



# Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street  
Fairport, NY 14450

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585-223-3989

## Murder in Perinton 1881: The Matthew Hickey Trial The Verdict Part 5 of 5

At 9:30 a.m. on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1881, Judge Rumsey reconvened the court. It was now time for the closing arguments.

District Attorney Fenner began for the prosecution. He plainly laid out the prosecution's reasoning by saying "It is for protection of society..." that the jury find the prisoner guilty of first degree murder. The prosecution claimed Matthew Hickey had actually stalked his victim in the days before the murder. Hickey, although he had been drinking, would have been sober given that he had walked the full mile and a half from the bar to the oat field, to his home and then back to the murder scene. The allegation was that Matthew Hickey deliberately and purposely went to his house, took the loaded gun from under his bed and walked to the oat field with the intension of killing Fred Ruffer. Furthermore, Hickey's ugly temper was not insanity as alleged by the defense but simply his personality.

The defense, lead by George Raines, took much longer to develop his final statement. Hickey was a victim of a hard life. The murder "...was a sudden revulsion of feeling in a mind already weakened by

the causes we have related, including the immoderate use of liquors-eight to ten drinks at a time-that he discharged his gun. And then he went along the road howling enraged beyond control-passion had jostled reason from its throne." The attorney went on to say that if the jury did not find Matthew Hickey insane that they must determine to what degree this was an excusable and justifiable homicide. George Raines also appealed to the jury's sense of mercy at this joyous Christmas time of year. A reporter at the scene wrote "At the end of the plea there were many handkerchiefs in use in the jury box and a great many wet eyes in the audience." The defense rested its' case.

At 11:15 Judge Rumsey gave his instructions to the jury. By 12:30 the jury retired and the court took a recess until 2:00. The jury came back after the recess and in only 15 minutes had reached a verdict. The court was called back into session and the jury announced that they had found Matthew Hickey Sr. guilty of murder in the second degree.

Judge Rumsey asked "Matthew Hickey, have you anything to say why the sentence of the court should not be pronounced upon you? 'What's that?' asked Hickey starting forward. The court repeated the question and the prisoner replied 'not anything, sir.'" The judge sent Matthew Hickey to the state prison in Auburn, NY for the rest of his natural life.

Matthew Hickey died in the Auburn Prison in January of 1886 at the age of 75. Local accounts say he was buried at St. Mary's cemetery just a mile from the grave of the man he murdered, but a newspaper

### ≡≡≡ *Our Mission* ≡≡≡

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

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article from Auburn claims he was buried in the prison cemetery. Frederick Ruffer age 23 is buried at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in the village of Fairport.

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

*Series Author: William Keeler, curator*

## Reminders

- ~ The Museum will be closed in February.
- ~ The Museum will be open by appointment during this time for groups, scouts or researchers. Call 223-3989 and the curator will get back to you.
- ~ The February meeting will be at the Fairport Public Library on February 26 at 7:15 p.m.
- ~ The date of the Spring House Tour has been set for Sunday April 27.

**★ Thank You! ★**  
**★ THANK YOU! ★**

The Society recently received donations from the following and we appreciate their support:

- ~ Maryo G. Ewell of Gunnison, Colorado who made a donation in honor of Matson and Ruth Ewell.
- ~The members of Fairport-Perinton Merchants Association who made a generous contribution to the Society.
- ~Kathleen Cloonan who set up the Christmas decorations for our December meeting.
- ~All the people who brought cookies to the December meeting.

## *February's Meeting...*

# Rum Runners and Prohibition

*By Joan Alliger*

The Perinton Historical Society offers a joint meeting with the Fairport Public Library, Tuesday, February 26, titled Prohibition and Ontario Rum Runners and presented by Steve West. The program will be at 7:15 p.m., in the Fairport Library and is open to the public.

Activities to control the manufacturing and sale of alcoholic beverages during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were pretty militant in the United States. After World War I, national prohibition became law via the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution and the 1919 Volstead Act providing for its enforcement. Rochester's own Curt Gerling, in his book *Good Enough for Grandpa...*, refers to the decision as "...one that made America a nation of lawbreakers." Instead of reducing the consumption of liquor, there followed a period of bootlegging and unparalleled drinking until in 1933, prohibition was repealed by the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment.

In Fairport and Perinton liquor was a contentious issue for years beginning in the late 1800s. The Fairport Christian Temperance League, later known as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, operated in Fairport from 1877 to 1941. These women wore white ribbons as a sign of unity and formed a committee to visit "families of drunken men". There was even a Prohibition Party which nominated and elected local officials. In 1883 Every candidate put up by the Prohibition Party was elected by a large margin in the village elections. Never a force on the national scene, there were 22 registered voters in Perinton that belonged to the Prohibition Party in 1921.

Steve West, our presenter, takes us on a historic journey back in time, revealing how local citizens turned to alternative sources for their booze, patronizing numerous local speakeasies which in turn supplied by a daring group of Lake Ontario rum runners. Using primary sources and period photographs, this program focuses on Rochester's local bootlegging industry and key players.

West, in his 5<sup>th</sup> year as a Greece middle school Social Studies teacher, received his master's Degree recently from SUNY Brockport (his thesis was on "Prohibition"!)

Come hear and see Steve's thesis-turned-hobby! Please call the the Library, 223-9091, to make reservations. The meeting is free, and the the room is handicap accessible.

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# Firsts in Fairport and Perinton

*By William Keeler, curator*

Listing “firsts” is sometimes a tricky business. Some firsts are rather straight forward like your first job, your first car, your first born or your first house. Other firsts are less clear cut. Such things as the first time you tasted ice cream, when you uttered your first word, or the date you first paid \$3 a gallon for gasoline may be a little less certain.

In history, try as we might to get it right, the first of anything is sometimes a matter of heated debate among historians. There is always someone claiming to know the “real first” of some event or person in time.

With this in mind, I am going to take a stab at several firsts in the history of Fairport and Perinton. The information comes from a four page document I found in the papers of Robert Antel, a former Perinton Historical Society board member in the 1950s. What is unique about the document is that all the firsts have a notation as to the publication where they were found.

If any member has a different opinion concerning the dates, people, or places named, you are welcome to submit a revision (with bibliographic references) to the editor of this newsletter and I will try and substantiate your claim.

Watch next month for *Fairport Firsts*.

## ***Perinton Firsts***

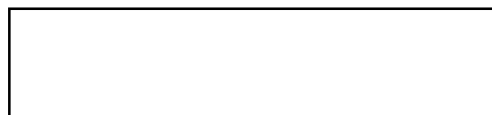
- First owner of all the land in Perinton was Col. William Walker.
- First white child born in Perinton was Hollister Perrin son of Jesse Perrin Jr. He was born in 1797 and died the same year. He is buried in Perinton Center Cemetery.
- First log house was Glover Perrin's house on Ayrault Road circa 1790.
- First block house was Jesse Perrin's house on Moseley Road.
- First frame house was built by Thomas Ramsdell in Egypt in 1815.
- First two story brick house was the home of Levi Treadwell in 1816 on Palmyra Road.
- First painted house was owned by Jeremiah Ramsdell on Mason Road in Egypt.
- First frame barn was built by Justus Beardsley on Macedon Center Road.
- First road was Ayrault Road then called Wapping Bridge Road.
- First name of Hannan's Corners (intersection of 250 and Ayrault Road) was Antioch.
- First apple orchard was planted by Jesse Perrin at Perinton Center (corner of Turk Hill and Ayrault Roads) from 1790 to 1792.
- First grist mill was Joseph Richardson's mill on Irondequoit Creek near Fairport Road.
- First saw mill was on Thomas Creek near Baird Road owned by Isaiah Northrup in 1808.
- First tavern belonged to Cyrus Packard in Egypt 1812.
- First store was Samuel Bennett Jr.'s store on the Ellsworth farm at Perinton Center.
- First tannery in Egypt circa 1812 belonged to Roswell Everett.
- First blacksmith shop was on the south side of Palmyra Road in Egypt in 1817 owned by Daniel Whitman.
- First boat builders were Gelson and Penfield located east of Fairport on the Erie Canal.
- First school building was #3 on Turk Hill Road. 1813 is the probable date. School classes were previously held in the Slocum house.
- First Post Office was in Fullamtown in 1822 on the north side of West Church Street. The building was later moved to the village and still stands on East Church St.
- First meeting house was the M.E. Church in Egypt in 1826.
- First burial place was on the Slocum farm in the early 1800's.
- First cemetery was at Perinton Center on Ayrault Road 1813.
- First marriage was between Nancy Perrin (daughter of Jesse Perrin) and Philetus Blackmon in 1803.
- First sermon was preached by Rev. Crane at Jessie Perrin's house.
- First school mistress was Lucretia Packard in 1811.
- First rural mail carrier was Hans Hansen in 1913.
- First year of navigation for the Erie Canal was up to Bushnell's Basin in 1822.
- First canal break was at Fullamtown in 1826.



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## **FAIRPORT HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

**18 PERRIN STREET, FAIRPORT, NY 14450**

### **REGULAR HOURS**

*The Fairport Museum will be closed during February*

Tuesday 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Thursday 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Sunday 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

The first two Mondays of every month the Archives open for Researchers only.

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.*