



Perinton Historical Society Historiogram

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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New Research Tool for the Fairport Museum Archive and a Major Postal Exhibit at the Museum

*By William Keeler
Curator, Fairport Historical Museum*

If you have ever tried to write a genealogical history of your family, you know the frustration of looking through public records to find where your ancestors once lived. Public documents were never meant to answer one of the basic questions we all would like to know: What house did my ancestor once live in?

Census records will tell you that a person lived in a particular village or town but will not have a specific address. Early directories may tell you if a person lived in the town or village, have their occupation, and how many acres they had but are not helpful for specific house numbers. Monroe County was so sparsely populated in its early years, and directories didn't cover all citizens in the suburbs until the 1930s. Newspapers would record events or "doings" at the Chadwick house or DeLand house but no address would be given because everyone in the small community knew where they lived and an address was not necessary. Maps are useful but are intermittent at best. Many clues as to where people lived in a village or town are sometimes found in oral histories by people who lived at the time. Plus, if you are looking for a female relative or children, be warned that most early records are male-centric in nature and just record the head of household.

If you asked yourself what *one* person needs to know where everyone lives in a particular town or village on a daily basis, who would that be? The answer is the postman. Through rain and sleet and snow, the trusty postman is responsible for delivering the mail to your door and needs to know who lives in each building on his route.



A.F. Hansen carrier 1 on the far left, George G. Emrich carrier 2 is third from the left and A.B. Kinsella carrier 3 is at far right. Photograph is taken in front of the Bown Block in 1913.

From the collection of the Perinton Historical Society

The village of Fairport has had door-to-door delivery of mail for 100 years. Beginning in April of 1913, the mail was delivered to each family in the village by three postmen. Alfred Hansen delivered City Route 1. George G. Emrich, who lived at 12 Miles Avenue, delivered City Route 2, and A.B. Kinsella delivered City Route 3. George Filkins also filled in as a carrier from time to time with no assigned route.

Continued on page 3



~ Bob Hunt ~

Comments from your President

Thank you for responding to the call to volunteer a few hours a month. At last count we have 19 new volunteers wishing to help out in several areas. This will be a tremendous help to PHS as our committees will benefit with the addition of new ideas and enthusiasm.

The committees with new volunteers are:

House Tour: Deb Mabry has been the driving force of this effort for many years. Joining her this year are Elaine Lanni, Jeanne Cole, and Lucy McCormick. Elaine has agreed to move into the Chair position in 2014. This committee is already hard at work preparing for our 2013 house tour, to be held on Saturday, October 6th.

Membership: Jim Unckless has been the chairperson and only member of this committee for many years, keeping our membership database, sending out renewals in August, thanking members for their extra contribution, and emailing announcements to members on upcoming events. Two of our members, Lucy McCormick and Pat May, have volunteered to help. This committee recently met to discuss levels of membership along with associated dues and has a report to be reviewed by the board. We will discuss this more in the future.

Volunteer/Docents: This committee, chaired by Gail Black, has a number of new faces. Members of the committee, new and old, participated in a training session recently, and are focused on sustaining a receptive, knowledgeable team of docents at the museum. Curator Bill Keeler is preparing a large information manual about the museum exhibits to help our docents provide accurate and descriptive information to our guests and visitors. I do not have all the names to give you at this time, but we do have enough new volunteers to allow us to consider increasing the hours of operation of the museum. One time slot being considered is on Saturday mornings during the summer in conjunction with the Farmer's Market.

Computer/Technology: This committee is also being chaired by Jim Unckless with members George Wolf, Bill Keeler and Evan Tzimas. The committee has recently met twice to establish a long-term plan for the museum's computer system, printing, copying, communications and the use of social media. We will keep you posted as details evolve.

In upcoming issues of the HISTORIGRAM, I will report on other committees, including Structures, Communications and Public Relations, HISTORIGRAM, Website, Scholarship, Property, Special Events, Programs, Children's Activities, Community Relations, Awards, Finance, Gardening and Nominating. So you

can see committees and the work they do are extremely important in the operation of your museum and the Society. The outpouring of new volunteers has been great but there's still a need for more. Please give me a call if you can spare an hour or two. Thanks.

The Nominating Committee is filling the slate of board members for the 2013-16 term of service. If you have an interest, please let Doug Whitney, Chairperson of the Nominating Committee.

Finally, special thanks to Joan Alliger who recently resigned from the Board of Directors due to some health issues. Joan has been a member of the Perinton Historical Society for forty years, and has served in a variety of valuable positions. We sincerely thank her for her many contributions.

Thanks to all for your continued support of PHS, and we will chat again in our next issue.

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HISTORIGRAM

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Perinton Historical Society

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In the archives of the Fairport Historical Museum, there are three postal carrier route books or directories which record the whereabouts of people who received mail in the village from 1913 to 1957. These books were started by George Emrich in 1913, and were carried by him and later by A.B. Kinsella while doing their deliveries. The books list in rough alphabetical order all the people on their route in the village of Fairport, and record changes over time.

The books were started in 1913 as every resident was required to fill out form I22, indicating the street address and who lived in the house (including servants). George then listed every person in his book for future reference as a guide for substitute carriers and his successor. Entries were recorded after the names when the resident changed addresses or died. The books were continued up to 1957 and track several hundred people who once lived in the village.

The route books cover all of West Avenue, West Street, North Street, North Main and parts of South Main Streets, Parce Avenue, Roselawn Avenue and several other streets on the west side of the village.

I have recently created an index of all the people mentioned in these books. The index is set up by last name, and then by address. It is now possible to look up long lost relatives and find their specific street and house number in selected areas of the village. These indexes now add an additional resource for those doing genealogical research in our museum.

This is a very poignant set of documents. Since our country was founded, we have had mail service. Door-to-door delivery in the village began 100 years ago, and yet this same service may not exist in another five years. The Postal Service is in trouble financially and may not be the same in the future as the one we all grew up with. In the past, we have relied on the Postal Service to deliver communications between friends and family members hundreds of miles apart. Love letters, bills, condolences, postcards, and advertisements were all part of the service. The Postal Service has delivered packages of products not found in our hometown, and has been our connection to the rest of the world.

Today we have other methods to communicate, and additional choices for the delivery of packages. Cell phones, email, UPS and FedEx that have cut into the profits needed to support the United States Postal Service.

The Fairport Historical Museum is commemorating the 100th Anniversary of home delivery in the village of Fairport. We will take a look back at the US Postal Service of the past with a major exhibit beginning in April of 2013, and continuing until September. I hope you all come and review our exhibit, and remember the days when postal service was an essential part of our lives. Free postcards of Fairport's Centennial Quilt, which is on display in the Fairport Public Library, will be given out to all visitors to the museum.

History of the United States Postal Service in the Village of Fairport

- ◆ April 8, 1822: The first post office was established at Fullamtown on what is now the western border of the village of Fairport on the Erie Canal. The building was later moved to East Church Street.
- ◆ 1829: The post office was moved to the store of Aiken & Goodell on South Main Street in what is now the village of Fairport.
- ◆ July 28, 1838: A post office was located on the north side of Cherry Street (West Avenue today) not far from Main Street. It was known as the Perrington Post Office.
- ◆ 1853: The "Fairport Post Office" was once located in Chemung County, New York. It closed around 1853, making the name "Fairport" available for use by the Postal Service. On January 23, 1853, the name Perrington Post Office was changed to the Fairport Post Office.
- ◆ 1897: The Bown Block at 22-28 South Main Street was completed and postmaster George Bown moved the Fairport Post Office from West Avenue to his building on South Main Street.
- ◆ March 15, 1913: Forms were filled out by residents of the village of Fairport and postal carrier books for three separate routes in the village were created in advance of door-to-door delivery.
- ◆ April 1, 1913: Door-to-door mail delivery started in Fairport.
- ◆ 1916: The Fairport Post Office was moved across the street to a building at 23-25 South Main Street, just north of the Perinton Town Hall (now the Fairport Village Hall.).
- ◆ 1919: Fairport received Second Class rating.
- ◆ September 23, 1938: A new post office building was dedicated at 121 South Main Street.
- ◆ 1953: The Fairport Post Office received First Class rating.
- ◆ 1976: The Fairport Post Office was moved out of the village to a new building on Ayrault Road, corner of Moseley Road. The former Post Office building was bought by R.C. Shaheen Paint store.
- ◆ 2001: The Fairport Post Office was moved to 6740 Pittsford Palmyra Road in the Perinton Square Mall, occupying the former Perkins Restaurant. The building on Ayrault Road became the Postal Annex.

Note: A very good description of the Postal Service in both Perinton and Fairport can be found in the booklet "Communications 1790-1968" by Clayton Bridges that is part of the *Perinton Papers*, and is for sale in the museum gift shop for \$4.00 per copy.





A train approaching the New York Central passenger station in Fairport.

From the archives of the Perinton Town Historian

Railroading in Fairport - Then and Now

By Tom Bastian

People who see the CSX railroad tracks which bisect the village of Fairport as only an annoyance and delay, might be surprised to learn what an important role railroading has played in its past.

At one time two railroads came through Fairport; the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad and the New York, West Shore and Buffalo. The first tracks to come through Fairport belonged to the Central, and were installed in 1853. About thirty years later, a rival company financed at least partially by Pennsylvania railroad interests, built a competing line through Fairport as part of its line from Weehawken, New Jersey to Buffalo, New York. Railroaders were cut-throat in those days, and would rather run their competitors into bankruptcy than compete. Eventually, the New York Central bought out the New York, West Shore and Buffalo, and continued running it well into the 20th century.

Today, as you travel north of the canal on Main Street you see three railroad tracks. The first is what remains of a segment of the West Shore and serves as a bypass around Rochester from Fairport to Chili Junction. The second and third tracks were the passenger and fast freight tracks of the New York

Central. As you continue north, just before you get to High Street, the parking lots on either side of the street used to be tracks three and four of the New York Central. In addition, there was a freight yard and a freight station where the former H.P. Neun now stands and a "team track" where businesses without a siding could load or unload boxcars. In the first half of the 20th century, the freight yard's biggest customer was The American Can Company factory, which received raw materials and shipped finished cans by rail. For many decades, railroad tracks actually went into the building so boxcars could be loaded inside.

Just east of where Railroad Street enters Main Street once stood the New York Central passenger station. It was near where the self-storage building now stands. It operated into the early 1950s. Even after passenger trains from New York City no longer stopped in Fairport, it was used to deliver "Fresh Air Kids" from NYC to Fairport families every summer.

A large multi-story coal dock owned by The Dewey Jackson Coal and Oil Company once stood behind Town and Country Cleaners at 24 North Main Street. The railroad delivered coal cars loaded with various grades of anthracite (hard coal) and bituminous (soft coal). The coal was loaded into the coal tower, ready to be dispensed into wagons or trucks for delivery to homes and businesses.

And just to the south, where the Box Factory complex now stands was formerly the Deland Chemical Company, and later, the Certo plant. It was served directly by the railroad with tracks coming off the main, crossing State Street, now known as Lift Bridge Lane.

As technology advanced and passenger travel waned, the New York Central began reducing the number of tracks throughout New York State and elsewhere. In most places four tracks were reduced to two. Fairport avoided the removal of tracks three and four for several more decades until the American Can went out of business and the need for switching was eliminated. Tracks three and four and the yard tracks were ripped up and replaced by parking lots and the H. P. Neun factory.

To the east of the village, the Wayneport coaling tower and steam engine servicing facility of the New York Central was located about two thirds of a mile east of the Lyndon Road bridge. It was large enough to span all four mainline tracks plus both tracks of the West Shore. Nearly all trains powered by steam stopped there for servicing into the 1950s. Remnants of the foundation and water tower still exist. At this same location was an icing plant, used to put ice into bunkers of the fresh fruit and vegetable cars before mechanical refrigeration became popular.

Immigrant ancestors of many of the families who live in the Perinton area came to this area to work for the railroad. Many worked in the railroad yards and the coaling station. One man even worked in a little shanty by the tracks at Main Street, and manually pumped the gates up and down when a train was near. Many local residents worked at the Despatch Car Shops in East Rochester. The shops were owned by the New York Central. Employees built and repaired a wide variety of railcars including boxcars, reefers and cabooses, to name a few.

The railroad continues to play an important role in Perinton. The three tracks see upwards of 60 to 70 trains daily, including up to eight Amtrak passenger trains. And trains still stop in Fairport. The LiDestri Foods Inc. plant at 815 West Whitney Road has a siding and receives supplies by rail.

While you wait at the Main Street crossing for a train to pass, remember, without the railroad, the village and town you live in would be far different than it is. Enjoy the diversion and contemplate the past.



Boy Scout and PHS Member Chris Grace Works to Attain His Eagle Scout Rank

Several months ago, we were contacted by Boy Scout Chris Grace of Troop 208, a local student and member of the Perinton Historical Society, who had an idea for an Eagle Scout service project he wanted to complete. After several meetings with members of the museum and the board, Chris decided to make a difference at the Fairport Historical Museum by painting the Merriman-Clark Room as a way to achieve his Eagle Scout rank.

The Eagle Scout is the highest rank offered in the Boy Scout program. Since the first Eagle Scout badge was awarded in 1912, over 2.2 million young men have earned the award through their diligence and hard work. Eagle Scouts are presented with a medal and a badge upon earning the requisite number of merit badges and upon the completion of a service project. The Perinton Historical Society is pleased to work with Chris Grace to help him achieve his goal of Eagle Scout.

Following is a special message from Chris:

Eagle Project at Museum Troop 208

I will be doing my Eagle Scout Project, which will take place on June 23rd and 24th. My fellow scouts and I will be repainting the basement presentation room. If anyone is interested in helping paint, or in making a donation toward supplies, please contact myself at cgrace.chris@gmail.com, or my father at jaclpat@rochester.rr.com.

*Thank You,
Chris Grace*

2013 House Tour– Sunday, October 6, 2013 Save the Date

*By Deborah J. Wilcox Mabry
Chairperson*

So now that you have saved the date, you probably want more details: Our focus this year will be on the **American Craftsman Bungalow**, which typified the common styles of the American Arts and Crafts movement from 1905–1930s. The term “Arts and Crafts” refers to the early 19th Century British and American movement to revive handicrafts. The movement was also the inspiration behind the Craftsman and Bungalow styles.

English reformer William Morris was one of the founders of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the late 1880s. Tired of excessive Victorian architecture and the machine-driven Industrial Age, Morris and his followers wanted to return to a pre-industrial, handmade society. Morris also wanted to make custom furnishings available to the “common man.” When the movement made its way to the United States at the turn of the 20th century, Gustav Stickley, a well known furniture maker, became the American leader. Originally, the term “Craftsman” meant a home built from a plan in Stickley’s *The Craftsman* magazine, but it has come to mean homes built in the Arts and Crafts style. Stickley preached that bungalows would give working-class families the chance to experience “serious architecture.” They melded simple design with handcrafted artistry—all for about \$900 dollars.

Key Elements of the American Craftsman Bungalow:

- ◆ **Natural materials.** Wood, stone and brick
- ◆ **Built-in furniture and light fixtures.** Built-ins were the hallmark feature of the Arts and Crafts era. Built-in cabinets allowed the furnishings to be part of the architecture, ensuring design unity and economic use of space.
- ◆ **Fireplaces.** A fireplace was the symbol of family in the Arts and Crafts movement: Many designs feature a dominant fireplace in the living room and a large exterior chimney.
- ◆ **Porches.** Most homes in the Craftsman style have porch with thick square or round columns and stone supports.
- ◆ **Low-pitched roofs.** The homes typically have a low roof with wide eaves and triangular brackets.
- ◆ **Exposed beams.** The beams on the porch and inside the house are often exposed.
- ◆ **Open floor plans.** The Arts and Crafts Movement rejected the small, boxy rooms like those in Victorian houses.

The House Tour Committee (Lucy McCormick, Elaine Lanni, Jeanne Cole and Deb Mabry) have been busy working on locating and researching the American Craftsman bungalows in Perinton. We are even gathering information from the Town Historians in Pittsford, Penfield and East Rochester



The Robert McDowell Arts and Crafts home,
built in 1937, at 97 High Street in Fairport

2009 photo by Keith Boas

on the bungalows located in surrounding towns. We have begun contacting the owners of these fabulous homes to find out if they would be interested in having their home be one of the six to eight homes on the upcoming tour. If you own a bungalow in Perinton and you haven’t heard from me, please contact me, because I’d love the opportunity to talk with you.

Thank you.

Some information for this article is from
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bungalow> and from
<http://www.frontdoor.com/buy/arts-and-crafts-architecture/1045>

Children’s Program– Clothing from Yesterday

*Sunday, April 14, 2:30 pm
At the Fairport Historical Museum*

We dress very differently today than people did 20, 50 or 100 years ago. Your clothing is very different from what your parents and grandparents wore when they were growing up. Come see outfits and accessories for men, women, and children from the museum’s collection, some of which are almost 130 years old! Fashions from the 1880s to the 1940s will be on display. You will hear a brief history of these items before taking a tour of our new costume exhibit, “Fashions Inspired by Downton Abbey.”

Children in grades K–6 are invited to attend the children’s history programs with an adult in attendance. The program is FREE and takes place at the Fairport Historical Museum, 18 Perrin Street in Fairport. Scout troops and adults are welcome.

Adult Program— Fashions Inspired by Downton Abbey

Tuesday, April 16, 7:30 pm
At the Fairport Historical Museum

Using clothing from the collection of the Fairport Historical Museum in a local interpretation of the TV series *Downton Abbey*, this talk will illustrate changing fashions in America from the 1880s to the 1940s.

Supposedly, America was a classless society. However, the clothes Americans wore definitely reflected their places in society. Social standing was less obvious than in England, but ballgowns, dinner dresses, sports outfits and work clothes all had their place, and indicated to any observer just where the individual belonged within society. Did opportunities for women create changes in their clothing? Did new fashions affect the way things were done? Did working class people adapt high fashions to suit their way of life? These are some of the questions discussed in this talk. The accompanying exhibition also will provide a glimpse into our society during that era.



Fashions Inspired by *Downton Abbey* Costume Exhibit
Opens April 16th

Photo by Vicki Profitt

Mary-Ellen Perry received a BA degree in Art from Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College) in Westminster, MD, and an MA degree in American Folk Culture from SUNY at Oneonta (Cooperstown Graduate Program). Her career includes working as intern and curator at the Montclair (NJ) Art Museum, director of the Arnot Art Museum in Elmira, NY, and curator of clothing and art at the Strong Museum in Rochester. She also served as guest curator at the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut. Ms. Perry currently works as an independent consultant to historical societies.



Fashions Inspired by *Downton Abbey* Costume Exhibit Opens April 16th

By Vicki Profitt

The Fairport Historical Museum is pleased to announce the grand opening of our new exhibit, *Fashions Inspired by Downton Abbey*. The exhibit opens the evening of April 16th, directly following the presentation by costume consultant Mary-Ellen Perry.

More than twenty costumes and accessories from the collection of the Fairport Historical Museum have been chosen for their resemblance to outfits worn by the major characters of the hit television series *Downton Abbey*. Photographs of fashions from early Fairport residents will also be on display.

Please join us as we celebrate the beautiful beadwork, lace and velvets of earlier times in this exhibit. The exhibit is available for viewing at the Fairport Historical Museum on Sundays and Tuesdays from 2:00–4:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 7:00–9:00 p.m. *Fashions Inspired by Downton Abbey* runs from April 16–September 30, 2013.



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Fairport Historical Museum

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

The Fairport Historical Museum is open to the public Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, on the hours listed below.

Hours

Sunday 2:00-4:00 pm
Tuesday 2:00-4:00 pm
Thursday 7:00-9:00 pm

Group tours, presentations and special projects are by appointment. Please call and leave a message at 223-3989.

www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org



On March 19th, Abraham Lincoln, as portrayed by Terry Darrow, paid a visit to the Fairport Historical Museum. Boy Scouts from Fairport Troop 273 were part of overflow crowd.