



Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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Inventors from Fairport: Albert E. Clarke, Inventor of the Reeling Device for Electrical Conductors

Reeling Device for Electrical Conductors. Patent Number 1,288,511. Granted 12-24-1918.
Tool Mechanism for Gear Cutting Machine. Patent Number 2,148,078. Granted in 1939.

It was good to be an electrician in the last part of the 19th century. This novel form of energy was just beginning to enter the home, first in the form of lighting and bells, and eventually in labor saving devices. The practical incandescent light bulb was invented in 1878 by Thomas Edison opening up the potential to electrify millions of homes throughout the United States.

A rising star in this new occupation of electrician was Albert E. Clarke. Clarke was raised in Oswego, New York and established an electrical store in 1898 at 194 West First Street in that city. He sold electrical supplies, wiring, electric bells, electric gas lighting and incandescent lights. In 1901 Albert Clarke became the wiring inspector for the city of Oswego. By 1908, Clarke had moved to Fairport with his wife Susie. They lived at 4 Filkins St. and later had a home at 2 West St. in the village. Albert began his electrical career in Fairport in charge of Schummers Hardware electrical department. He teamed up with fellow electrician W.S. Wooden in 1911 to form the Clarke-Wooden Electrical Company which was located in the Clark Building. In 1919 he was

employed by the Gleason Works and was foreman there until his retirement.

Albert Clarke made a name for himself beginning with store displays in 1898. Electrical movements were eye catching in those early days. Albert designed a store window display for Pulver's Dry Goods Store in Oswego. The display featured a revolving platform and intermittent lights. From there, Albert began designing and building light displays for festivals and fairs. When he moved to Fairport, Albert designed electrical signs for the 1908 Old Home Week celebration and the 1923 Fireman's carnival.

Albert Clarke's most famous work was the triple arch over the Main Street Bridge for the 1908 Old Home Week festival. At that time, the Main Street bridge was a fixed bridge with three steel spans approximately four feet in height over the canal. The triple arch was a wooden structure perpendicular to the bridge in the center of the span. It was 23 feet long and 14 feet high and cost \$565.00.

The electrical reeling device was conceived by Albert Clarke in response to one of the technical problems of setting up a wooden light display. The electrical elements for the displays had to be connected to a power source. That meant the electrician had to custom make an extension cord or use a pre-made one that might or might not be of the proper length. The reeling device

✦ *Our Mission* ✦

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

for electrical conductors was a compact reel which held several hundred feet of electrical wire. The wire could be played out to any desired length. Connectors at the base of the reel, which was located next to the power source, could then be connected to the generator. This device was most likely used by Albert in his August 1923 electrical fountain and welcome sign set up for the Fairport Fireman's Carnival at the corner of Beardsley and Roselawn.



Old Home Week welcoming arches on the Main Street Bridge looking south from the north side of the bridge.

If you would like to see a picture of the electric reeling device, go to Google Patents on the internet and search for the patent number listed in the article headline above.


Electrical Engineer		Electrical Contractor
A. E. CLARKE		
FAIRPORT		
Designer and Builder of the Old Home Week Electric Arch and Electric Street Decorations		

Image of Albert E. Clarke taken from the Old Home Week Souvenir booklet

**A Description of the Triple Arch as reported
in
the Fairport Herald August 3, 1908**

Electrical Effects

But the sight worth traveling several miles to see is the electrical display. On Saturday night the lights were tested and the effect was far more gorgeous than even the executive committee had expected. The central feature is the great triple arch in Main Street, which is erected in the center of the canal bridge.

On account of the height of the bridge the arch can be seen from all parts of Main St. It is simple in outline, having one span over each roadway which cross the bridge and a third arch joining the two. It bears the motto, "Fairport Extends the Glad Hand" and so skillfully did Albert E. Clarke, the designer, do his work, that the arch has the appearance of a transparency. This effect is secured by the use of more than 1000 four candle power bulbs, red being used for the border lights and white for those making the motto. The gilt letters of the slogan add to the excellent effect.

The President's Letter

by Catherine Angevine

We were sad to learn of Bob Hartigan's passing. He was a delightful and dedicated addition to the Museum volunteer staff and graciously served us for 6 years. Bob loved Fairport and he will be missed at the Museum.

In October the Board of Trustees reviewed and approved the budget for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. We are off to a good start. And I am pleased to announce that in response to our request for help with our financial issues, Linda Wiener has graciously agreed to work with us. Linda, a CPA, worked for The Bonodio Group for a number of years and has recently opened her own business, Martin & Wiener on University Avenue in the city. She has experience with not for profits and public organizations (schools/hospitals/town governments). She is a Fairport resident and a member of the Society. We are thrilled to have her expertise available to us.

Our website continues to be an interesting place to visit. We logged 3700 unique visits each for the months of July and August, an all time high for the site in its 15 month existence. Also, there have been a number of requests to provide the names of the Board of Trustees and their positions. You will find that information included in this issue of the Historigram and every issue from now on.

Your know what? History can be fun. Todd Allen from the Monroe County Sheriff's Department entertained approximately 50 members of the Society at the

first PHS program presentation of the year. History is history no matter how it occurs and this presentation was a delightful and often hilarious glimpse into our law breaking past. The next day PHS members greeted the delegates from the World Canal Conference and provided tours of the Village and the Museum. We hope the delegates enjoyed themselves - we did.

The Board of Trustees recently spent a Saturday morning examining the Museum inside and out. This splendid old building is in need of maintenance and repairs. Over the next several months we will be developing long and short term plans for the preservation of the building and will communicate those plans to you as we go forward. Volunteers will surely be needed. Speaking of volunteers, we are grateful for the folks that have already stepped up and volunteered for several positions within the organization.

And on a final note, The Board of Trustees would like to thank the 26 members of the Green Briar Garden Club who maintain the flower beds and urn planters at the Museum. I recently learned they have been doing this for 30 years. They are behind (literally) the planters on the porch, the bed plantings around the Museum sign and the gardens at the rear of the building. The group does a spring and fall cleanup and weekly watering during the summer. Speaking of the Museum grounds, did you know that our Mayor, Fritz May, cuts the grass and the DeGoey's, father and son trim the hedges? Our thanks to all of you.

November Meeting Speaker to Explore Christmas Traditions

Christopher Bench, one of the curators from Strong National Museum of Play, will be our special guest and speaker for our November meeting at the Museum. Christopher will be giving a slide presentation and lecture entitled "Decking the Halls to Shopping Malls: American Christmas Traditions and How They Grew."

Although our Christmas traditions have an aura of permanence, many can actually be traced to the second half of the nineteenth century. This lecture explores the origins and changing styles of such standard holiday features as the Christmas tree, ornaments, stockings, and greeting cards. And the Vic-

torian period established familiar holiday patterns for everything from favorite carols to traffic jams of shoppers.

The Society meeting will be Tuesday November 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the Fairport Museum.

Music at the Museum

The December meeting of the Perinton Historical Society meeting will be Tuesday December 14 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fairport Museum. Plans currently include traditional music of the season and refreshments brought by members.

Earliest Erie Canal Maps of Perinton and Fairport Acquired by the Fairport Museum

By Bill Keeler Fairport Museum Curator

As curator at the Fairport Museum, I am constantly on the lookout for documents and materials relating to Fairport and Perinton. Whenever I find something in another institution I always make notes and include my findings in a file in our museum so that researchers are aware of other institutions that own relevant material on our community. Sometimes I am lucky and am able to acquire a copy of the original for the museum.

The New York State Archives has a wealth of historic documents. The trick is finding what you want.

Last June, while researching documents relating to the Erie Canal, I stumbled onto a set of maps that were commissioned by the State of New York in 1828. These maps were referenced by Marjorie Snow Merriman in her essay *Early Days in Fairport* which is part of the *Perinton Papers*. Because of the limitations of duplicating processes from the 1930's through the 1960's, only crude pencil drawings could be made for the museum at that time.

The nine maps in the set follow the canal and record the property and buildings along the route from the Macedon Town line to the Town of Pittsford and the Great Embankment. The marked settlements along the route are Bushnell's Basin, Fullum's Basin, and Fairport. Now with the dawning of the digital age and digital scans, I was able to obtain a full set of these fragile maps from the New York State Archive for the Fairport Museum. The Perinton town archives has a photostatic set of these maps at the town hall but they are seldom seen.

Only three years after the completion of the Erie Canal, legislation was passed to fund the mapping of the Erie and other canals in New York State. This accomplished two things. First, the maps would confirm the acquisition of lands by the state for the building of the canals. Second, the whole idea behind building these inland canals was to develop the interior of the state. By mapping the canals and buildings along its banks several years after their completion, the legislators could see first hand new communities and buildings that had been built along the route. The entire survey was completed in 1843.

The cartographer who succeeded Holmes Hutchin-

son, the engineer who was initially in charge of mapping the canals, reached the town of Perinton, spelled Perrinton at the time, by 1834. On map 6 is a small settlement around a narrow bridge over the canal marked Fairport. The map extends from where the Parker Street Bridge is today to where townhouses are on the canal before you enter Perinton Park. There is a single road going down the center of the map with several buildings clustered on the north side of the canal and nine other buildings spread out a little more down the street along the south side of the road.

One of the houses on the east side of the street where the village hall is today was owned by John Sperbeck, who was a trapper.

On the northwest side along the canal was the famous Cyrus Mallett's Tavern, built in 1827. This establishment is where a packet boat captain supposedly heard a passenger exclaim after spending the night here that he felt this area was a "pretty fair port" thus giving the settlement its name. This building is still standing today covered up by generations of remodeling and expansion, and separated by other buildings from the clear view a person standing in the front door of the tavern once had of the canal.

On the same side of the canal on the east side of the street, there were several acres bordered by Main St., Thomas Creek, feeder from the canal waste weir, and the canal. The property was owned by Oliver M. Tomlinson. Isaac Beers originally owned property (believed to be on East Church St.) in Fairport in 1816 but sold it to Tomlinson that year because he was disappointed with the cold weather in the area. It had actually snowed here in July of 1816, the year known thereafter as the "year without a summer."

There are a series of unmarked buildings on the north shore of the canal east of the street. The buildings may have been warehouses for goods stored before being shipped on the canal or horse barns that were set up all along the canal every fifteen miles to provide fresh horses and mules for the packet boats. In the book *The History of Monroe County 1788-1877* the author describes an early grocery store in one of the buildings run by Oliver Tomlinson and two black-

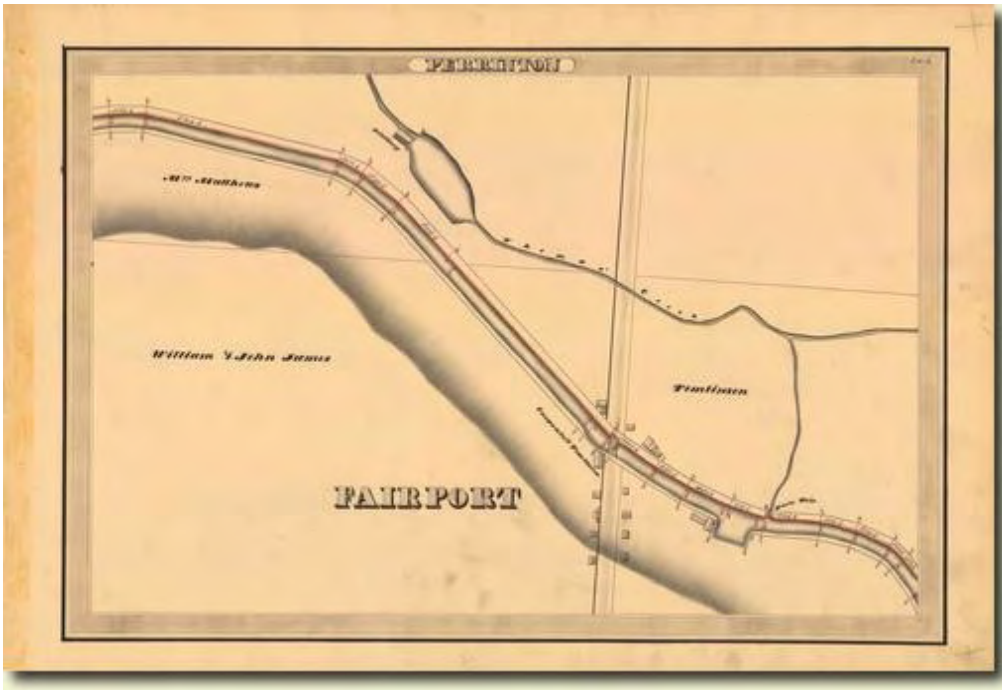


Image from the New York State Archives

smith shops at various times along the canal in this area. A blacksmith shop was owned by Joseph Eldridge near Liftbridge Lane during this time. Joseph bought Oliver Tomlinson's cabin and an acre of land for \$25 and a silver watch in the late 1820's.

On the south side of the canal just east of Main Street is a curious rectangular indentation in the canal just a little west and on the opposite side of the waste weir located today off Liftbridge Lane. The indentation has straight sides with a small building on the west side. This could very well be the boat building shop of Stillsen and Penfield who built packet boats in Fairport for fifteen years after the canal opened.

The only building marked on the map is just south over the bridge on the west side of the street. It is marked Carpenter & Tomlinson, which was a dry goods store. On the same side of the street is believed to be Goodell's grocery store, and the location of the United States Post Office after it was moved to Fairport from Fullamtown in 1829. Salmon Mallett had a log cabin approximately where the entrance of the Village Landing Mall is today, and Peter Ripley is also suspected to have had a cabin along this side of the street.

One of the most notable features on the map is a large mill pond just a few hundred feet from the first bend in the canal going west. This was the water supply for the old Peter Ripley Mill which was established in 1812 along Thomas Creek. By the time the map was made, the mill had become a distillery.

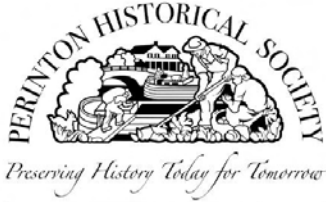
These maps are an important acquisition for the museum, as they are some of the first maps to record the early settlements throughout Perinton, established in 1812, and Fairport, which was chartered as a village in 1866. If you are interested in seeing the map of Fairport, you can come to the Fairport Museum during normal open hours. It is currently framed and on display in the north wing of the museum. The other maps in this collection are on display in the Merriman-Clark room in the basement of the museum.

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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.

Visit our website:
www.perintonhistoricalsociety.org

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