



# Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street  
Fairport, NY 14450

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585-223-3989

## Murder in Perinton 1881: Case for the Defense Part 4 of 5

On the 16th of December 1881, George Raines began his defense of Matthew Hickey in the murder of Fred Ruffer. Attorney Raines spent the day describing the family situation and bringing up nearly a dozen witnesses to testify to his client's habit of drinking until he was drunk, leaving Matthew Hickey with greatly impaired judgment.

Matthew Hickey bought a seventy acre farm near Turk Hill Road just after being discharged from the army in 1865. By 1869, he was in debt. To avoid losing the farm, he transferred the title to his daughter Kate. In 1868 there was an incident in which Matthew was thrown from a horse and sustained injuries to his head. This event, as told by his lawyer, led to his irritable disposition thereafter.

Hickey's family life was troublesome. Mr. Hickey had a fight with his daughter Kate's husband, John O'Ray, over property and had another fight with his son Matthew Jr. in 1877. This last fight led to the elder Hickey leaving the home and occupying another house about a mile away. Matthew Hickey Sr. was never married but lived with a woman on and off for several years. Matthew had no means of support and

relied on odd jobs and the charity of his family for food and money. Some evenings in the winter he had only potatoes to eat. He was living alone in 1881 when the murder occurred.

George Raines, the attorney, brought up several witnesses that attested to his client's demeanor and excessive drinking. Raines also brought up two physicians to testify that Matthew's blow to the head by a horse several years earlier had actually caused his mental imbalance. As the attorney put it in his closing arguments, "I turn now to the testimony of the two physicians that the old man's pulse ranges to 100 per minute. It denotes organic disease and in the absence of bodily disease there must have been mental disease." The doctors claimed that according to Gray, author of the famous book *Gray's Anatomy*, the normal pulse rate should be between 60 and 70 beats per minute.

The defense's case relied on the fact that Matthew Hickey was mentally unstable due to the kick in the head in 1868, and that his judgment was impaired due to his excessive drinking. That coupled with his family life and destitute living conditions, made the act of murder one of passion and not premeditated.

The defense rested on the 18th of December 1881. The final summations were given the next day.

*Note: Quotes in this article were taken from the Union and Advertiser 12-20-1881.*

*Next month: Part V - The Verdict*



### ≡ Our Mission ≡

*"The Mission of the Perinton Historical Society is to promote interest in preserving and sharing local history."*

*A message from Clark King...*

## Season's Greetings from Your President

I was elected as your new President at our annual picnic meeting in May of 2007. With the support of a very enthusiastic and dedicated board, we have been working hard the last six months to make our society even better.

Our Museum Director, Bill Keeler coordinated our booth for Canal Days and hosted 73 visitors to the museum during our first time participation in the Scarecrow Festival this past October.

Early in the summer, member Phil Yawman led the board through several workshops to develop new mission and vision statements for our organization, giving us a clear focus for the future. We have adopted the following mission and vision:

*The Mission of the Perinton Historical Society  
is to promote interest in  
preserving and sharing local history.*

*The Vision of the Perinton Historical Society  
is to be the leading, widely recognized  
community resource for promoting  
and instilling a sense of local history  
among Perinton residents.*

From there we formed a committee, led by Doris

Davis-Fritsch to develop specific goals and objectives. These will be adopted at our next board meeting.

I have established several other committees, including the Communications Committee, which is examining our logo and website for improvements, the Historic Structure Committee, which will be of assistance as the new village preservation ordinance is implemented, and the House Tour Committee, which has been working on plans for our traditional house tour in April.

Member Pat May has been helping us strengthen partnerships with the Fairport-Perinton Merchants Association and the Fairport Village Partnership.

Our Program Chair, Bernadette McDonough, has launched another year of informative and entertaining programs for you to attend.

I thank all of our dedicated volunteers and encourage each of you to volunteer your ideas and time during the upcoming year. You can give me a call at 223-7156 or join us at an upcoming board meeting. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month.

I am delighted to be leading this organization as we look backward into history as well as forward to our future. Best wishes for a delightful holiday season and a rewarding new year!

~ President, Clark King

## Perinton Historical Society Board of Trustees 2007-2008

### Officers:

President ..... Clark King  
Vice-President ..... Bernadette McDonough  
Secretary ..... Doris Davis-Fritsch  
Communication Director ..... Joan Alliger  
Treasurer ..... May Thomson

### Non-Voting Board Member:

Museum Director ..... Bill Keeler

### At-Large Trustees:

House Tour Chair ..... Bill Barry  
House Tour Chair ..... John Jongen  
.Membership Secretary ..... Jim Unckless  
Trustee ..... T.C. Lewis  
Trustee ..... David Wild  
Trustee ..... George Wolf

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*December's meeting...*

## Christmas at the Museum

Join us as we celebrate the Joy of Christmas with a very talented group of Fairport Middle and Senior High School musicians under the direction of Richard Osterling. The students will be performing on violins, violas and cellos. Listen to the wonderful music and if you come early stop in our gift shop for some last minute gifts.

The meeting will be in the Merriman-Clark room downstairs in the Fairport Museum at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday December 11. It is requested that you bring a small plate of 6 to 12 cookies to pass. Coffee will be supplied by the society.

So come to the museum and enjoy a pleasant evening listening to music and eating cookies...at Christmas no one counts calories.

*January's meeting...*

## Meet the Tinsmith

*by Benadette, McDonough*

Join us for a wonderful evening on Tuesday January 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Perinton Historical Museum when our imagination will take us on a trip to when the Tinsmith was one of the most important people in early villages and towns.

Jim Nicoll will guide us as we explore a *History of Tinsmithing and How the Tinsmith Evolved*. We'll learn about the products he produced, the tools he used, and the challenges he faced. We'll see the effect of the Civil War on the tinsmith, how they adjusted to meet new challenges, and the part they played in the changing world.

The meeting is free and open to the public.

## Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for the following two new Perinton Historical Society committees set up under the Communications Department:

- **Logo Committee**, chaired by Doris Davis-Fritsch. This committee is charged with proposing an "official" logo for the Perinton Historical Society. At present there are several logos in circulation. We need to design/choose one symbol that represents the Perinton Historical Society, for all our publications. If you have marketing communications, advertising or graphic design skills, or are just plain interested in participating on the committee, please contact Doris, at [dorisdfristch@hotmail.com](mailto:dorisdfristch@hotmail.com) or at 377-7613.

- **Website Committee**, chaired by David Wolf. This committee is being asked to recommend a new design for a Website (or Blog), set it up along with a process for posting and maintenance. Please contact David at [davidw@justinc.com](mailto:davidw@justinc.com) or 425-3420, if you have web development, design or content development skills or just a basic interest-we would like to get you involved.

Volunteers are also needed for a newly formed committee called the Historic Structures Committee. The committee will serve as a resource to help identify significant local historic structures; to promote

public awareness and education about local historic structures; and to provide assistance to citizens, government and other groups seeking information about local historical structures. Currently the committee is working to determine a process and format for research and discussing other ways to support our goals.

- **Historic Structures Committee**, chaired by Craig DeLancy. Volunteers are needed with historic expertise or interest. You are invited to join our next meeting December 13th at 7:00 PM at the Fairport Museum, or contact Craig DeLancy at [delancey@oswego.edu](mailto:delancey@oswego.edu) or call 223-7417.

## Don't Forget

- The museum will be closed again this winter in January and February because of the cold weather and to give our volunteers a well-deserved break. The Museum will open by appointment and for scout troops wanting special tours in the evening or the weekend.

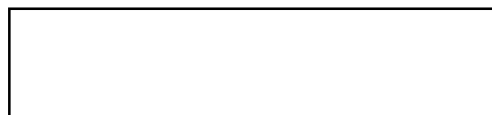
- There will be no Historigram in January to give our newsletter volunteers a long holiday. Don't forget to write down the January program on your calendars. The next Historigram will be in February.



Perinton Historical Society  
18 Perrin Street  
Fairport, NY 14450

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## FAIRPORT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

18 PERRIN STREET, FAIRPORT, NY 14450

### REGULAR HOURS

Sunday	2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Tuesday	2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Thursday	7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

The first two Mondays of every month the Archives open for  
Community Researchers only from 8 a.m. to noon.  
The Fairport Museum will be closed during January and February

Visit our website:  
[www.angelfire.com/ny5/fairporthistmuseum](http://www.angelfire.com/ny5/fairporthistmuseum)

*Group tours, presentations and special projects by appointment.  
Call 223-3989 and leave a message.*