

A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837

By Paul E. Johnson

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Editorial Review

Review

“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*

“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*

About the Author

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A Shopkeeper's Millennium
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Economy
CHARLES FINNEY came to Rochester via the Erie Canal in the autumn of 1830. The route from Albany took him through the Mohawk Valley, then onto the broad plain that forms the southern shore of Lake Ontario. The last fifty miles passed through recently settled land, and on both sides of the canal Finney saw farmhouses and bustling villages surrounded by endless yellow wheatfields. East of the Genesee River, the fields stopped abruptly and Rochester began. Finney's boat crossed a line of new stores and houses, passed high over the river on a stone aqueduct, and delivered him to the center of the nation's newest city.
It was a city with the look and feel of a country town.1 Near the boat landing Finney picked his way through horses and wagons that visiting farmers had left at the central intersection. Glancing east, he saw and heard country people hawking produce from stalls on the bridge over the Genesee, while underneath them the famed Rochester mills ground mountains of local wheat into flour. A half block west, farmers auctioned wagons and livestock from the steps of a pretentious new courthouse. Across from the courthouse, sidewalks were clogged with farm families and with displays of shoes and clothing, nails, butter churns, farm tools, hats, and other simple manufactured goods. Had Finney looked upstairs or into the back rooms of some of the stores, he would have found that most Rochesterians were engaged in making those goods. The streets were filled not only with farmers and merchants butwith what Finney may have felt was an uncomfortable number of urban workingmen.
Turning south on Fitzhugh Street, the evangelist passed between stately Episcopal and Presbyterian churches and left the downtown crowds behind. Before him stretched a quiet, tree-lined block of Greek Revival

mansions. At the end of the block he found the door of a merchant and land speculator named Josiah Bissell. Bissell had invited the preacher to Rochester, and it was his neighbors who would attend Finney's meetings. They were the kinds of provincial entrepreneurs with whom Finney did his best work, men like those who governed the Connecticut and New York villages in which he had grown up. For the wealthiest men in Rochester were merchants, millers, and manufacturers engaged directly in an agricultural economy.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

Cities like Rochester were new in the 1820s. A generation earlier, every urban place in America had been a seaport, standing with its back to the countryside. Merchants in Boston and New York had more contact with their counterparts in London and the West Indies than with farmers a few miles away. Town and country were separate worlds. But after 1815 improvements in inland transportation extended the market and turned farmers into businessmen; inland cities shot up overnight to process and ship farm products, and sometimes to turn them into finished goods for sale back to the farmers. It was in the 1820s that cities and large towns began continuously to grow faster than the countryside. And it was in that decade that Rochester became the fastest-growing community in the United States.2 Standing at the junction of the Erie Canal and the Genesee River, Rochester was the most spectacular of the new cities created by the commercialization of agriculture.

The Genesee country was among the prizes of the American Revolution. Title fell to the state of Massachusetts, then to successive groups of speculators, and finally to farmers.3 In the 1790s New Englanders crossed the mountains and began colonizing the Great Lakes Plain; the Genesee Valley was among their first stops. Early in the new century the wilderness gave way to tilled fields and pastures and neat Yankee villages. Links with the east were primitive, and the first settlers produced little more than what they and their neighbors used. The principal crop was Indian corn, and farmers and their animals ate that themselves. There was, of course, a small surplus. A trickle of livestock and logs made its way down the Susquehanna River and into Pennsylvania. Even smaller amounts made the tortuous and expensive trip overland to Albany.4 But most went downriver to Rochester.

For many years the nearness of an unfriendly Canadian border and the fevers that threatened settlers near the lake kept farmers out of the lower Genesee. But the perfect mill site at the falls (the river drops two hundred feet within what is now downtown Rochester) had attracted attention from the beginning. In 1812 optimistic promoters laid out the village of Rochesterville. The town milled Genesee produce and sent it over the lake and up the St. Lawrence to Montreal, a touchy and unpredictable market subject to regulation by a foreign government that had farmers of its own.5 At the same time, primitive transportation kept the Genesee country largely dependent on its own resources. Scores of merchants and artisans set up shop in Rochester to sell goods imported from outside the region, and to turn livestock into salt meat and shoes and harnesses, wheat into flour and whiskey, and logs into lumber and furniture--all for sale back to the countryside. When workmen digging the Erie Canal reached Rochester in 1821, they found a busy village of 1,500 growing in symbiosis with the farming community of the Genesee Valley.

Canal workers finished the through route to New York Cityin 1823. Overnight, the Genesee Valley became one of the great grain-growing regions of the world, and Rochester was America's first inland boom town. Assured cheap and easy access to the New York market, settlers plowed pastures and cornfields and planted wheat up to their doorways. Tilled acreage south of Rochester doubled between 1822 and 1835. Closer to the canal and to the mills at Rochester, it tripled. The region's only city stood at the center of its richest agricultural county.6 Rochester processed Genesee wheat and sent it on to New York City, and the growth of both town and country was measurable in barrels of flour. The town exported 26,000 barrels in 1818, a good pre-canal year. Ten years later the figure stood at 200,000, and by the close of the 1830s Rochester produced a half-million barrels of flour annually.7 In the same years the village grew from a few hundred to 20,000 persons.

Rochester was first and last a mill town. Four- and five-story stone flour mills lined the river at the city's center and dominated the skyline as well as the economy. Of the town's 117 manufacturing establishments in 1827, 10 were flour mills. These accounted for 55 percent of Rochester's investment in manufactures, and a full 71 percent of its manufacturing output. 8 Built on plans developed in the 1790s by Oliver Evans, the

mills were lessons in what could be done with water power and money. Boats pulled up alongside them and workmen shoveled grain into buckets on a vertical conveyor. Wheat went up the side, onto the top floors, and through machinery that cleaned it and ground it into flour, spread it on the floor to cool, picked it up, and dropped it into barrels. A visitor left one of these establishments gasping that it was "as full of machinery as the case of a watch."9

The mills hired few men directly, and they made great fortunes for even fewer. But they were the linchpin in the Rochester economy. Commercialization enabled farmers to trade their surplus for manufactured goods, and the mills drew them into Rochester, paid them cash for their wheat, andsent them onto the streets looking for things to buy. Much of what they bought was imported. Westbound traffic on the canal carried finished goods as well as emigrants, and Rochester merchants stocked their shelves with finished goods from New York City and around the world. Its position at midpoint on the canal also made Rochester the wholesaler to country merchants, adding another strand to the ties that bound town and country.

But imported goods were expensive. For everyday necessities the farmers continued to rely upon craftsmen in Rochester, and their insatiable demand turned the village into a manufacturing city. More than half the adult men in Rochester were skilled artisans, most of them engaged in turning local raw materials into finished goods for sale back to the countryside. The sixty-five workshops of 1823 concentrated on the necessities and little luxuries of rural life: guns and nails, shoes, hats, woolen cloth, wagons, furniture, farm tools--even jewelry and mirrors.10 These last testify to a growing prosperity and urbanity in the countryside. By the late 1820s merchants' stocks of imported silks and fine wines had grown, and the Rochester market supported three bookstores. Artisans now made carriages as well as wagons, and builders moved out to duplicate Rochester's Greek Revival mansions on the greens of Palmyra and Geneseo and other valley towns. In 1835 a Rochester manufactory began filling the parlors of those homes with that seldom-played symbol of the Anglo-American bourgeoisie, the piano--testimony to the "increasing wealth and improving taste of the people of the surrounding country, as well as of the city."11

Most Rochester entrepreneurs made their money in direct dealings with farmers, and engagement in a rural economy and conformity to its norms sustained a peculiarly countrified urban business community. Of the ninety-two merchants, millers, and manufacturers who made up Rochester's richest tenth of taxpayers in 1827, thirty-two can be traced to theirplaces of birth. A full 84 percent of these were natives of inland New England and thus shared the cultural inheritance of their customers in the hinterland. They shared more than that, for most had moved into western New York early in their lives and had done business in the villages surrounding Rochester. Of the twenty-nine whose residences prior to arriving in Rochester are known, 59 percent came from towns that were within fifty miles of the city. Many of them kept substantial investments in the villages. Others relied on rural relatives and friends for capital and business information. And they retained mentalities that, along with their money and their strategic locations, made them legitimate spokesmen for the more prosperous elements of Genesee Valley society. City ministers frequently exchanged pulpits with their colleagues in the hinterland. Rural-based agricultural societies and committees for the distribution of Bibles and temperance tracts welcomed the participation of Rochester entrepreneurs and often accepted their leadership, and it was no accident that four of the five state committeemen of the overwhelmingly rural Antimasonic Party were Rochester businessmen.12 For while Rochester grew into a city, it kept the economic functions and the business elite of a country market town.

Of course, not every store and workshop catered to the country trade. For a time in the 1820s the canal made Rochester the chief provisions market for migrants on their way farther west, and canal travelers continued to spend money in Rochester even after such newer towns as Buffalo, Cleveland, and Detroit had taken up the bulk of their trade. In addition, the Rochester working class was large enough to support scores of groceries and small retail stores. It was here--and apparently only here--that men who had little in common with the farmers could prosper. Every known Irish Catholic businessman, for instance, avoided the country trade. Their leader, Henry O'Reilley, owned a Democratic newspaper which, if voting returns are any indication, found few readersin the countryside. Peter Lynch operated a combined grocery and boardinghouse on one of Rochester's poorest streets. And his countrymen James Buchan and Patrick Kearney, the richest Irishmen in

town, provided workingmen and "gentlemen traveling" with cheap ready-made clothing.13 Men who entered the country trade without meeting its cultural and behavioral standards learned painful lessons. When marginal retailers failed during the panic of 1837, one of the more substantial merchants listed the reasons why. The Scotch Dry Goods Store was run by foreigners who published misleading advertising and hired dishonest and impudent clerks. Hamilton Leonard kept bad company and spent too much time at the theater. And E. W. Collins, who cheated his customers repeatedly,"ought to be among savages and not among the citizens of Rochester."14

A few of these outsiders operated substantial businesses, but none made great fortunes. For Rochester's real money was in the country trade. The nature of that trade and of the men recruited into it produced urban entrepreneurs who retained the social practices and the moral vision of village storekeepers.

FAMILY CAPITALISM

The merchants, millers, and master craftsmen who flocked to Charles Finney's meetings worked successfully within the limits imposed by the Rochester market. The first of those limits was set by the farmers. The people of the Genesee country were natives of inland New England: clannish, self-righteous, and suspicious of outsiders.15 Wealth in Rochester went only to men who could win and hold their goodwill. The second limit derived from economic scale: the more lucrative operations demanded more capital than aspiring businessmen had at hand. Rochester entrepreneurs shared the risks and rewards of enterprise with others--usually relatives and long-termassociates. Individual fortunes were meshed with social networks that linked wealthy families with each other and with similar families in the hinterland, and entrepreneurial behavior was typified by caution and cooperation, and not by ungoverned individual ambition. The result was a remarkably orderly and closed community of entrepreneurs.

We begin with land speculators. Rochester grew from a wilderness to a city overnight, and the first fortunes went to men who bought and sold the wilderness. As settlement accelerated in 1815, central Rochester was held in four parcels: the Hundred-Acre Tract and the Frankfort Tract west of the river, and the Andrews-Atwater Tract and Enos Stone's farm on the east side. The Hundred-Acre Tract was bought in 1803 by three gentlemen from Maryland: Charles Carroll, William Fitzhugh, and Nathaniel Rochester. The Fitzhughs moved north and established themselves as one of the leading families on the upper Genesee. They kept their large holdings in Rochester and (in partnership with Nathaniel Rochester's son-in-law Jonothan Child) invested in boom-town construction projects. The Episcopal parish register records a few of their marriages and births in the 1820s. But William Fitzhugh and his family stayed up the valley, leaving the administration of their Rochester holdings to partners and to his son-in-law Frederick Backus, a Rochester physician. The Carrolls joined them on the upper Genesee, and sent one son downriver to manage their investments.16

But it was Nathaniel Rochester who moved into the Genesee first, and who gave his name to the village at the falls.17 At the head of his family, a caravan of wagons and carriages, and an indeterminate number of slaves, he rode up the Susquehanna and into the Genesee country in 1810. He settled at Dansville, where he operated a 400-acre farm and looked after investments scattered all over the region. Prospects for settlement at the falls brightened with the end of war in 1815, and Rochester sold his farm and bought another in Bloomfield.From there he made frequent seventeen-mile visits to his holdings at the falls. In 1818 he moved to Rochester. With the center of activities now at Rochester, members of his extensive family began filtering into town. The colonel's son-in-law Jonothan Child followed him in from Bloomfield. From Bath came his son William, already one of the leading Bucktail Republican politicians in the state. The connection grew with the arrival of Rochester's son Thomas and his son-in-law Harvey Montgomery, who had been in the dry-goods business in nearby Parma, and another son-in-law, Dr. Anson Colman. Along with their friends, associates, and distant kin, the Rochesters formed a powerful clan whose size defies full description. Every Fourth of July the colonel gave a picnic on the grounds of his house on Spring Street. It was the most elaborate and reputedly the largest of the town's social gatherings in the early 1820s. Only members and close friends of the family were invited.18

North of Colonel Rochester's holdings stood the Frankfort Tract, bought in 1810 by Matthew, Francis, and David Brown in partnership with Thomas Mumford and John McKay.19 A Massachusetts family, the

Browns had been among the founders of Rome, New York, in 1794. Early in the new century, Francis Brown went to live with an uncle who traded with the Indians in Detroit. It was on one of his visits home that he looked into prospects on the lower Genesee and recommended them to the family. They bought land along the west bank in 1810. Francis and Matthew Brown left the family seat in Rome and moved onto the new holdings. Their cousin Warren followed, speculating in mercantile ventures in Rochester and the surrounding towns before settling at Penfield, just outside Rochester. Francis Brown soon married a daughter of the proprietor of that town, and the family edged steadily out into the countryside. Their partner, Thomas Mumford, a Yale-educated lawyer who had settled east of Rochester at Cayuga Bridge, bought out John McKay, and went into partnershipwith his son William and his brother Silas. Thomas and Silas Mumford stayed at Cayuga Bridge. Young William came to Rochester and managed the family holdings.

The pattern of family partnerships and family ties extending into the hinterland held up east of the river, where Samuel J. Andrews and Caleb Atwater bought a string of mill sites and the land behind them in 1812.20 Atwater was a physician, merchant, and realtor who had been among the first settlers at Canandaigua, the pre-canal commercial center of the Genesee Valley. Andrews was Atwater's brother-in-law and a merchant near New Haven, Connecticut. Along with the Whittleseys of New Haven, they bought Rochester land. Andrews settled in Rochester in 1815 and built the town's first stone building at what became the corner of St. Paul and Main. His son Samuel G. Andrews, along with William and Frederick Whittlesey, came in from New Haven and took over active promotion of the Andrews-Atwater Tract.

The last large parcel was Enos Stone's farm.21 Like several families who became their Rochester neighbors, the Stones were old residents of Lenox, Massachusetts. With some of those neighbors, Enos Sr. bought Brighton Township (east Rochester) in 1789. His son Orange settled there the following year. His younger sons Alvah and Enos Jr. stayed in Lenox until 1810, when he gave them each a large farm on the Genesee. The father remained in Lenox until his wife died in 1816. Then he moved and lived out the rest of his life as a member of Enos Jr.'s household at the falls. Alvah and Orange remained gentlemen farmers in the nearby townships of Brighton and Penfield. But Enos Jr.'s land lay directly in the path of the Genesee boom town. He held on shrewdly, selling a piece in 1817 but keeping most of the farm intact until prices reached a peak in 1826. Then he sold it and became very rich.

These were the men who owned Rochester before it was built. Certainly they were a diverse group, ranging from New England hill farmers to seaport merchants to members of theMaryland gentry. But they had much in common. All of them came to Rochester as members of business networks made up largely or entirely of their relatives. Enos Stone, with his father in the house and two brothers in adjoining townships, headed the simplest of these families. Nathaniel Rochester headed the most complex: a fantastic labyrinth of connected sons and sons-in-law (not to mention two more sons managing family land in Missouri and Kentucky), old neighbors and business associates from Maryland and from up the valley, and an indeterminate but large number of distant kin in Rochester. Each of these combinations included prominent citizens of other western New York towns: the Mumfords at Cayuga Bridge, the Stone brothers in Brighton and Penfield, Moses Atwater in Canandaigua, the Carrolls and Fitzhughs in Livingston County. From the beginning, large business operations in Rochester hinged on cooperation within and between the wealthier families of the Genesee Valley.

The landowners of 1815 were firstcomers. While they owned a wilderness and made money selling it to newcomers, they may have sensed that the transformation of family land into urban real estate would spell the end of them and their kind. That, however, was not the case. The country trade remained the source of great fortunes throughout the 1820s and 1830s, and we have seen already that ties between the countryside and the entrepreneurial elite remained strong even at the height of the boom.22 And within Rochester, the rich men of 1827 continued to organize their operations along family lines. Few of these men had enough money to build flour mills or speculate in land for themselves, and they joined forces with members of their families. The result of participation in the boom-town business world was not a collapse of kinship but the strengthening of old family loyalties and the invention of new ones.

The nature and extent of those relationships can be demonstrated by comparison with an older and more

establishedelite: the overseas merchants of Salem in 1810. In Salem, where the marriage of family and enterprise is almost legendary, 42 percent of the merchants were in business with relatives.23 Among the richest tenth of Rochester property holders in 1827, the figure was an identical 42 percent. That, of course, is startling evidence of a strong relationship between kinship and enterprise in Rochester, and we might be tempted to leave it at that. But the relationships underneath those uniform totals are equally revealing. The formation of Salem partnerships was governed by what must be called dynastic considerations. 24 Agreements between brothers were most common, but they were nearly equaled by combinations of fathers and sons. These arrangements united family assets in a single male line. Uncle-nephew partnerships served the same purpose, for many of them joined childless men with their brothers' sons. Such agreements reunited fortunes that had been split by inheritance, sending the fragments to a single male heir.25 The Salem arrangements speak of a strong corporate sense of family: fully 48 percent of family partnerships crossed generational lines.

In Rochester that figure dropped to 33 percent, while there was a sharp increase in the number of agreements between brothers-in-law. In part this was due to the relative absence of fathers and uncles in Rochester's young elite. Businessmen and manufacturers had left older relatives at home, and most were too young to have adult sons.26 But even more, the Rochester pattern reflected the need to increase blocks of capital rather than preserve them. The young Salemite who went into business with his father or paternal uncle kept family resources intact and provided them with an heir. But he seldom brought new money into the concern. In alliances with in-laws, the Rochesterians merged the fortunes of separate families and thus increased the potential pool of resources. Perhaps the Rochester pattern reflects a weakening of ties between generations. (In the rural New England homeland,such ties had been eroding for a hundred years.27) But it points more strongly to the invention of new loyalties between distant kin and to a broadening concept of family. Alliances between in-laws increased available capital and at the same time entrusted its use to men who shared familial as well as contractual obligations. Even businessmen who formed partnerships with non-relatives did not join with strangers but sought out men whose long-term friendship and association established them as surrogate kin. When Josiah Bissell joined with Harvey and Elisha Ely, he was continuing a partnership that had existed at home in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The merchants Charles Hill and A. V. T. Leavitt had grown up together in Bethlehem, Connecticut. And young Everard Peck entered the publishing business with Silas Andrews, under whom he had served an apprenticeship in Hartford. 28 The result of all this might be termed a fraternalization of economic relationships--both within wealthy families and between them. Such arrangements united large segments of the business elite. Altogether, 55 percent of these men formed partnerships with others who ranked among the richest 10 percent of property holders. Twenty-seven percent formed more than one of these alliances; 12 percent formed three or more. Rochester's entrepreneurial community was no capitalist free-for-all. It was a federation of wealthy families and their friends.

All of this points to stability in the upper reaches of the Rochester economy. Stability, however, implies continuity over time, and a full 45 percent of the 1827 elite either died or left Rochester within the next ten years. Some--notably Abelard Reynolds and William Atkinson--are known to have failed at least once. And Josiah Bissell poured his fortune into a Sabbath-keeping line of stages and packet boats and died a pious bankrupt in 1831.29 But despite the ups and downs of individual members, the elite families of 1827 retained continuous control over the Rochester economy. Of those whostayed in Rochester between 1827 and 1837, 71 percent remained among the richest tenth of property holders. These accounted for 41 percent of the 1837 elite. Twenty-three percent of the others were their sons, brothers, and in-laws; 7 percent were their business partners. Thus all but 29 percent of the 1837 elite were tied by blood, marriage, or business association to men who had held that status ten years earlier --and this over a boom-and-bust decade that saw the population shoot from 9,000 to 18,000 persons. The continuity stretched unbroken from the beginnings of settlement. In 1837 four of Rochester's five richest men were sons and sons-in-law of the original proprietors of 1815.30

ROADS TO RICHES

What, then, of the fabled individualism and instability of Jacksonian society? Rochester folklore is filled with poor boys who wandered into town in the early years and finished their lives in mansions. No doubt local patriots romanticized these stories, but they did not make them up. For among the ten richest men in Rochester in 1827 there were two who had grown up amid poverty and/or extreme and repeated economic insecurity. There was indeed room at the top. Thomas Kempshall and Abelard Reynolds were poor boys who found it.

The father of Abelard Reynolds was a farmer and sometime saddler who went broke in at least seven New York and Connecticut towns before his son was eighteen years old.31 When Abelard reached his twentieth birthday the family was living (and failing again) in Windsor, Connecticut. He obtained his father's permission and traveled to the home of Eliphalet Wells in Vermont. Wells was no stranger. Years earlier he had worked as a journeyman saddler and lived in the Reynolds household. Abelard became a journeyman and then a partner in the Vermont saddlery, and after a year he left with his firsthundred dollars. On the way home he stopped in Massachusetts and made a down payment on a farm. Then he moved his parents to the farm and went to New Haven with his mother, where they borrowed the rest of the money from his uncles. Abelard finished that year on the new farm, helping his parents establish their first stable home. Then he left permanently. It was 1807 and he was twenty-two years old.

Sometime that year Abelard Reynolds opened a saddlery in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. His activities there are obscure until 1809, when he married a daughter of King Strong and joined one of Pittsfield's first families. He stayed two more years, then roamed through New York and Ohio looking for opportunities to suit an ambitious and now well-connected young man. On the return trip, he stopped at the falls of the Genesee and visited Enos Stone, who was tending his farm and acting as agent for Nathaniel Rochester. It was Stone who talked Reynolds, an old Berkshire County neighbor, into settling at the falls, and it seems to have been Stone who introduced him to Colonel Rochester. Reynolds must have impressed the colonel at their first meeting in 1812. For in that year Rochester used his influence with his former business partner Thomas Hart and with Hart's son-in-law Henry Clay to secure the appointment of Reynolds as the first postmaster of the village. Nine years later the colonel still recognized him as a close friend of the family, and Reynolds never strayed far from the Rochester connection.32 He and four of the colonel's sons and sons-in-law helped found the Masonic Lodge in the village, and Reynolds sat as director of the Bank of Rochester while it was under Rochester family control.33 In 1825 he was the Rochester faction's successful candidate for New York assemblyman. Speculating wisely in west-side land and investing the profits in a four-story office building and hotel, this bankrupt saddler's son became one of the richest men in Rochester. But there was nothing of the *arriviste* about Abelard Reynolds. Beginning at the bottom of village society, he knew how tofunction at the top: as Methodist trustee, as bank director, as Master Mason, as faction politician, and as the husband of a wealthy woman and the father of wealthy children. For Reynolds's individual fortune was inseparable from the social system in which it was made, and from the values and social skills that had won him entry into that system.

Another "self-made" member of the elite was Thomas Kempshall.34 Kempshall was not only poor but (to complete a mythmaker's dream) an immigrant and an orphan as well. His family came from England and settled ten miles east of the falls in 1806. The father died that year. The oldest son, Willis, found homes for his nine brothers and sisters, then walked to the falls and found work as a carpenter for the Brown brothers. Once established, he sent for his brother Thomas. Thomas worked with Willis, then was placed as a clerk in Ira West's dry-goods store. (It is difficult to determine how this relationship began, but it is noteworthy that both Ira West and Willis Kempshall were Masons.) Kempshall worked hard and learned the business, and in 1823 West took him in as a full partner. When his patron retired the next year, Kempshall bought the business and went into partnership with John Bush, who had clerked the previous two years for Kempshall and West. By 1824 Thomas Kempshall was a man with a future. And like Abelard Reynolds, he took on the life style and responsibilities of a man of property. In that year he married a sister of Everard Peck, a wealthy publisher and speculator from Hartford, and his fellow communicants at St. Luke's Church elected him vestryman. He and John Bush continued to operate their dry-goods store and opened a large mill-furnishing

and millstone factory in the second ward. In 1827, as the junior partner of Ebenezer Beach, he built the largest flour mill in the United States.35 Eleven years later he took a seat in Congress.

For these men, entry into the elite hinged on participation in the elite social world and acceptance within it, and mobilityin boom-town Rochester had a peculiarly "sponsored" character. 36 Even the most spectacular leaps between social strata posed no threat to the elite or to established ways of doing things at the top of society. Nor did successful participation in the economy isolate the new rich from their own families and former friends. Abelard Reynolds surrounded himself with one of the most elaborate clans in Rochester. When he held the first Methodist services at his house in 1818, the congregation included his father and sister, who had followed him out of Massachusetts. Before long, his sister-in-law Mary Strong came from Pittsfield and married a son of Matthew Brown, and another of his wife's sisters married into the mill-owning Gibbs family.37 Reynolds sat at the center of a family network that joined his humble past and his prosperous present, and--when his son opened an extensive seed and farm supplies house in Reynolds Arcade--he passed his good fortune on to a new generation. Thomas Kempshall, the immigrant boy turned miller and congressman, also had company at the top. His dry-goods store stood a few doors from the central corner of Buffalo and State. Next door stood printing offices owned by his in-laws Everard and Jesse Peck, and on the other side was the largest hat factory in western New York, owned and operated by his brothers, Willis and Timothy Kempshall.38 A successful man in Rochester seldom left his relatives and friends behind, for the economy tended to select kin groups and social networks rather than individuals for success. The presence of Kempshall and Reynolds among the town's ten richest men suggests that the rags-to-riches story was acted out with considerable frequency. It is the related assumption that the entrepreneurial world was filled with freely competing individualists that must be set aside. Neither of these men made himself. No doubt both were ambitious and talented, but talent and ambition were of no use without the cooperation and patronage of other men. Abelard Reynolds's road to richesled first to one of his father's former employees, then to his uncles in New Haven, his father-in-law in Pittsfield, a wealthy old neighbor who had settled at Rochester, and finally to Colonel Rochester himself--and thence to the immense group resources of the Rochester connection. Neither is it difficult to pinpoint the time at which Thomas Kempshall's fortunes turned for the better. It was his employment and subsequent sponsorship by Ira West. Kempshall's biographer knew that, and he concluded his success story with an odd mix of rugged individualism and a recognition of the importance of friendships with powerful men. "The orphan boy of a foreign emigrant, thrown upon his own resources, unaided but by the patron who had the discrimination to discover merit ..."39

CAPITALISM, MOBILITY, AND THE ROCHESTER REVIVAL

When asked to explain nineteenth-century revivals, most historians point to social dislocations that attended migration and the expansion of the market after 1790. Young persons dissolved old social ties and worked out their careers far from home, and each was forced to create an identity and a system of ethics pretty much out of whole cloth. The result was a nationwide epidemic of unregulated greed, family collapse, adolescent trauma, status anxiety, cultural confusion, simple loneliness, and--as a result--revival religion. To use an older and more cheerful phrase, revivals were society's antidote to individualism.40 A systematic test of that proposition is long overdue.

Precisely how could individualism translate into religious tension? In Tocqueville's America, the great concomitant of individualism was movement: migration from place to place in search of opportunity, and mobility between social strata once it was found. And mobility is migration between social worlds. A man who moves from one place to another separateshimself from the family and neighbors with whom he grew up and in collaboration with whom he arrived at his system of values and his personal identity. Even if he stays at home, vertical mobility creates psychic distance from former intimates who move in different directions or at different speeds. Among migrants and the newly successful (or newly failed), old values are challenged every day. Norms and conceptions of self formulated in another world become alien and oddly unreal, generating confusion and personal anxiety that are often resolved in religious ways.41 The religious potential of individualism and spatial and occupational mobility lies in their tendency (to borrow a phrase

from Tocqueville's followers) to atomize society and thus to deprive people of old ways of understanding themselves and their places in the world.

Rochester was America's first inland boom town, certainly a good place to look for normless men on the make. Few Rochester entrepreneurs, however, fit that description. And if we limit attention to men who joined churches during Charles Finney's revival, we shall find even fewer for whom migration and participation in the entrepreneurial world had been an isolating or norm-shattering experience. More than others, Finney's converts were firmly engaged in the country trade and in the elaborate and stability-inducing relationships through which it was conducted.

Take the case of migration. In 1830 every adult in the city had come from some other place, and no doubt many moved too quickly and too often to maintain stable relationships with kinfolk or anyone else. The Protestant churches, however, formed remarkably stable islands within this shifting population. Both before and during the revival, churches were filled disproportionately with businessmen and master craftsmen and their families--persons who enjoyed far greater residential stability than did other elements of the Rochester population (Table 1).42 More revealing, the men who joined churches during the Finney revival were more stable than were otherseven in the same stability-prone occupations--and this despite their relative youth.43 Anyone wishing to ascribe the Rochester revival to rootlessness must explain the fact that Finney's converts were the most firmly rooted men in town.

Nor had they left their relatives and friends at home. More than others, they came to Rochester in the company of fathers, uncles, and adult brothers, and they made their money in close and continuous collaboration with members of their families. We have seen that illustrated in the careers of Rochester land speculators and of Abelard Reynolds and Thomas Kempshall --all of them Protestant church members. We see it again in Table 2, which describes partnerships formed by Rochester entrepreneurs in the 1820s. The data are rough and incomplete, for family relationships are inferred from surnames.44 The table is useful, not as an absolute measure, but as a means of comparing patterns of cooperation among three groups of entrepreneurs: those who were church members in 1829, those who joined churches during the revival, and those who never joined a Rochester church. The results are clear. Churchgoing merchants and masters tended to be the proprietors of family firms. Charles Finney's converts entered partnerships with members of their families twice as frequently as did proprietors who stayed outside the churches. The converts were successfulmen. And like other nineteenth-century businessmen, they stayed in one place and maintained strong ties with relatives. 45 Insofar as there was a relationship between revival religion and mobility and its attendant social isolation, it was demonstrably negative.

Of course family partnerships and residential stability are not proof that Finney's converts had avoided the moral dangers of Jacksonian capitalism. It is possible that they stayed in Rochester and cooperated with brothers and brothers-in-law, and still abandoned the standards of right behavior that they had learned in their home villages. That, however, is unlikely. For the entrepreneurs in Finney's audience seem to have been precisely those who were directly dependent on the countryside. Their livelihoods hinged not only on cunning and business acumen but on reputations for honesty and reliability, and on conformity to the cultural and behavioral norms of rural western New York. Among such men, ungoverned ambition was a fatal liability.

The relation between church membership and involvement in the country trade cannot be documented systematically, for it is impossible to determine the clientele served by most businessmen. But it is clear that men who were independent of thecountryside and its moral judgments spent less time in church than those who were not. Most Rochesterians were laborers and journeyman craftsmen, and few of them went to church. Neither did the grocers and boardinghouse keepers who operated businesses in their neighborhoods. These men were relatively poor, and we might conclude that the churches were filled with rich men regardless of their economic functions. But even wealthy entrepreneurs who were independent of the country trade stayed away from church. Forwarding merchants and hotel owners, for instance, were attached to the canal rather than to the farms. Finney touched a few of them, but the vast majority remained outside the

churches throughout the 1820s and 1830s.46 The evangelist drew most of his audience from among the millers, merchants, master craftsmen, and county-seat lawyers who had filled the churches since the beginnings of settlement--men who with few exceptions derived their livings from the country trade.
But perhaps the most telling evidence of ties between the churches and the countryside was the revival itself. Finney made repeated forays into the hinterland, and the revival spread quickly into the surrounding counties. Hundreds of farm families participated in the Rochester meetings, often at the invitation of relatives and friends in the city. And at the height of the excitement Finney had the help of nine ministers from the surrounding countryside. Two of these stayed on to accept Rochester pulpits.47 The revival did not derive from the problems of ambitious men who had moved to the city and then lost their moral bearings. On the contrary, the revival reaffirmed the moral unity shared throughout the 1820s and 1830s by Genesee farmers and the more prosperous members of the Rochester business community. Whatever generated religious troubles for merchants and masters, it had little to do with rootlessness, isolation, and anomie.
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