



Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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Murder in Perinton 1881: The Fred Rufer Shooting Part 1 of 5

In the early days, before radio, television and the internet, the best source of news was the newspaper. Communities, large and small, had at least one newspaper and in several cases had two or more. Competition for subscribers was keen as editors sent out their reporters to try to “scoop” their rivals.

Typically early newspapers had national events on page one, state and local news on pages two and three, then obituaries, advertisements, serial stories and at least one column devoted to sensational events including natural disasters, deaths and murders. Many times the murders were from small cities like Auburn or Albany and more often from the big cities of Chicago or New York. Local murders were rare but when they occurred reporters were promptly sent to gather all the gory details.

In August of 1881, one of the most reported local murders of that century took place in Perinton. At 7:00 in the evening of August 18, 1881, James Hickey shot and killed Fred Rufer in an oat field on the Hickey farm located three miles south of the village of Fairport

on Moseley Road where old Foley Road intersects. It was known as Willow Brook Farm.

The first person to report the murder was Fairport store owner L.H. Estes who was returning home from a trip to Victor. Estes saw Fred Rufer’s dead body in a field and immediately drove to see Deputy Sheriff Perkins and Harvey Howell in the village of Fairport. In the meantime, the shooter, Matthew Hickey, was walking to the village with the murder weapon (a borrowed Springfield musket from the Civil War.) to give himself up. Hickey made it to S.P. Howard’s house on South Main Street before he was apprehended.

As soon as word of the murder reached the *Fairport Herald* a reporter was immediately dispatched to the scene of the crime. The next day the reporter wrote “Upon coming in sight of the Hickey farm we first saw a light by the roadside, and found a group of men assembled in the feeble light of a lantern, and they were standing in a gateway leading to an oat lot which is just south of the barn and on the west side of the road. Just twelve feet from the gateway was the body lying just where it fell, and resting partially on one side. The coroner removed the sheet which had been thrown over it and rolled it over upon the back. A horrid hole in the right breast was plain to be seen, and the flesh around it was burned with powder. The shirt was then cut down the back and it appeared as if one slug came through just at the lower edge of the shoulder blade.” *Fairport Herald* 8-19-1881.

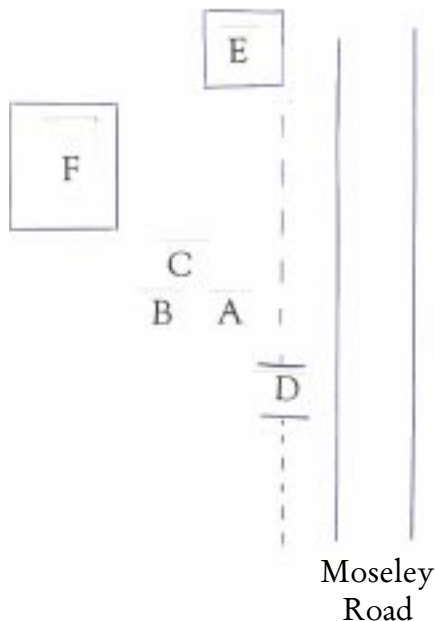
A map of the crime scene is printed on page 2.

Next month: Part II - The Interview

≡≡ Our Mission ≡≡

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

Murder in Perinton 1881: The Crime Scene



Map Legend

- a. Place where Hickey stood when he fired, 12 feet west of the gate.
- b. Place where Rufer stood when murdered.
- c. Place where Matt Rufer, the only witness stood.
- d. Gate.
- e. Hickey's house 10 rods north of the gate.
- f. Barn

from the Democrat & Chronicle 8-19-1881 p. 5

Bob Marcotte to Speak at the September Meeting on Rochester Industries During World War II

With the new Ken Burns documentary on World War II on the horizon, it seems appropriate that the Society turn to local historian and newspaper reporter Bob Marcotte to come and speak on Rochester's Industries role in the war.

Bob Marcotte spoke several years ago at the Society on the New York 108th Volunteers where so many of Perinton's young men served during the war of the Rebellion. As a newspaper man, Bob answers readers questions in a weekly Just Ask column and is author of several books *Brecks War* and *Where They Fell: Stories of Rochester Area Soldiers in the Civil War*.

Bob will be talking about some of the industries in Rochester that changed their peace time production to making products to support the war effort. Among the companies were Eastman Kodak who made many products including fuses, height finders and of course film for planes recording destruction after bomb runs. Gleason Works made tanks in a

building that later became their shipping and receiving docks. The large building on the Genesee River near High Falls Brewery was built by the federal government for Bausch and Lomb for making glass for optical control instruments and bomb sights. Even a Fairport company contributed. Gundlach Optical Company, working out of an old abandoned underwear factory behind South Main Street, manufactured lenses, cameras, and photographic equipment for the army. They earned the Army-Navy "E" flag in 1942 for their efforts in the war.

So come to the Fairport Museum, 18 Perrin Street at 7:30 p.m. on September 11 to hear all about Rochester Industry's role in World War II. The meeting is free, open to the public and refreshments will be served.

Women's Land Army Photograph Donated

By William Keeler/curator

One of the most exciting things about working in a museum is finding out things you never knew. This year Judy Ball of Caledonia NY found a picture of her grandmother picking green beans in Fairport as a member of the Women's Land Army and donated copies of the pictures to the museum.

After a little research, it was discovered that the Women's Land Army was part of the Farm Labor Program of the War Food Administration for World War II and administered by the United States Agriculture Department. Many of the farm husbands and sons had been called to war and there was a labor shortage in the fields during harvest time. Women 18 years and older were hired to do either farm work or domestic work to free up farm wives and their children to do the harvesting during the war. The participants in the Land Army would go from farm to farm and harvest crops in season. They were paid by the government a modest wage averaging \$25 to \$50 a month for year round work or 25 to 50 cents an hour for seasonal work. Many of the women who worked in the Women's Land Army did so purely to support the country in time of war. An excellent article about the Land Army was done in a 1942 issue of Life magazine.

In the picture, you can see Florence Boorman Ball on the right, harvesting green beans in an unknown Fairport farm field. She had just finished the previous day's work picking cherries at a Sodus fruit farm. As a side note, the director of the program in this area was Clara Louise Werner who later married J. Hawley Ward. She is better known as "Clayla" Ward, Rochester socialite. Clayla Ward died in 1973.

If there are any readers who know of other women who participated in the Women's Land Army in this area, or farms where these women were employed in Perinton, please contact the curator Bill Keeler. He would like to talk with you.



Florence Boorman Ball picking green beans in a Fairport field circa 1942

Mark Your Calendars

- ~ **September 11** - Robert Marcotte speaking on "Rochester's Industry During World War Two." Second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Fairport Museum.
- ~ **October 9** - "A Light Hearted Look at Out-houses" with Carolyn Adriannan. Second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Fairport Museum.

Fourth Graders Enjoy New Museum Program

There has been a Fourth Grade Program in the spring at the Fairport Museum for many years. The program is traditionally run by teachers and Fairport fourth grade classes are invited to attend. The program consists of two parts. The first part is a scavenger hunt on the first floor where the children find certain artifacts in the museum and answer questions about them. The second part is a role playing activity with Jean Keplinger, who is dressed up as Minerva Deland.

Since the change in displays this past winter, and the loss of our coordinator, we needed to revise the program. Jean Keplinger, the town historian, took up the challenge.

Jean, a member of the Perinton Historical Society, has been doing her part for the past six years. As a former teacher and current Perinton town historian, Jean appreciates the rich history of Fairport and Perinton and the importance of presenting this history in the context of the Fairport Museum. Jean rewrote the questions for the scavenger hunt based on the new exhibits and organized a group of retired teachers to coordinate and monitor the scavenger hunt. This spring was the first time this revised program was presented to the students. Almost 300 students participated in this program over six days in late May and early June.

The Society owes a special thanks to Jean Keplinger and all the teachers who gave up their time for this fine program. We hope to keep the program going for many more years to come.

Club Prepares Gardens for the Growing Season

The Greenbrier Garden Club is the organization which takes care of our garden behind the museum and the two large pots on our portico. This year has been especially challenging for members of the club with such a dry spring. Preparing the garden correctly with mulch in the spring is essential for keeping the plants moist all season.

This spring was a little different in that the club decided to recruit local scouts, including Cub Scout Pack 208 from the Fairport United Methodist Church, to help groom the garden. Bags of mulch were staged in our parking lot and one Saturday morning scouts, their parents and the garden club members descended on the garden to weed and spread mulch. In about an hour the gardens were looking neat and trim, ready for the new season. A little while later, these same scouts could be seen on West Church Street spreading mulch in another garden.

The Society thanks the scouts and members of the Greenbrier Garden Club for helping our garden grow.

You will also have noticed the expertly trimmed hedges around the museum courtesy of Mike DeGoey and the reseeded lawn in front, the work of Art Wilson.

Are You Smarter Than a Fourth Grader?

Some bonus questions from the scavenger hunt for 4th grade students written by Jean Keplinger. Come to the museum and see if you can answer them.

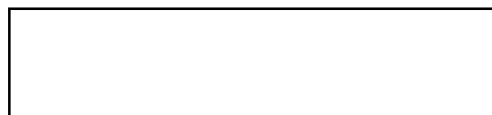
1. Find an old-fashioned "crock pot." How is it different from those we use today?
2. Find the old "foot warmer." How does it warm your feet?
3. Find the display about the Fairport Chicken Hatchery and identify the business that is there today.
4. Find the list of old Fairport laws. Which ones do you like best?
5. Find the "Graphanola" and identify what it does.



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18 Perrin Street
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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.

Visit our website:

www.angelfire.com/ny5/fairporthistmuseum

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