



Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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Fairport Museum Exhibit to Honor the Work of Architect John Rochester Thomas

Beginning March 1 and continuing to October 1 the Fairport Museum will have an exhibit of drawings and pictures of buildings designed by Rochester architect John Rochester Thomas. One of the most prolific architects in the late 19th century, John Rochester Thomas designed several hundred buildings during his 30 year career. Among his work are three buildings in Fairport, two of which are on the National Register of Historic Places.

John Rochester Thomas was born in Rochester, NY on June 18 of 1848. He was the son of William and Elizabeth Thomas. John was enrolled in the Rochester Public School system until early 1862. At that time he dropped out to help his family after his father's business failed. Later that year John apprenticed under the Rochester architect Merwin Austin. He also took classes at the University of Rochester. After coming back from studying the grand buildings of Europe, John Thomas entered professional practice in 1868 at the age of 20.

John's designs were not only a pleasure to look at but he incorporated innovative ideas into his work as well.

In his Sibley Hall design on the University of Rochester campus, John incorporated steel beams and iron staircases into the stone structure to make it the first fireproof building in Rochester.

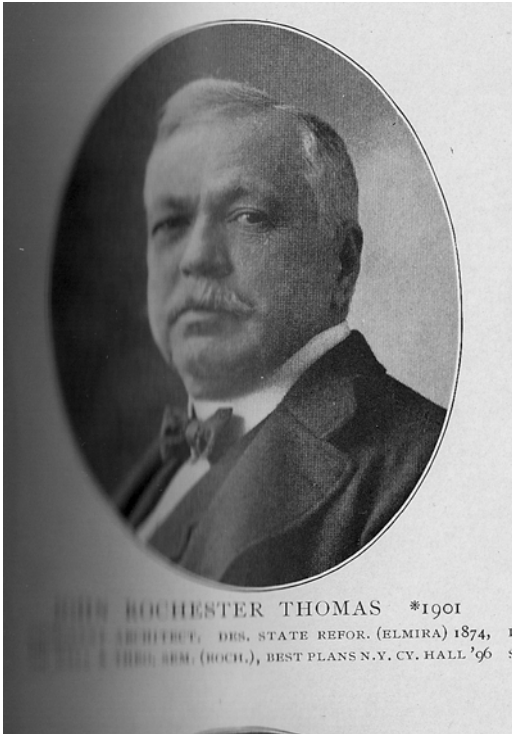
The mansard roof was first introduced in residential buildings in Rochester by Thomas. Previously, mansard roofs were only used for large edifices and public buildings. His finest example of this type of design can be seen today adorning the Green Lantern Inn. This house was originally designed for Daniel DeLand around 1872. Judge DeLand, as he was known, died tragically in 1872 when he fell down an elevator shaft at his factory, the DeLand Chemical Co., and he never saw the plans started for his new house. Henry DeLand, his brother, became a part owner of the firm and executed his dead brother's plans for the house in 1875-1876.

Remembering a particularly gruesome fire in a Rochester church where several people were trampled to death in a panic when a fire was discovered in the nave of the church, John Thomas created an entrance to the First Baptist Church in Fairport parts of which can be slid back to allow many more people to exit the church in case of emergency.

In 1874, John was still working in Rochester at 53-55 Reynolds Arcade and was appointed state architect by then New York State Governor Dix. Through this appointment, he designed the State Reformatory at Elmira, which was considered a model of prison design at the time (Drawings of which are in the collections of the Rochester Historical Society). John married Julia Hortense in Rochester in 1877. They had 4 daughters and a son together. Five years later in 1882 the family moved to New York City. From his office on Broadway, John R. Thomas designed over 100 churches, numerous state prisons and public buildings in New York City and along the east coast of the United States. He was known as a leader in prison and church design. In 1891 he read a paper on "Church Architecture" before

≡ *Our Mission* ≡

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



John Rochester Thomas from the book "Notable Men of Rochester and Vicinity published in 1902"

the conference of clergymen in Boston and in 1893 he appeared before the National Prison Association in Pittsburg, PA to read another paper on the "History of Prison Architecture." Mr. Thomas was a member of the New York Chamber of Commerce, New York Yacht Club, the Sculpture Society, National Arts Club, the Architecture League and was on the executive committee of the New York Prison Association.

John Thomas died of heart disease in August of 1901. He was at his summer house in Westminster Park in the Thousand Islands at the time. His remains were brought back to Rochester and he is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery.

The exhibit will include rare original drawings and floor plans for the Howe house at 26 Perrin Street just two doors down from the museum. There will be photographs of some of the 25 or so buildings that have been identified as being designed by John Rochester Thomas. Included are 1877 engravings of the First Baptist Church of Fairport and the DeLand House, Sibley Hall from the University of Rochester campus and Warner's Observatory which once stood on East Ave. in the city. A rare set of working drawings for an unknown house in Rochester designed by Thomas, courtesy of the Landmark Society of Western New

York, will also be on display. The drawings were mounted on a set of boards by 19th century carpenters so that they could read the drawings without having to roll and unroll them while constructing the house. One set is mounted on a set of boards which was hinged so the workers could fold it up and take it from room to room to check the specifications laid out by the architect.

John Rochester Thomas ranks as one of the most famous architects that Rochester has ever produced. Make sure you don't miss this display at the Fairport Museum and take a look at his remarkable works. The Museum is open Tuesdays and Sundays 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and Thursday evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.



The Howe House designed by John R. Thomas at 26 Perrin Street.

Partial Listing of Buildings Designed by John Rochester Thomas

- **Henry DeLand House** (Green Lantern Inn), Fairport, NY. Designed around 1872 and executed in 1875-76. Still standing. On the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.
- **First Baptist Church of Fairport**, Fairport, NY 1876. Still standing. On the National Register of Historical Places in 2006.
- **Howe House**, 26 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 1881. Still standing.

(continued on page 5)



March Program

**President
Ulysses S.
Grant to Visit
Perinton
Historical
Society**

Please join the Perinton Historical Society on Tuesday, March 15, 2011, for a once in a lifetime opportunity as we proudly welcome President Ulysses S. Grant to Fairport. President Grant, as portrayed by Steve Trimm of Grant Cottage in Wilton, New York, will speak of his time as General during the Civil War. He will also discuss the eight years he served as the 18th President of the United States. The President will take questions following his speech.

Steve Trimm has been involved with Grant Cottage for the last four years, as a tour guide and through educational outreach programs. He recently had an article about Grant Cottage caretaker and Civil War veteran Oliver P. Clarke published in New York Archives magazine. Besides portraying President Grant, Oliver P. Clarke and several other notable historical figures, Mr. Trimm has broadcast a Listener Essay on WAMC and was involved with the making of a CD entitled, "Grant and Lincoln: A Conversation". Information about Grant Cottage can be found at www.grantcottage.org.

This event is free and open to the public. It will be held at the Fairport Museum, located at 18 Perrin Street, at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 15, 2011.

Photograph: General U.S. Grant 1862 courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

**Fellowship Group Helps
Repair the Museum**

by William Keeler, Fairport Museum Director

For many years the Fairport Museum has been shut down for two months in January and February. This is to give our loyal volunteers a break in the coldest months of the year during a time when visitation in small museums and historical societies traditionally drops off. This also gives me a chance to reevaluate displays, plan large scale projects, and fix small maintenance problems. In recent years, the museum has had new lights installed, the floors waxed and new displays created.

This year I am setting up a new exhibit on architect John Rochester Thomas (see article on Page 1), and long overdue maintenance has been done by a group of 9 men from the Home Repair Ministry from the Church of the Assumption led by Jim Robinson, who is also a Perinton Historical Society member. Many overdue maintenance jobs, typical for an old building, were accomplished. Plumbing, painting, electrical and carpentry projects were done while we were closed. Many of the jobs will not be noticed by the membership but they have been on my to do list for years. The Board of Trustees has voted to make each of these men honorary members of the Perinton Historical Society for a year. If some of these workers come to our meetings this year, be sure to introduce yourself and thank them for their hard work in helping to maintain our marvelous building.

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Solon H. Bushnell, Inventor of Improvements in Hay Rakes

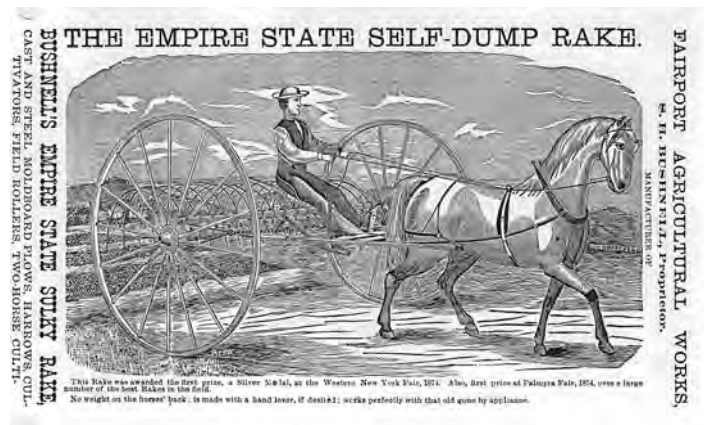
In the 19th century, America was largely a rural agricultural nation. Thousands of farms were spread across the country all with needs for agricultural implements of all kinds. A man with metal working abilities and a foundry had a ready local market for agricultural tools and machinery.

Solon Bushnell moved to Fairport in 1872. Along with investor and partner James Webb, he started the Fairport Agricultural Works, which was located just across the street from the railroad freight depot on North Main Street. An 1875 advertisement in the Fairport Herald shows that they made agricultural implements, sulky rakes and general farm implements. The company had a foundry which may be the first one in the village of Fairport. They used it to make and repair broken tools and machinery for local farmers. In 1873, Solon Bushnell applied for a patent on an iron plow that had detachable plow heads. The heads were used for certain type of furrows and some were designed to cover freshly planted potatoes.

The Fairport Agricultural Works was best known for their patented horse hay-rakes. Solon had 4 patents for horse hay-rakes. Several were simply improvements on his original design.

Putting up hay for the winter for farm animals was a very important job. The hay was mowed in July and prepared for storage in a hay mow which was a part of the barn dedicated to its storage. In the 19th century, a reaping or mowing machine was used to cut the hay. The horse drawn McCormick Reaping machine, common on local farms, was made in Brockport, NY. The machine had a large wide master wheel and cut the grass with reciprocal knives or blades. The hay would lie in the field and had to be gathered into rows called windrows to dry and later to be collected. The horse-drawn hay-rake was used for the gathering and collecting operation.

The Improvement in Hay-Rakes originally designed in 1874 by Solon Bushnell was what was called a sulky hay rake. It was very light weight and could be pulled easily by a horse over uneven hay fields. The rake is unique in that the teeth are mounted on a hollow shaft which slides over the carriage axle. Metal springs apply pressure on the rake teeth to keep them in constant contact with the ground. There is a lever for the driver that engages the teeth to gather the hay



Advertisement for Bushnell's Empire State Rake from the 1875 Monroe County Directory.

and is also used to release them when enough hay had been collected. The other three patents are improvements on Solon's original design. Patent #229,864 in 1880 actually redesigned the carriage to automatically adjust for the weight of the driver on the rake so that the hay rake could operate at maximum efficiency.

After it was patented, Solon Bushnell immediately entered his hay rake into competitions at local and state fairs. The rake won first premium at the Palmyra Town Fair in 1874 and was also entered that year in the Central New York Fair in Utica. By 1876, the hay rake was named the "Empire State Sulky Rake" and it appears in several ads in the Fairport Herald.

Solon Bushnell became very successful in the agricultural implement business. In 1874 he bought the G.L.G. Seeley mansion on the corner of West Ave. and West Street for \$3,000. That same year, his partnership with James Webb was dissolved. Solon Bushnell was 52 in 1875 and lived with his wife Emma E., and three sons. They had one servant in the house by the name of Julia Maby. By 1880, the family had moved out of their house and sold it to Mr. Egett.

To see Solon Bushnell's original patent applications, go to Google Patents on the internet and enter these patent numbers:

- Patent No. 156,275 Improvement in Horse Hay-Rakes 1874
- Patent No. 160,387 Improvement in Horse Hay-Rakes 1875
- Patent No. 216,829 Improvement in Horse Hay-Rakes 1878
- Patent No. 229,864 Horse Hay-Rake 1880

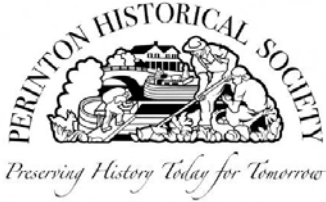
A Description of the Fairport Agricultural Works

from the Fairport Herald
February 14, 1873

“This model establishment which has been completing and perfecting its arrangements for the last year to enter largely into manufacture of Agricultural Implements has arrived at last to apparent perfection and are conducting a successful business under the firm name of Bushnell & Webb. Their stock is all made from the choicest timber, an item on which they make a special point, and embraces the latest improvements known to the trade. Their Sulky Cultivator is the most perfect thing of the kind we ever saw, and we are certain it will commend itself to every intelligent farmer and must eventually come into universal use: They have a variety of Plows in all their different sizes of either wood or iron beam, with cast or steel mould-board, which adapts them to all kinds of soil,-Besides this perfect arrangement of their own manufacture, they keep the stock of all leading plows, which have been sold in this section of the country, which enables them to do repairing for the same on short notice. Our space will not permit us to go through with a description of all the new and useful articles which are the result of twenty year's experience of the senior member of the firm. We recommend the farming community to this establishment as they can SEE what they buy, a privilege not often vouchsafed by the dealers in the whitewashed articles that flood the country.”

Thomas Buildings *(from page 2)*

- **Bentley House**, 7 Prince St., Rochester, NY 1878.
- Sibley Hall Library, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY. No longer standing.
- **Trevor Hall**, Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester NY.
- **Grand Opera House**, South Clinton Ave., Rochester, NY. 1871. Burned to the ground in 1891.
- **H.H. Warner House and the Warner Observatory**, 269 East Ave., Rochester NY. No longer standing.
- **Natural History Building** (Brooks Museum), University of Virginia, Virginia. Still standing.
- **State Reformatory**, Elmira New York 1874. Still stranding.
- **Calvary Baptist Church**, 123 West 57th Street, New York City 1883. Replaced..
- **New York Presbyterian Church** (Metropolitan Baptist Church) West 12th St., Harlem, New York City 1884. Still standing.
- **St. John's Episcopal Church**, 139th Street, St. John's Place, New York City 1885. Still standing.
- **New York Stock Exchange**, New York City 1886.
- 18th Regiment of the National Guard of New York, New York City 1889.
- **71st Regiment and 2nd Battery Building**, New York City 1893. Burned down in 1902.
- **New Jersey State Reformatory at Rahway**, NJ 1899. Now known as the east Jersey State Prison.
- **Eastern New York Reformatory** near Ellenville, NY 1899. Still standing.
- **Hays Building**, 21 Maiden Lane, New York City. Still standing and on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.
- **Willard Asylum**, Seneca Lake, NY.
- **8th Regiment, Squadron "A" Armory**, Madison Ave. New York City. Still standing.
- **Second Reformed Church**, Lennox Ave, New York City.
- **New York City Hall of Records** (Surrogate's Court Building) Chamber Street, New York City. Still standing.
- **Ephesus Seventh Day Adventist Church**, 101 West 123rd St. Lennox, New York City. Still standing.
- **First Baptist Church**, Lynchburg, VA. Still standing.
- **First Baptist Church**, 871 Main Street, Danville, VA. Still standing.



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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.

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www.perintonhistoricalsociety.org

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Call 223-3989 and leave a message.*