



Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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Ice Skating: A Cultural Phenomenon

by John Jongen

In 2006 the Village of Fairport, New York constructs its own 40x80 ft artificial ice rink adjacent to the Erie Canal. It is intended for residents and neighboring communities to enjoy the unparalleled exhilaration of ice skating. The opening of this winter venue will be celebrated at its first Fairport Winter Festival on Saturday February 18, 2006 at Fairport Junction, north of the Box Factory complex. This is the first of a two-part series of articles by the Perinton Historical Society to coincide with this event, and with the 20th Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy.

Our Mission

"The Mission of the Perinton Historical Society is to promote Community interest in the preservation of local records and artifacts for posterity, and for the enlightenment of the people of our town of Perinton"

Coming This Month

Tuesday February 21 ~ Well-known historian John De Volder will make a slide presentation on the history of local breweries. Look for complete details on page 5. Join us at 7:30 PM at the Fairport Museum, 18 Perrin Street. Special Note: the date is the third Tuesday of this month.

History of Ice Skating

Personal conveyance, i.e. a practical and effective method of personal transportation, has been, and continues to be, mankind's greatest quest. From the ice skate and the snowshoe in primeval times to the bicycle and the automobile in the modern era each of these vehicles evolved from its utility phase to an entertainment and, today, as sport.

Necessity was the mother of invention. Our ancestors living in the northern latitudes discovered long ago that sleigh and sled devices were more effective on ice and snow than wheeled devices. They also learned more than 5000 years ago that snowshoes, skis and skates were more effective for walking in deep snow than just shoes and boots.

The earliest skate from about 3000 BC was found at the bottom of a Swiss lake. It was fashioned from the leg bone of a large mammal with holes punched through the front and back to attach a rope for tying the skate to the foot.

These primitive skates seem to have evolved from snowshoes used by Norwegians in their snowy and mountainous terrain. Skates were fashioned from long thin wooden sticks covered with reindeer skin. More like a ski, they were better suited for snow than ice. The hide apparently served as a brake to prevent the skate-ski from gliding backwards on ascents, of which there were many in this rugged terrain.

On ice they used bare reindeer bones to improve the glide. Sticks and pikes were used to provide forward momentum and balance.

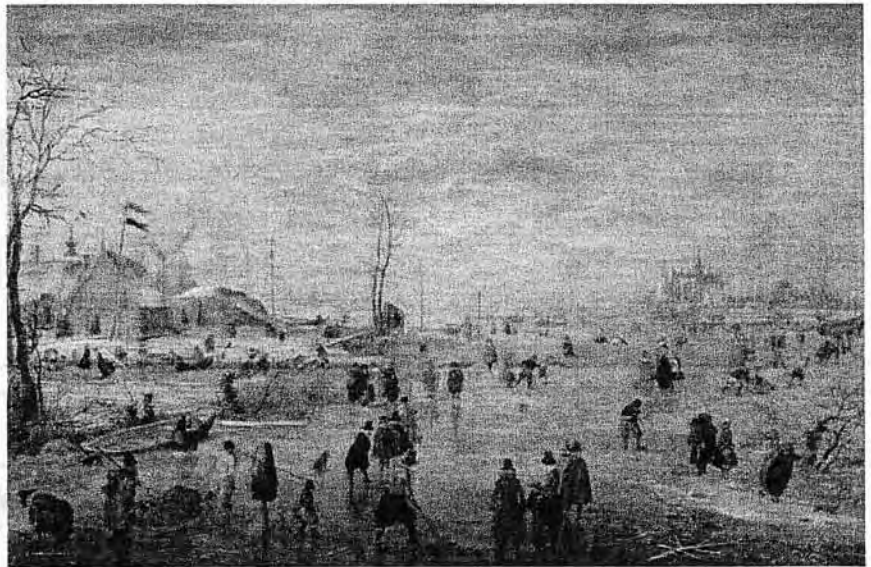
In the Middle Ages the Dutch of the Lowland Countries south of Scandinavia developed an improved version of the 'Schenken' or bones, by attaching a flat iron blade to a wooden support that could be tied to the shoe. An account in the daybook of the Dutch ruler Filip the Good describes a skating race in 1466 and ushered in the modern skating sport and, coincidentally, the era of sports-writing.

At the end of the Middle Ages the entire Dutch population participated in the sport of skating: royals and their subjects, men and women, young and old. It became the democratic leveler and the cornerstone of Dutch culture. In the 16th and 17th centuries skating emerged as a Dutch cultural phenomenon and was extolled by painters and writers alike. Among them were Rembrandt van Rijn and Hendrik Avercamp who painted and drew skaters in their natural motions on the Dutch frozen rivers and lakes. Hendrik Avercamp painted this scene about 1620. Writers such as Vondel, Hooft and Bredero also wrote about ice skating.

During their 80-Year War with Spain the Dutch repeatedly used their abundant water and ice to defeat Spanish troops sent to Holland by King Philip II to put down the Calvinist insurrection in his Low Lands provinces. Spanish troops, under the command of the brutal Duke Alva, had become accustomed to beleaguering the Dutch cities in winter since ice made their approach much easier. However they had not counted on the ice skating skills of the Dutch defenders who had used the frozen low lands to provision their cities with food and arms.

At one point Alva was so impressed by the skating skills of the Dutch defenders that he ordered his troops to don skates too. However the Spanish troops could not master the required skating skills and Alva's strategy was doomed.

The 18th century saw the beginning of the Eleven City Race (Elfstedentocht), in the Dutch province of Friesland. This event is still held when natural ice conditions permit. It is a 24 hour race, open to anyone with a pair of skates, through eleven city checkpoints. The event attracts virtually the entire Dutch population, either as spectator or participant. Until well into



A turn-of-the-century afternoon on the ice.

the 19th century ice skates remained the fastest transportation in the Netherlands.

There were many skating competitions throughout the low lands and many of these were organized by innkeepers whose inns were along the watery routes of the skating race. It was their way of attracting customers to their establishments. It is perhaps a historic coincidence that Fairport merchants again look to ice skating and other winter activities to generate business during the winter season.

It is interesting to note that skating seemed to reduce the gender difference. Women and girls could be just as skilled on ice skates as men and boys. Women's races were very popular in the early 19th century in the northern Dutch provinces of Groningen and Friesland.

However in 1809 came protests that women's clothes were revealing too much and could be the cause of uncontrolled behavior by city folks. The Calvinists to the west held that folks on the eastern Frisian flat lands were more sober-minded and were permissive of such outrage! When a Friesian female skater performed in Amsterdam she was scorned and ridiculed.

My first pair of skates in the early 1950s was not unlike the skates worn by skaters in Avercamp's time some 300 years earlier. They consisted of a metal blade fastened to a wooden block which was then tied to the bottom of the shoe with a leather strap. My parents bought my first 'friesche doorlopers' for a birth-

day present for the still hefty price of 16 Dutch Guilders, the equivalent of about \$4 USD then.

When I arrived in America in the winter of 1957 I soon replaced my Dutch skates with American Planert skates where the boot and skate were an integral combination. These skates could be bought new for \$15-\$22. The cost of skates was not a great financial obstacle for most families to outfit their entire family. As families got older the younger children would just 'grow into' their older siblings' skates.

The only other expense would be for an occasional sharpening of the blades. If you were resourceful you could sharpen them yourself using a flat sanding stone and some motor oil. But if your skates had hollow-ground blades, like those on hockey and figure skates, you required the service of a 'hollow grinder' skate sharpener. Many hardware stores provided this service and would charge 25 cents to sharpen a pair of skates. Muxworthy on Titus Avenue in Irondequoit, and Country Gentlemen on Chili Avenue were just two of these hardware stores. Some of these skate-sharpening hardware stores eventually became ski shops.

In those early days the City of Rochester maintained a number of public skating rinks free to the public. Several were artificial ice surfaces, still outdoors, but they required supplemental refrigeration to maintain predictable ice quality. One of these rinks was located on Webster Avenue and another in Genesee Valley Park, on the west flood plane of the Genesee River near the Elmwood Avenue bridge. It hosted the Genesee Valley Speedskating Club where young future Olympians Janice Smith and Kathy Turner had their ice skating career start.

The city also maintained natural skating rinks; one such rink was the Cobbs Hill Wide-water rink. This rink was on a natural body of water that was originally part of the Erie Canal. But when the canal was diverted away from Rochester the pond became part of the Monroe County Water Authority reservoir overflow system.

Eventually the building of the 490 expressway usurped a substantial part of the pond to where it is now just a few acres in size. Today it is named Lake Riley. Despite its reduced size the City maintained the ice, and the warming and changing building until recent times, even after a devastating fire threatened to close it forever.

Another artificial rink maintained by the City is Manhattan Park Ice Rink, near the Margaret Strong Children's Museum. For a nominal fee and rental charge anyone can participate in recreational skating during the winter season from late-December to March. It is closed during the 2005-2006 season for renovation.

In the 1950s, and for some time thereafter, there was also the Ritter Memorial Rink on South Plymouth Avenue operated by the Rochester Institute of Technology for its student body. It provided ready access to budding future Olympians, and continues to be used to develop our young ice hockey players.

(Part 2 of this 2-part series describes ice skating as it has evolved from recreational activity to spectator sport).

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★ Thank You! ★
★ THANK YOU! ★

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

- ~ The Fairport Perinton Merchants Association
- ~ Susan and Ronald Roberts in memory of Charles W. Saum

Perinton Historical Society ~ Trivia ~

Martha Brown, a local Fairport teacher whose name has been given to one of our schools, was corresponding secretary for the Perinton Historical Society from 1951 to 1952.

February Society Meeting ...

John DeVolder to Speak on Local Breweries

By Bernadette McDonough

Where and When: Tuesday February 21 at 7:30 p.m. at the Fairport Museum at 18 Perrin Street.

Topic: A Fascinating Tour of Rochester Breweries from 1819 to the Present.

John De Volder will make a slide presentation on the history of local breweries. John is probably the best known historian for his knowledge of the subject. He has presented the program numerous times throughout this region and has captivated and entertained audiences with his unique facts and humorous presentation.

Think of it. There were about one hundred breweries each taking a different approach in their concept of beer making. In 1888 alone there were thirteen breweries in Rochester including Bartholomay Brewery and Genesee Brewery on St. Paul St., Miller Brewing Co. and Rochester Brewing Company on Cliff St. Today only one brewery remains.

What happened to them? Why did they fail? Certainly we didn't stop drinking beer. What marketing concepts did they use without television and radio?

John invites you to bring anything you may have relating to the presentation. He will make free appraisals as time permits.

About the Presenter: John DeVolder has been intrigued with local history and antiques for over 40 years. In addition to being a member of many antique associations, he currently belongs to three national brewery clubs and has been past president of the Eastern Coast Brewerina Association and currently serves as its treasurer.

He is researching and seeking documentation and information on the subject in his goal to publish a history of Rochester breweries.



February 18

Fairport Winter Festival.

February 21

7:30 p.m.

at the Fairport Museum

John DeVolder to give a slide presentation on local breweries

March 14

7:30 p.m.

at the Fairport Museum

Matt DiRiso will give a talk about his life in Fairport.

April

To be announced

May 9

5:30 p.m.

Annual Society Meeting and Picnic
at Perinton Park

New Products Now Available in the Gift Shop

The gift shop now has color reproductions of the 1872 Town of Perinton map. The map comes from the *Atlas of Monroe County* and was originally hand colored with pink, blue and green watercolors. Color copies are available unframed in the gift shop for \$10 each.

Another gift item are color reproductions of vintage Fairport postcards mounted behind mylar in attractive cardboard folders. Four Fairport scenes from the early 1900's are for sale. They are the Green Lantern Inn (Henry DeLand's house), the oxbow, the Potter Memorial building and the old Rochester, Syracuse and Eastern trolley station. Each copy is \$3 each.

The First Leaders of the Society

(Part 1 of 4)

The Perinton Historical Society was founded by ten women on November 1, 1935 at the home of Mrs. Clarence Moore at 23 Pleasant Street. This was a follow up meeting to an October 25 gathering at Mrs. Gardner Bown's house at 127 South Main Street when the forming of a club for the recording and preservation of Perinton history was first suggested.

The first order of business was the election of officers. Majorie Snow-Merriman was elected president.

Marjorie was born in her great uncle Henry DeLand's house in 1886. The house today is known as the Green Lantern Inn. Her father helped found the village's first department store on South Main Street known as E.C. Snow & Co. Marjorie graduated from Fairport High School in 1904 and after marrying Paul Merriman in 1906, moved to Ithaca, New York. In 1925 the Merrimans moved back to Fairport and built a house on Ayrault Road. Ms. Merriman was to go on to compile thousands of pages of local history for the Society. The range of materials are from biographies of early settlers, land records, newspaper articles to oral histories.

Helen Martin was elected vice-president. Her husband designed the Fairport Public Library which is now the Fairport Museum. Helen went on to copy many of the land records of Perinton along with writing papers on the Peter's mural and early settlers of Perinton.

Bertha Bruner Bown became secretary. Bertha had written a comprehensive history of the Bown family in 1932 and was one of the first local historians to investigate and write about the underground railroad in Perinton.

Elizabeth Defendorf Price was elected treasurer. Elizabeth's father, Fletcher Defendorf, ran a barrel factory and supplied the Deland Company with many barrels to ship their saleratus in the late 19th century. Fletcher was also a Democratic politician, serving as Perinton Town Supervisor for many years and on the Monroe County Assembly. Elizabeth was born in Fairport in 1874, graduated from the Fairport schools and went to the State Library School in Al-

bany. She married George Price, a local doctor, in 1904. Mrs. Price served on the school board for 10 years and was on the library board when the proposals for a permanent library building were proposed and finally approved in the 1930's.

Charlotte Clapp was elected custodian. The custodian was responsible for taking care of the documents and artifacts donated to the Society. Charlotte Clapp was the town clerk and Perinton Town Historian for over 30 years. Her parents were early settlers in Perinton and she lived all her life at 15 Perrin Street across from the current Fairport Museum.

After the election the very first artifact donated to the society was turned over to Charlotte. It was an old map that Lucille Redhead had acquired from a man in Rochester. The map had been used as building paper in a greenhouse wall on the grounds of the Hiram Sibley house in Rochester. The collector was a brick driver who found it while cleaning up the Sibley House after a renovation. He was thinking of selling it until Mrs. Redhead convinced him to donate the map to the newly formed society saying "...he could see it whenever he chose."

Next month: *The Research Committees.*

Correction:

In the last *Historigram* on page 5 paragraph 6 in the article "Members Make Scholarly Contributions", the statistics should be prefaced by:

"Recently, James Unckless, one of our trustees, has contributed a listing of Perinton residents from the 1820, 1830 and 1840 federal census. Jim's genealogical interest led to his subscription to an online census site from which he made lists of residents from Perinton."

Fairport-Perinton Merchants Association Donation Used to Acquire the Jacobson Collection.

A generous donation from the Fairport-Perinton Merchants Association has allowed the Perinton Historical Society to purchase photographs and documents of long time resident Sam Jacobson from an ephemera dealer in Ellisinore, Mo. The collection consists of over a dozen photographs and a script for a WHEC radio broadcast in 1950 honoring Sam Jacobson as "Citizen of the Day."

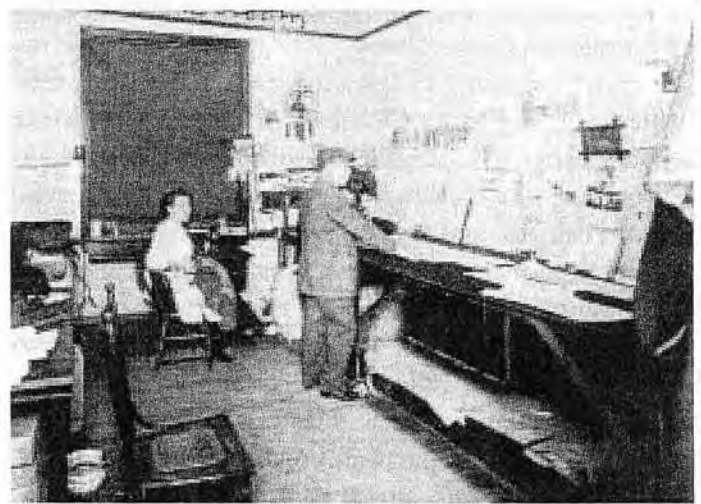
Sam Jacobson was born in London, England in 1867. He came to America with his family at the age of three settling in Brooklyn, NY. Sam took up the needleworking trade, and was a tailor and clothing designer his entire life. His first job was in St. Louis, later he worked in Chicago and Rochester, NY. In the 1890's Sam Jacobson was on the road helping Sam Gompers organize the needle and cutter trades.

Samuel Gompers was the charismatic union organizer that spurred the growth of the American Federation of Labor. His social creed was "volunteerism" and he strove to get small local unions to band together to support their mutual concerns and ideas.

Sam Jacobson married Catherine Louise Kunzman in 1895. The couple had three children and moved around several times in their early years together. The family lived in New York City in the 1890's, Baltimore from 1902 to 1906 before finally settling down in Fairport in 1909.

Jacobson's first tailor shop was in the newly built Clark Building on South Main Street. Later, he bought a building on West Ave. next to Shaw's Hall where he conducted his tailoring business until his retirement in 1950.

Sam Jacobson was a charter member of the Rotary Club of Fairport and one time president of the club. In politics, he established the Citizens Party which ran candidates in local elections. As an historian, Sam wrote several articles about Fairport's history which were published in the Fairport Herald in the 1930's. At the age of 70, Sam Jacobson was part of a group of Perinton residents that were able to secure land from the State of New York next to the Erie Canal that became Perinton Park.



Sam Jacobson with his wife Catherine Louise in his showroom in the Clark Building on South Main Street in 1912.

Imogene Blum, our museum curator emeritus, remembers seeing Sam on his daily walks around the village. He made fun of his short stature by wise cracking to friends on his walks that he was "looking for a man I can lick." You could find Sam sometimes on the Main Street bridge watching the boats go by on a windy day claiming he had "two rocks in my pockets to weigh me down."

Sam's wife Catherine passed on in 1957 at the age of 82. Sam Jacobson died five years later at the age of 96 and is buried next to his wife at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery.

Included in the Jacobson collection are pictures of Sam as a young man and shots of Sam published in the Fairport Herald in the 30's and 40's. There are also a series of rare photographs of the interior rooms in both the Clark building and Jacobson's tailor shop on West Avenue.

The Perinton Historical Society and Fairport Historical Museum are grateful to the Fairport-Perinton Merchants Association for their generous donation that made it possible to acquire this significant collection.



Perinton Historical Society
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Fairport, NY 14450

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FAIRPORT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

18 PERRIN STREET, FAIRPORT, NY 14450

REGULAR HOURS

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

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