

# **ROCHESTER WAYS**

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Rochester ways by Charles Mulford Robinson

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**CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON**

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—BY—

CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON



Scrantom, Wetmore & Company  
Rochester, N. Y.

The following pages seek to give a glimpse of the intimate side of Rochester life at the turning point of the century. Such is their only claim to historical importance. A small—in this case, a very small—part of the sketches have appeared from time to time in the writer's department of a local paper. It might be added that the present collection's companionship to "Third Ward Traits," on which it bases a hope of kindly reception, can be described as nearly resembling that of the city to the little mother district.

C. M. R.



## ROCHESTER WAYS

### I.

#### Main Street.

In the matter of pageants a new custom has lately come to Rochester. It is to rope off Main street and clear it of traffic. The custom has a civic merit. It gives to Rochesterians a chance to think about the street, and to note its dignity and what degree of beauty it has. In the pressure and turmoil of traffic this may seem little; but who is there, having from the vantage point of stand or window the view up and down the street on such an occasion, that does not feel some pride at the spectacle? The long thoroughfare is gay at these times with flags and bunting from end to end. The fine proportions, which are emphasized by the gleaming car tracks tapering in perspective; the clean pavement; the fluttering flags; the life and motion of the



rope-restrained, impatient crowd, all this makes an urban prospect of uncommon merit for a city of the size of Rochester.

No doubt, however, Rochesterians, realizing how truly Main street is the dominant chord in the song of the city's life, read into the scene more than a visitor could. How many things, indeed, a resident may see as he looks up and down the long street—how many things that would be invisible to strangers! To him it does not represent only a highway, a street important merely because he takes it when going to his work and when going home again, or when going to his amusements and his shopping. In his imagination there are surely afforded visions of other pageants—military, civic, funereal, and circus—sweeping down that street which has heard the blare of every band and the tramp of all the feet that ever have marched in Rochester. A small city has that advantage that the major part of all the spectacular side of its life is crowded, with certainty, into one or two of its thoroughfares.

He will see other things, too, than pageants. His remembering eyes, rising to the gayly dressed façades, will see in their place golden store fronts, glowing windows, and below them a gleaming pavement burnished by November's setting sun. And then, perhaps, the vision will change into a picture of the same street swept by winter storms, the clinging snow putting pure new sculpture on the gray façades, half veiling in white mist the double street lights, and hiding the tops of buildings in swirling clouds of snow.

In the long wait for the procession, the resident of Rochester will also pick out many a point in the street to dwell upon in half amused thought and tender affection. Starting at the Four Corners, that heart of the city—its pulsing then strangely stilled—he notes, with sure remnant of traditional pride, the curving corner of Powers Block. In fancy he sees the long double row of lighted street lamps, and the line of trolley cars starting at a whistle's sighing signal in the evening, like a lot of children trooping away to bed. His

gaze pauses at the Front street corner, with its mingled record of good and ill, the good crowding away the evil twice certainly in each year, when the market wagons of Christmas and Thanksgiving choke the rollicking way with cheer. He pictures the old Liberty Pole, only a memory now, on the summit of the hill—that hill where an extra horse used to help the bob-cars up, with gay jingle of bells, steaming of flanks, and prodigious kicking of legs, the man astride the helper like an outrider to the rickety chariot. The glory of the hill's summit is still, he recollects, as of old, the glory of the dawn, in the rush and clatter of market business, and of the Christmas-tide, with its city forest of evergreens when Christmas trees are before and behind you, and on either side of you, filling the air with their delicate, nerve-tingling aroma.

Oh, you strangers, who look up our Main street at these times, you do not see the half that is visible to the loving, reminiscent eyes of Rochester!