

Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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The Fairport Canal Riot of 1871: The Break Part 2 of 4

On Thursday April 27, 1871 at 11:00 p.m. a major break occurred roughly in the center of the Ox-Bow on the west side of the canal. The news was immediately relayed to the proper people by a telegraph message sent by Miss Hall from the Atlantic & Pacific office in Fairport. By 6:00 the next morning local canal commissioner Fay and engineer Richmond were on the scene.

The Ox-Bow, at the time of the break, was 30 feet deep, 200 feet wide at the top and 120 feet wide at the prism or bottom. It was estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 yards of earth was washed away by the break. Just south of the break most of the bottom of the canal was gone to a depth of 40 feet. The time to complete repairs on the canal was estimated at two to three weeks by the engineer on the scene.

When the break occurred, the packet boat Barney Bird (or by some accounts the Bonnie Bird) was docked at Fullamtown several hundred yards from the Ox-Bow. The boat slipped its moorings, was sucked into the breach and carried over fields for about a mile. Its bow struck a hemlock tree 30 feet above the ground, swinging the boat around

and resting it on a hillock. The captain John Terrill, his wife, a steersman and several horses took the terrifying ride and were remarkably unharmed. Two other boats, the L.W. Clark and the J.W. Ravens, fought the current and stayed afloat in the canal. One hundred to two hundred boats were said to have been stranded between the city of Rochester and Fairport. Benjamin Strong, whose fields were damaged by the last breach, lost his barn this time, the structure being swept away, along with his cow, by the rushing water.

Preparations to repair the break began immediately. Ironically the repair barge used to mend the breach several days earlier was still in the vicinity and was quickly put to work. It was estimated that 50 to 60 thousand yards of earth would be needed to fill the break and major reconstruction was needed to rebuild the bottom of the canal. Timbers were brought in to construct a dam a few hundred feet to the north of the break. With the proper number of men and horses, it was estimated that it would take between 15 and 21 days to complete the repairs.

One thousand workers were quickly assembled from all over the state. They were local people, stranded boat hands hoping to pick up some lost wages and what the Union and Advertiser described as "not a few dissolute idlers from the city." This description turned out to be prophetic in the days ahead.

Next issue: The Riot.

✚ Our Mission ✚

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

When breaches or breaks occur in the canal there is usually extensive property damage but little loss of life. Exceptions happen. An article from the Union and Advertiser printed after the Erie Canal breach on November 27, 1864 reported one of these exceptions:

Lost in the Breach.--The man who was drowned by the waters from the breach in the canal in Perinton on Friday, was named David Webb. He was a bachelor, lived in a shanty, and was not of much use to society. He was indifferent to his fate or he would have fled as he was called upon to do as the water threatened to carry away his dwelling. His body was found in an eddy made by the flood, on Saturday. It is thought by some that he was asleep, and did not hear the alarm. It was soon after noon that the accident occurred--an hour at which none but a bachelor, or an invalid or a child would likely to sleep. The fate of this man is a warning to bachelors. Some such, however, may be so calloused as to say it is better to drown than marry.



The Oxbow circa 1900 looking south and west from the old Fullamtown Bridge. The site of the 1871 canal break would have been around the middle of this picture to the right.

Re-roofing of the Fairport Museum Slated to Begin

Beginning around September 21, construction will begin at the museum to remove the old roof and install a new substitute slate compound. The scaffolding goes up in September, the slates will be removed the first 12 days in October, and the gutter and new roof will be installed by the end of October (Depending on the weather). Repairs to the trim, that has been loosened from ice build up, will also be done during the project. The roof will be put on by Spring Sheet Metal and Roofing of Rochester the same company that re-roofed the Village Hall last year. This project has been in the works for several years and is being paid for by a grant from Dave Koon our State Assemblyman, the IDA, village of Fairport, and from your membership dues to the Perinton Historical Society.

The Society hopes to save several dozen slates which we will attach a small commemorative plaque. We hope to have them available to people in the community for a modest donation to help pay for our costs in the project. The scaffolding around the building will be the most noticeable feature to this project but it will not interfere with people entering the museum. The museum will be open for regular hours and meetings during construction.

This new roof should keep us high and dry for another 50 years.

• Correction from September's Historigram: On page 3 paragraph 2. Edward Lawson won the "Prix de Rome" prize in landscape architecture. (not Pix de Rome) He was actually the first student from Cornell University to win that prize.

Now For Sale in the Gift Shop...

Old Book About the History of Perinton

In 1876, Americans were celebrating the 100 year anniversary of our Declaration of Independence from Great Britain. Americans were thinking about our country's achievements and looking back at their own local history. To take advantage of this nostalgia, publishing houses from New York City and Philadelphia sent agents into the field to recruit historians to write books about the history of America's towns and villages. In New York State, there was a series of books written concerning the history of the counties in the state.

One of these books was the "History of Monroe County, New York 1788 to 1877" written by William McIntosh and published by the Everts, Ensign & Everts Publishing Company out of Philadelphia, PA. The book chronicles the history of all the towns and villages throughout Monroe County. Included with these detailed histories were engravings of scenery, residences, public buildings, stores, and factories. In the section on the town of Perinton (spelled Perrinton in the book.), there are engravings of the First Baptist Church, Rochester Powder Mills (now Powder Mill

Park), the Henry DeLand House, DeLand Cemetery and portraits of both Henry and Daniel DeLand. Thousands of these books were sold. Today they are an invaluable source of information about the beginning of settlements in this region.

One hundred years after the book went out of print, Wayne Morrison, a printer from Ovid, N.Y., reprinted the pages concerning the town of Perinton. He titled his compilation "Morrison's History of Perinton Monroe County, New York, 1812-1876." This newer book contains the exact text and copies of engravings from the original 1877 edition.

The Fairport Museum Gift Shop has obtained a limited number of these 1978 editions of "Morrison's History of Perinton," which are now on sale for \$25 each. This hard copy book is an excellent guide and historic reference to the early history of our community. Wayne Morrison published the book so that many more people could have access to this really unique resource.

If you are looking for an attractive and unique gift, come take a look at this item in our gift shop.

Fairport Puzzles Now On Sale in the Gift Shop

As the economy and inflation has taken its toll on our disposable income, many people are spending more time at home instead of going out. Old forms of entertainment are making a come-back. Cards, board games and puzzles are making a resurgence.

The Fairport Museum Gift Shop is now offering for sale 5 different 500 piece puzzles of scenes of Fairport for \$22 each. The images have been taken from our extensive collection of pictures and post cards. The 5 scenes of these 16"x20" puzzles are as follows: 1885 birds eye view map of the village of Fairport, the New York Central passenger station in Fairport circa 1908, a trade card of a boy holding a package of DeLand saleratus made in the DeLand factory on North Main St. in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Main Street Lift Bridge, and Villa Rosenberg circa 1923 known to many people as the

Henry DeLand House or Green Lantern Inn. These high quality puzzles are perfect for that quiet evening at home.



Invented in Fairport: Improved Medical Compound

Patent No. 90,308 held by William Evans Robinson M.D. 5-18-1869

Everyone has heard of “patent medicines.” These cure-alls were popular in the early days of medicine. They contained secret ingredients and were said to cure almost anything. One local patent medicine was Dr. A.L. Taylor’s Pain Annihilating Liniment or Oil of Life for Man or Beast manufactured by George Taylor in his Patent Medicine Depot on the corner of High Street and North Main. Another such medicine was Agoil the Great External and Internal Remedy for Man or Animals, manufactured by Dr. Weir in a building on the south side of the canal on the east side of South Main and later manufactured by Becker and Came. Most patent medicines were never really patent protected in the United States because the applicant would have had to reveal the ingredients in the medicine and the rights to the compound would be guaranteed for only a limited amount of time before people could copy the formula.

An exception to this rule was Dr. Robinson’s Improved Medical Compound for Summer Complaints. The medicine invented by Dr. Robinson was intended for dysentery, cholera, diarrhea and other intestinal problems. Dr. Robinson claimed that his medicine was milder than the products on the market and that it did not send the bowels of the user into sudden shock.

Twelve different ingredients can be found in Dr. Robinson’s formula. A patent medicine made in Fairport would not be complete without the ingredient saleratus, which was made at the DeLand Chemical Works on North Main just down the street from Robinson’s home. Another unusual ingredient was laudanum, which is a derivative of opium. This ingredient was available and legal in the United States until the late 1890s. Dr. Robinson marketed this medicine as “Robinson’s Infallible Dysentery and Cholera Syrup!” and sold it for \$5 a bottle.

In the early 1870s, Dr. Robinson lived on South Main Street three houses down from the old Cemetery Street. He is described in early directories as an “eclectic doctor.” If he was practicing today, he would be known as an “alternative medicine practitioner” for his use of natural remedies. By the late 1870s Dr.

Robinson moved to Rochester, where he practiced medicine until his death in 1882. He is buried, along with his wife Mary who died in 1905, at Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

If you would like to see Dr. Robinson’s original patent application, go to Google Patents on the internet and search for his patent number above.

Dr. Robinson's Improved Medical Compound for Summer Complaints

1 gallon of syrup
1 oz. of Turkey rhubarb
1 oz. Golden seal
2 oz. Nutmeg
2 oz. Cinnamon
2 oz. Cloves

Pulverize, put in a cloth bag and steep in 3 quarts of water for 3 hours. Strain and add 6 pounds of loaf sugar. Bring to a scalding heat, cool and add

1 oz. Saleratus
1 oz. Essence of peppermint
½ oz. Laudanum
½ oz. Tincture capsicum
1 qt. French Brandy

Certificates for Robinson's Infallible Dysentery and Cholera Syrup found in the Orleans County Business Directory circa 1866

From Major JOHN H. KEMPER, formerly of Arcadia, but at present in one of the Government Departments at Albany. Albany, June 7th, 1866.

Dr. E. Robinson: Dear Sir-It is with pleasure I certify, that the Syrup you furnished me, did effectively cure the Chronic Diarrhea, with which I had been suffering for over eleven months. In my mind, the Syrup you use is a certain cure for the above disease, and I can safely recommend it to all afflicted with the chronic diarrhea. JOHN H. KEMPER

(continued on page 5)

Certificates (cont.)

From CLARK MASON, Esq., County Clerk of Wayne County, N.Y. Lyons, N.Y. June 29th, 1866.

Dr. E. Robinson: Dear Sir-Having used in my family for some time, the Syrup called by you, "Robinson's Infallible Dysentery and Cholera Syrup," for Dysentery and Diarrhea, I never found it to fail to effect a cure. I do not hesitate to recommend it in all cases of derangement of the stomach and bowels; working mildly and gradually upon the system, it never fails to leave the organs active and healthy; and in the case of Chronic Diarrhea or Dysentery, as a remedy, I believe it has no superior. Should you come into this place soon, I desire to get a bottle of the Syrup. If you do not soon expect to visit our place, you may forward me a quart bottle, and oblige. C. MASON.

From MRS. JOHN VAN VALKENBURG, of Pownel, Vt., Pittsfield, Mass., June 3, 1866.

Dr. E. Robinson: I write a few lines, to say that I have been much better since taking your Medicine. I have not been as well for a few days, and think, perhaps, I have brought it on by walking too much. Being on a visit here, I intend to return home to Vermont in a few days, and wish you send me another bottle, and I will send you the money. Yours respectfully, MARGARET VAN VALKENBURG.

From J. COOKINGHAM of the Village of Newark, Town of Arcadia N.Y., June 13, 1866.

To Whom it may Concern: Sir-For nearly two years I was subject to the Chronic Diarrhea, which fastened itself to me, and became very afflicting; it exhausted my strength and destroyed my health, and I became very feeble. In August 1862, when I enlisted, my weight was 140 lbs.; two years from that date, after a severe illness in New Orleans, I came home on a furlough, reduced to 75 lbs. I employed the best physicians without any permanent relief, and had settled in the conviction that my case was incurable. Not being able to leave the house, I resolved to try no more, until meeting Dr. Robinson, when I was persuaded to try his Medicine, and in four weeks was able to ride out. From that time my health improved so fast, I soon returned to the army for duty. Yours, &c., J. COOKINGHAM.

Happenings at the Society

For more information visit our website at www.perintonhistoricalsociety.org or call the museum at 223-3989.

~ October 20th at 7:30 p.m. (Tuesday) Perinton Historical Society meeting at the Fairport Museum. The speaker will be Gary Lehman from Valentown Hall in Victor. He will talk about Sheldon Fisher's Archive.

~ October 6th at 7:00 p.m. Perinton Historical Society Board of Trustees meeting at the Museum.

~ November 17th at 7:30 p.m. (Tuesday) Perinton Historical Society meeting at the Fairport Museum. The speaker will be Audrey Johnson the town of Pittsford Historian who will talk about the history of the town of Pittsford.

~ December 15th at 7:30 p.m. (Tuesday) Perinton Historical Society Christmas Program at the Fairport Museum. Note: this date and time might change depending on the Fairport music students availability.

~ January 19th at 7:30 p.m. (Tuesday) Perinton Historical Society meeting at the Fairport Public Library. Vicki Profitt will be the speaker and talk on the graves and lives of Civil War Soldiers buried in Pittsford and Perinton cemeteries. Note: Time and date may change depending on the availability of the Library meeting room.

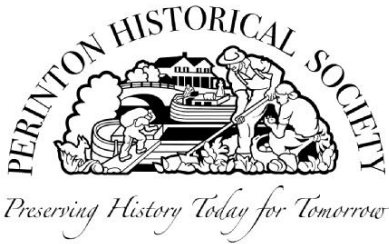
~ April 25th 1 to 4 p.m. (Sunday) Perinton Historical Society House Tour in the Village of Fairport, projected to be in the West Ave. neighborhood.

~ Thanks go to **May Thomson**, who stepped down this year as treasurer of the Board of Trustees. May has been treasurer for both the old Executive Committee and the Society's Board of Trustees for the past 13 years.

~ Thanks go to **Andy Gates** who, for the past five years, has beautifully formatted the Historigram for the society.

~ Thanks goes out to the 3 museum volunteers, who I forgot to mention last month, **Claire Dailey**, **Frank Angevine** and **Alan Keukalaar**

~ Congratulations to the newly elected Perinton Historical Society Board member **Bob Hart** (Treasurer) and the reelection of **Alan Keukalaar** (Vice-President) and **Jim Unckless** for another three year term.



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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 Researchers only.

Visit our website:
www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org

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