

Center of Government and Commerce

The rapid growth of population and commerce brought by the Erie Canal gave Rochester the nickname “Young Lion of the West.”



Left: 1894 view looking west along the Erie Canal. Note the Exchange Street bridge (foreground) and Old City Hall, the last tall building in the center of photo. Rochester Images: From the Collection of the Rochester Public Library Local History Division



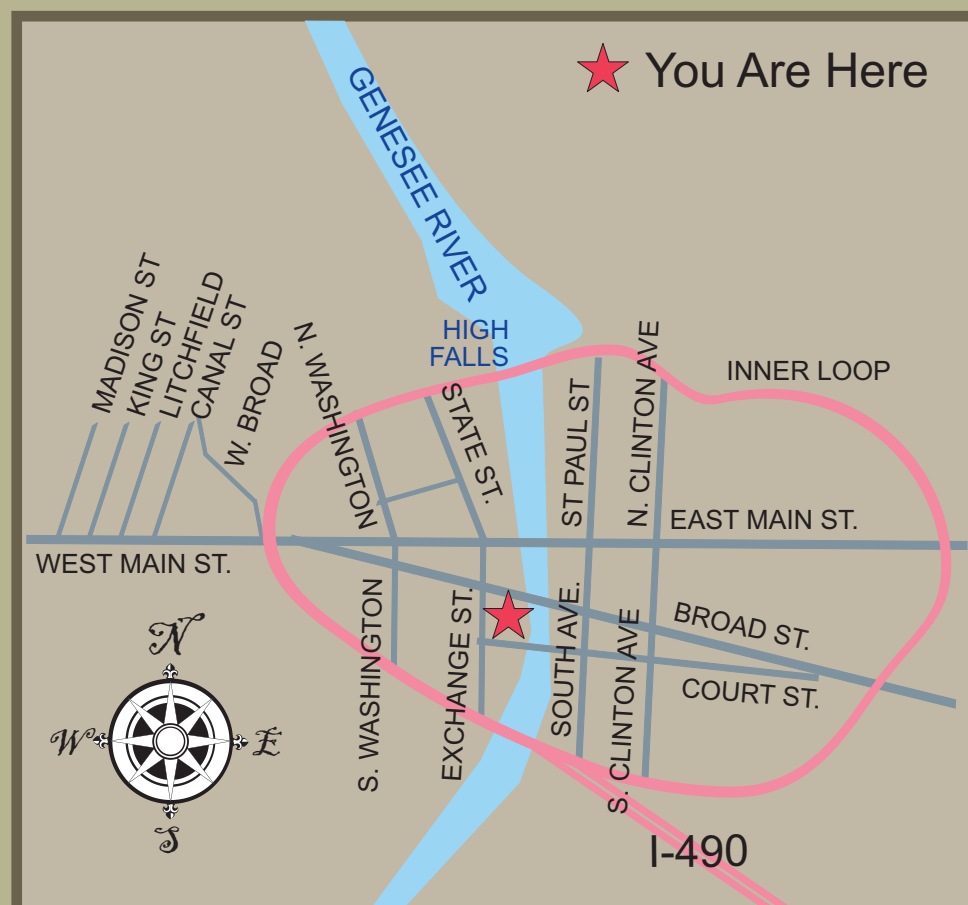
Above: View of the Monroe County jail - nicknamed the Blue Eagle Jail by 19th century circus clown Dan Rice. Private collection



Above: 1820 Map showing the island created by the mill race and the Genesee River and the approximate location of the Blue Eagle Jail

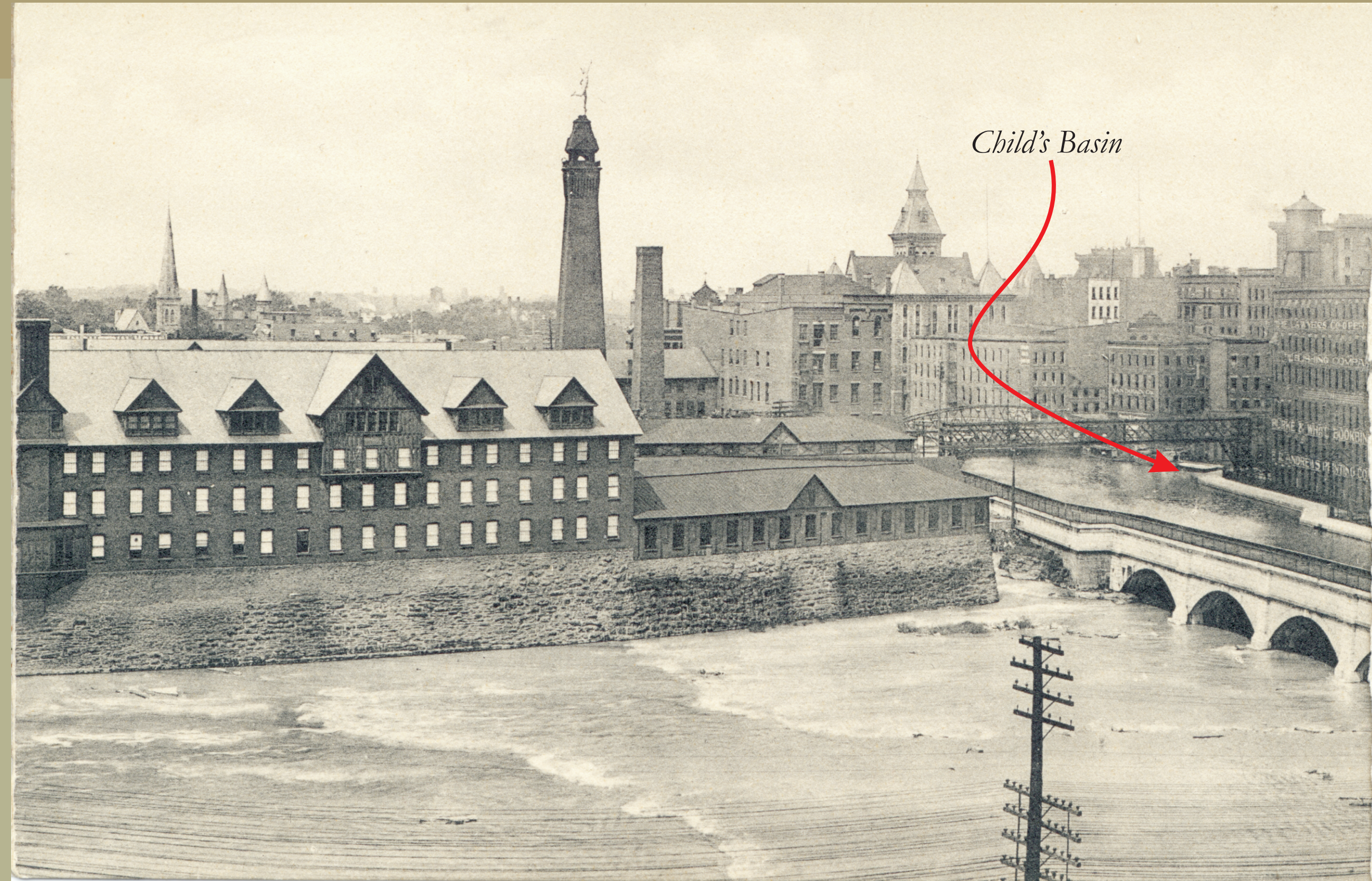
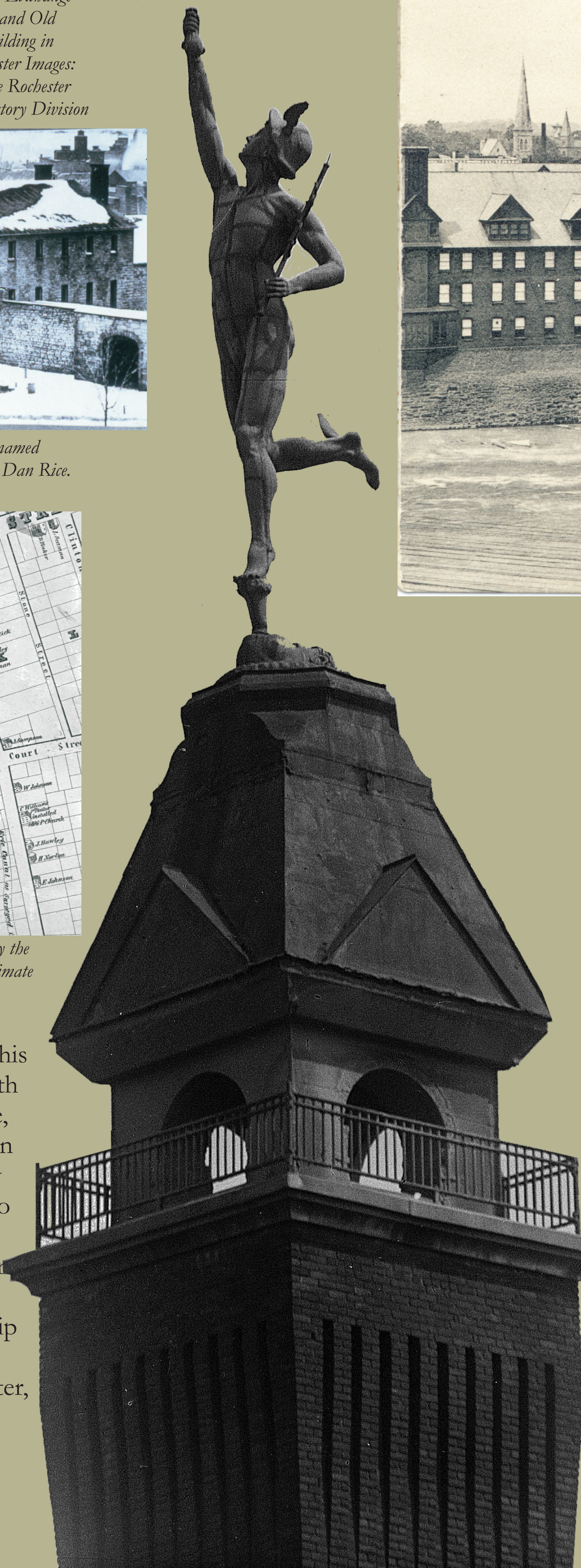
Blue Eagle Jail

The Blue Eagle Jail was given this nickname when the famous 19th century circus clown, Dan Rice, scrawled the words to a song on the wall of his Monroe County jail cell. Rice was accustomed to staying at the more sumptuous Eagle Hotel at the Four Corners. The jail stood secure on a one-half acre plot at the southern tip of the island created by the Genesee River and the Rochester, Fitzhugh and Carroll Raceway. This was the site of the last hanging in Monroe County.



Exchange Street Bridge

The early 19th century bridge that crossed the Erie Canal at Exchange Street was once called the “Loafer Bridge” after the “loafers” who watched the canal boats as they passed underneath - coming and going at Child’s Basin. Pioneer Edwin Scrantom wrote that numerous “Loafer Jims” idled away the day watching the humorous positions of the canal boat passengers as they ducked under the bridge when the Captain unexpectedly called, “Low Bridge, everybody down.” One day there were so many loafers on the bridge it fell into the canal, bringing laughter from the passengers.



Child's Basin

Kimball Tobacco Company

stood on the site of Ebenezer (Indian) Allen's mills along the riverside between Court Street and the Erie Canal aqueduct. William Kimball built the largest tobacco manufacturing company in America. When he died in 1895, the company was sold to the American Tobacco Company. It closed in 1905.

Above: 1906 view of the Kimball Tobacco Company building on the west bank of the Genesee River. Child's Basin, shown on far side of the aqueduct, was the busiest local port on the Erie Canal. Rochester Images: From the Collection of the Rochester Public Library Local History Division

Winged Mercury:

Mercury, the Roman god of commerce, has towered over Rochester's center city since 1881. Tobacco giant William Kimball commissioned his brother-in-law, J. Guernsey Mitchell, to sculpt the statue of Mercury to stand atop the smokestack of his Kimball Tobacco Company. After a brief period of storage, Mercury again graces the Rochester skyline on a building across the street.

Left: 1922 view of the statue of Mercury on top of the Kimball Tobacco Company building - From the Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center



Above: Postcard -Winged tower of the Genesee Valley Trust Company. Rochester Images: From the Collection of the Rochester Public Library Local History Division

Times Square Building

Originally built as the Genesee Valley Trust Company Bank, the Times Square Building's 13 stories raise the 'Wings of Progress' above Rochester's skyline. The cornerstone was laid in 1929, shortly before the great stock market crash.



Above: Community War Memorial 2009. Courtesy AustinDesign3D

Community War Memorial

Following WWII, the Kimball Tobacco Company was demolished, the statue of Mercury from atop the smokestack was stored, and the Community War Memorial was built. Dedicated in 1952, an eternal flame burns inside the northeast corner of the building in honor of those who gave their lives preserving this nation's freedom.

