. Hiram H. Edgerton began to champion the library cause. As Mayor in his first message of 1908 he said, "The establishment of a public library is much to be desired and I earnestly hope that means may be provided to accomplish this result."

In his 1909 message he said "We can not lay claim of being in fact as well as in name a city of the first class until we shall have accomplished

this desirable end." In 1910 he referred to the problem with equal earnestness saying "It is a humiliating admission that we are behind nearly every important city in the country in this respect."

In 1911 he declared it "to be time that something definite was done. While there are so many other public improvements demanding attention, it may not seem practical at the present time to erect a pubile library building which would be a suitable indication of the education and culture of our people. But the main purpose of a library is to circulate books among the people. This could be done by means of circulating libraries, established in various parts of the city, and easily accessible to the people of those sections."

"This plan has been found to work admirably in other cities in connection with the central library. It is taking the books to the people. It would form the nucleus of a future public library worthy of the city. I shall therefore recommend such legislation by the state legislature this winter as may be required to put this plan in operation, and that ten thousand dollars be put in the budget this year for this purpose."

The appropriation was made and by direction of the Mayor a bill was proposed which became a law within a few months. It is in the form of an amendment to the city charter and reads as follows: The board of trustees of the public library consists of the mayor, the president of the board of education and five trustees of the public library appointed by the mayor, and it must annually elect one of its members president

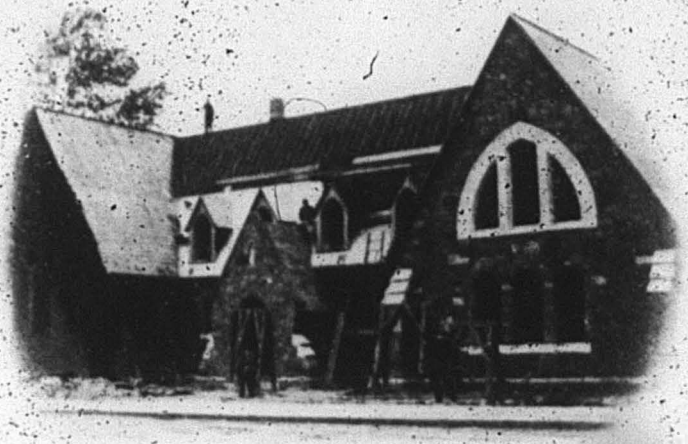
"The board of trustees of the public library has power to appoint to hold office during its pleasure such subordinates as may be prescribed by the board of estimate and apportionment, and to make rules for the transaction of its business, and subject to the approval of the board of estimate and apportionment, to contract with corporations for the use of real and personal property for library purposes, and it is its duty to establish a public library and branches thereof from time to time, and to make rules for the use of the same, and it has control, supervision, management and government thereof and of the maintenance, increase and extension thereof and it has the same power as heads of departments to authorize the expenditure of moneys."

In October 1911 Mayor Edgerton appointed the following trustees: Rev. Charles C. Albertson, Pastor Central Presbyterian Church; Mr. Edward G. Miner, Manager Pfaudler Manufacturing Co.; Dr. Rush Rhees, President University of Rochester; Mr. Charles H. Wiltsie, Lawyer.

These together with the Mayor and Prof. George M. Forbes, President of the Board of Education, as ex officio members constituted the first Board of Trustees. Prof. Forbes was in January 1912 succeeded by Mr. James P. B. Duffy.

The board engaged Mr. Frank P. Hill, Librarian of the Brooklyn Public Library, as Consulting Librarian. Mr. Hill spent some time investigating conditions in Rochester and in November 1911 submitted a comprehensive report outlining a public library system on broad lines and including many valuable suggestions and recommendations. He also had a list of 7500 books prepared, which the Board ordered by contract and paid for with the remainder of the $10,000 appropriated.

In February 1912 the trustees tendered the position of librarian to Mr. William F. Yust, Librarian of the Louisville Free Public Library, who began his new duties in April. Subsequent developments are fully described in the first annual report of the Rochester Public Library.



"Unknown Workman Against the Sky."

Hail, unknown workman, against the sky!
Who are you up there on the building?
I cannot see your face, or look into your eyes.
I pass by on the street below and wonder who you are.
One of many, are you, too, like me, the very center of the Universe?
Does the sun shine and the breeze blow specially for you?
Until now, I thought it was all for me.
Are you thinking thoughts of your own up there, as you lay the bricks and flick away the mortar from the edges with the ringing trowel?
Have you a home, wife, children, whom you love?
Have you books, flowers, hobbies, for the leisure hours?
Is your heart full only of your own affairs—what business have you with affairs of which I know nothing?
Can it be that I am no more to you than you are to me—not so much indeed?
Nay, you have built a great building in which one day I may be sheltered.
You, yourself, are at this moment good for my soul—am I any good for yours?
What have I ever done for you?
Hail, brother, look down in God's name and forgive my debt—
Unknown workman, far up there against the sky.
You yourself so much now to me, while I am still nothing at all to you.

—*John Palmer Gavit.*