



Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

December 2009
585-223-3989

The Fairport Canal Riot of 1871: The Troops Arrive Part 4 of 4

Depending on what account you read, the 54th Regiment of Rochester arrived at the Fairport train station at 7:20 or at 10:00 in the evening of Friday May 5, 1871. The train approached the village limits and the North Main Street station slowly as there was fear that the rioting men were awaiting to pummel the train with stones and rocks.

On the train were two hastily formed companies, Company E led by Captain Henderson and Company B led by Captain Schoen. Two companies of soldiers from the 54th Regiment were held in reserve in the city of Rochester on high alert in case trouble started. The soldiers were accompanied by Rochester Mayor Briggs and Sheriff Campbell. The troops came equipped with 35 tents, rifles and 40 rounds of ammunition per man. Before disembarking from the train, the 90 soldiers fixed their bayonets and loaded their rifles. The troops marched in formation south on Main Street to the Main Street bridge over the canal. There were several workers milling around the bridge. The soldiers cleared the bridge and posted 25 men to guard it. The rest of the soldiers headed south down Main Street and then took a right on West Church Street towards Fullamtown to

pitch their tents overlooking the Ox-Bow.

Early the next morning, the troops had breakfast in the mess tent and wrote letters to their mothers and sweethearts explaining their sudden departure from the city and telling them that they were all right. These letters were dispatched on the next train going to Rochester.

Letter from B.X. Beesterly to his sweetheart Nora published in the *Democrat and Chronicle* May 6, 1871

Dear Nora,

I am sorry, but it can't be helped, that I had to come down here with company E to subdue these cussed canallers. They won't hurt me, love. Don't worry. I'll call and see you Sunday. My God! What fun we'll have when the old folks are gone. No more at present, thank God! Oh, how my heart pants for thee.

B.X. Beesterly

After breakfast, Lewis Seyle the contractor, the city mayor, the sheriff, regiment commanders and several soldiers went out to address the workers to persuade them to go back to work. Several men in the group tried to counsel the men not to go back to work and hold out for more money. At this point two ring leaders, simply identified in the newspapers as Smith and a man named Williams, were arrested by Sheriff Campbell and led away to prison cells in the village of Fairport. There was more grumbling, but now that the leaders were taken away and the men who wanted to go back to work felt protected by the soldiers, work was soon resumed on the canal break.



Our Mission

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

For the next several days, the soldiers remained on duty and spent their time marching, performing military exercises, and taking target practice to make the workers aware of their presence. The 54th company won an elegant silver set given by Lewis Seyle for competition in rifle practice. The sheriff deputized several special deputies to guard farms in the area before accompanying the mayor back to the city of Rochester.

At the time of the riot there were 800 men who were working as shovelers at \$2.50 a day and 200 teams of men and horses earning \$6.00 a day transporting dirt to the site to fill in the break. By May 9th, only 13 days after the break at the Ox-Bow, the work was completed. The embankment had been rebuilt and the bottom of the canal was filled in with gravel to prevent further erosion. It took three days to refill the canal with water and resume boat traffic.

News concerning the canal break continued on in the newspapers for several more days after the canal reopened. Accusations were being throw back and forth between Democrat and Republican leaning newspapers, each blaming one or the other party for responsibility for the break. Some blamed the contractor for not fixing the breach properly the first time, some blamed the newly organized Democrat canal repair committee for not being diligent, some blamed workers for making a new breach in the embankment so they could get more work, and of course there was that pesky muskrat be he Republican or Democrat. There was even a telegraph sent to Horace Greeley, a New York City newspaper editor, claiming that the canal break was a humbug and that it was a scheme by the Democrats to plunder the State treasury. Greeley sent a reporter to Rochester to investigate this allegation but no hard evidence was found.

This sniping between upstate Republicans and downstate Democrats was typical of the time. In the early part of the 19th century, politics was dominated by the Republicans in upstate New York. After the Civil War, New York City politicians began to flex their muscles in Albany. This was the era of Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall. In the next few years, the downstate Democrats would dominate the State Government, a position they still hold today.

Happenings at the Society

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

~ December 15 at 7:30 p.m.(Tuesday) Perinton Historical Society Christmas Program at the Fairport Museum.

~ January 19 at 7:00 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. Please call the library for reservations 223-9091.

~ Thanks go to Carol Rolph who decorated the museum for the Scarecrow Festival open house at the museum last October and provided candy for the visitors. Almost 60 people (half of them children) visited the museum that day.

~ The Fairport Museum will be closed the months of January and February because of the cold weather and to install new lights in the gift shop. The museum will also be closed December 27, 29 and 31 for Christmas and New Years.

~ There will be no Historigram in January. The next issue will come out in the beginning of February 2010.



Ezra H. Griffith

Inventor of the Microscopist's Turn Table

Patent No. 354,130 granted 12-14-1886

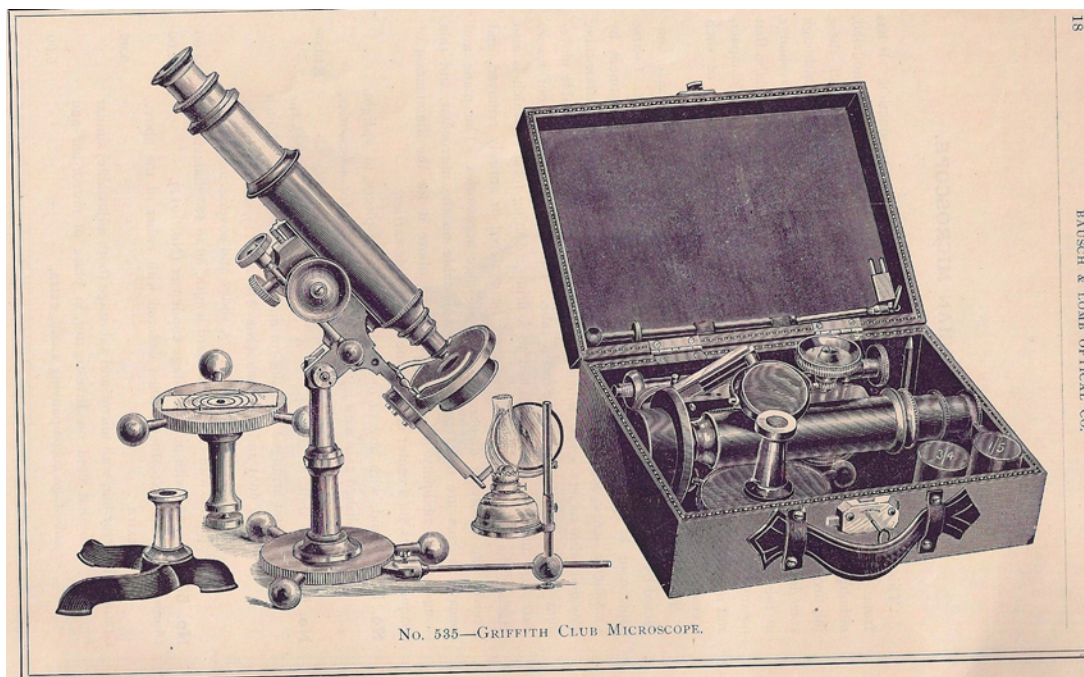
Ezra Hollis Griffith moved to Fairport in the early 1860's. He married Jennie Sanford in 1862 and they lived at 8 West Street in the village. The couple had two children, Lottie and Josephine. Ezra was employed as a traveling sales agent selling saleratus for the D.B. DeLand Company. By 1866 he was one of six teachers that taught in the Fairport schools.

Ezra Griffith's real passion was microscopes. In an 1882 article in the Fairport Herald, Ezra Griffith was described as "...our townsman who is getting to be one of the noted microscopists of this country, and is known as such through more than a dozen states of the west-in fact, they know it better than do his numerous friends here." Griffith was an active member of the Rochester Academy and was elected to the executive committee of the American Microscopical Society in 1881.

Around this time Ezra developed what he called his "Club Microscope." He took a standard microscope and modified the base which doubled as a turn table. The turntable was patented in 1886. It was a rack-and-

pinion coarse focusing assembly on the bottom of a three footed brass base. The turn table was detachable and could be mounted on a table as could the microscope. Ezra Griffith called it his Club Microscope because he traveled extensively throughout the West setting up microscope clubs in towns and colleges. He sold the microscopes to club members and to the general public. A basic Club Microscope no. 535 cost \$50 when new. Arthur Newman of Fairport was Ezra's sales agent after the Griffiths moved out of the area. The microscope were made by Bausch & Lomb of Rochester and it appears in their early microscope catalogs.

In 1890, Ezra, Jennie and their two daughters moved to Rochester into a house at 28 Meigs St. They stayed there only two years before moving to Chicago, Illinois. Ezra Griffith died in Chicago 8-18-1894 at the age of 56. After Ezra's death his wife Jennie moved in with her brother on Washington Ave. in Chicago's 34th ward. She went on to hold a position with the Baptist Missionary Society of the West in Chicago.



The Griffith Club Microscope.

The picture is from the Bausch & Lomb catalog of 1888. Courtesy of the Rochester Historical Society.



Ezra Griffith and his wife Jennie

A Description of the Griffith Club Microscope from the Bausch & Lomb Optical Co. Microscope Catalog of 1888

No. 535-Griffith Club Microscope

The Griffith Club Microscope is the invention of E.H. Griffith, F.R.M.S., of Fairport, N.Y., and it is named after Griffith Clubs of Microscopy.

It is a full-size, first-class monocular, made of brass, steady when in position, free from tremor, unique in design and beautiful in appearance. It has a draw-tube with society screw, a superior rack and pinion and a delicate micrometer adjustment, allowing the greatest range of objectives; sub-stage ring and revolving diaphragm, graduated adjustable mirror-bar that may be set at any angle above or below the stage, giving any obliquity of illumination; plane and concave mirrors, glass-faced thin stage with the clips supported above it on a bar, allowing the use of the entire surface.

Among the original features are the turn-table base, making one of the best turn-tables in use; the adjustable lamp for class and exhibition purposes; the micrometer adjustment, giving a range of nearly three inches and which locks the rack when in use, making a safeguard for valuable slides; the clips which may be turned simultaneously upward on an axis out of the way, and its portability.

The microscope is provided with a Morocco-covered, velvet-lined case, with the turn-table spindle ready for use, and with receptacles for objectives.

The strongest endorsement that can be given the microscope is the fact that it is owned by a large percentage of the officers and members of the American Society of Microscopists, members of the Royal Microscopical Society, and by other expert microscopists.

If you would like to see Ezra Griffith's original patent application go to Google Patents and search for the patent number above.



Perinton Historical Society

Executive Board

President

Clark King

Vice-President

Alan Keukelaar

Treasurer

Robert Hunt

Secretary

Doris Davis-Fritsch

Director of Communications

Joan Alliger

Ray Buchanan

Bill Poray

David Wild

Sean Delehanty

Jim Unckless

George Wolf

Fairport Lift Bridge Plaque

Donated to the Fairport Museum

In March of 2009, at the Perinton Historical Society's board meeting Frank Sadowski, member of both the Canal Society of New York and Perinton Historical Society, made a significant addition to the museum collection on behalf of the New York State Canal Corporation. This donation to the museum was one of two plaques once attached to the Main Street Lift Bridge. The white metal plaques were once bolted onto the top chords of the bridge at both ends by the Lackawanna Bridge Company of Buffalo, New York which built the original bridge in 1914.

There is an interesting story that goes with the plates. Every year, as a part of the routine maintenance of the bridge, loose paint was scraped off and the bridge repainted. The painter has to unbolt each plate and reinstall it after the paint had dried. Sometime in the 1970's, the maintenance person in charge of painting got tired of unbolting and bolting the plaques onto the bridge every year and was thinking of eliminating that tradition. He was a friend of Roger Masciangelo, who still owns and works at the Village Barber Shop on North Main St., and talked with Roger about his idea. Roger, who felt the plaques could likely meet an ignoble end at the bottom of the canal, offered to keep the plaques safe at his home. No one noticed that the plaques were missing, and for 35 years Roger had kept them. Around 2005 he gave them to the mayor of the Village of Fairport to have them reinstalled onto the bridge. Both plaques went missing for several years until they were located again by Frank Sadowski; Carmella Mantello,

Director for the NYS Canal Corporation; and Nick Stranges of the NYS Canal Corporation.

We know one of the plaques was installed on a vertical section of the top chord of the bridge on the south west side. If you have bought the new book "Then and Now: Fairport and Perinton" on page 44 you can see the Main Street Lift Bridge and how it has changed since it was built. In 1914, the Lackawanna Bridge Company brought in 685, 909 pounds of steel bridge parts and bolted together the 139.9 foot bridge at a total cost of \$79,759.83. The south end of the bridge was 5.54 inches higher than the north end and the bridge decking curved around the west side of the street and extended several feet down West Avenue. This meant that the top chord was shortened on that side of the bridge and ended in a vertical post approximately 5 feet high. This is where one of the plates was mounted. In 1987, the bridge was renovated at a cost of 2.2 million dollars. Because West Avenue had been blocked off from Main Street during urban renewal, the extra bridge decking plate that extended down West Avenue was eliminated and the top chord was extended with an additional triangular truss so that it matched the top chord on the other side.

One of the recovered plates is displayed in the museum in the north wing, and the other will be reinstalled on the Main Street Bridge sometime this year. The Society thanks all those involved in saving another piece of Fairport's history and making it available to the public.



Picture of the Main Street Bridge circa 1920 looking north from the top of a building on South Main St. One of the bridge plates was attached to bridge truss on the left.



Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Permit #149
Fairport, NY 14450



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 Fairport Museum will be **closed** January and February

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.*