

The Very First PHS Tour

Soon after the establishment of the Perinton Historical Society in 1935, the original members began to plan their first tour, a tradition that has continued, on and occasionally off, for the last 80 years. The initial tour was completed in 1936, and was a small affair, perhaps a dozen participants traveling from one site to the next in their automobiles. The event was documented by the Secretary, and is provided below for your review.

Bill Poray, Editor



Left: Early Perinton tavern in which town meetings were often held. Located on the northwest corner of Ayrault and Turk Hill Roads, the structure still stands today.

This photo might have been taken during the 1936 PHS tour.

All photos in this article are from the collection of the Perinton Historical Society.

Beginnings of Township 12 Brought Forth

A group of Perinton Historical Society members made their first tour last Wednesday afternoon, everyone receiving them helpfully. The idea is, to become acquainted with what remains of the beginnings of Township No. 12, Range 4, that our minds may understand more clearly from what labor and hardships grew the beautiful country which we have thoughtlessly taken for granted.

We went first to the peaceful hilltop cleared by Jesse Perrin in 1794 which in 1813 was incorporated into "The Centre burying ground", where many of our brave settlers are resting. The original map of the lots and their owners is still carefully preserved.

It is well nigh impossible to imagine forests covering the cultivated hills and fields surrounding it, but the difficulty of the task of clearing them away is more easily understood.

Turning back east from here, we reached the intersection of the Turk Hill and Baker roads (The "Centre") where a goodly share of land in its southwestern portion was owned by Judge Walker of Berkshire, Mass., who hired Glover Perin to clear it and set out an apple orchard, five of whose trees still live.

In 1804 four Slocum brothers from Massachusetts settled here: Amasa, the oldest, paying an advanced price because of the improvements.

On this farm was the first burial plot, called "The Slave Cemetery" of which no trace or record remains. After passing through various hands this land and that across the road



~ Bob Hunt ~

Comments from your President

September 13, 2015: It is a cool rainy day as I sit at my computer writing my comments this month. I enjoy reviewing the weather statistics found on the back of the Sports Section of the D & C, and in particular the Almanac. For the year, we have received about 3.5 inches more rain than the average year, 27.4

inches as opposed to 23.9 inches. I also check the cooling degree days, which gives an indication of how hot the year has been. You might remember that in the winter I watch the heating degree days. A cooling degree day is an index of energy consumption indicating how many degrees the average temperature is above 65 degrees. To date we have had 665 cooling degree days versus an average of 524 last year or 504 in a normal year. So this year has been warmer than normal.

As promised in my previous comments, let me tell about my ancestor, John Fillmore II's adventure with pirates, as described in *The Narrative of Captain John Fillmore*, a brochure printed in 1837 by A. M. Clapp of Aurora, NY. John Fillmore II was the first American-born Fillmore. At an early age, John had a yearning to go to sea. This, his mother understandably opposed, and John respected her wishes, awaiting the time when he would become of age, or gain his mother's consent. In the meantime, John was apprenticed to learn the carpentry trade, while one of his friends William White was apprenticed to a tailor. Remember William White as he pops up later in the story.

After about two years, John again sought permission to go on a voyage to the West Indies. Recognizing his strong desire for the sea, and realizing that his could not be long postponed, his mother Abigail gave consent for him to go aboard the fishing sloop, *Dolphin*, with Captain Mark Haskell.

After a few weeks at sea and off the coast of Newfoundland, the *Dolphin* was hailed by another vessel, which they feared to be a pirate ship, as indeed it was, and commanded by none other than the notorious pirate, Captain John Phillips. The fishing sloop was capable of neither fight nor flight. The pirate ship sent a boat to the sloop demanding the names of the crewmembers and content of cargo. When these had been supplied the boat returned to the pirate ship. After a short delay it again came to the fishing sloop with a message. If they would send over John Fillmore, the sloop and the rest of the crew would not be molested. There was a hurried conference in which John refused to go aboard the pirate ship. Captain Phillips was incensed with the refusal

and sent orders to bring Fillmore dead or alive, saying also, that if Fillmore came he would release him at the end of two months. John realized that further refusal would, in all probability, mean instant death for himself and all of the crew. He decided to go rather than to bring the vengeance of the pirates upon his comrades.

Once on board the pirate ship, John was amazed to find his former friend William White, as a member of the pirate crew. White told Captain Phillips that if he could engage Fillmore in his service he would have a good stout, resolute fellow, every way, as a hand.

Aboard the pirate ship, John refused to sign the "Articles of Piracy," and thus became what was known as a "forced man." There were ten men in the pirate crew, all but John having subscribed to the articles. Treatment at first was better than he had anticipated. John being assigned mainly to the helm. In the weeks that followed, no capture of any consequence had been made. At the end of two months, John requested his release according to agreement, but Phillips replied that since they had done little business as yet he could not spare him, but would set him at liberty at the end of a further three months. Little of value was taken after three months, with the exception of a few new hands being acquired, some of whom did and others did not sign the articles. John again requested his release, according to promise, saying he wished to go to see his mother who had heard nothing from him since the return of the fishing sloop with the news of his misfortune. "Let you at liberty! Damn you, you shall be set at liberty when I'm damned, and not before," replied Phillips in a rage. Thereafter, conditions for John worsened.

To be continued next month: Learn how John Fillmore escapes death and the pirate ship.

As you enter the museum, take a look at the wood in the entry, as the gold leaf used on the letter engraving has been spruced up a bit and the wood has been rejuvenated a bit by receiving a coat of linseed oil. There is also a new floor mat in the entry and at the bottom of the stairs going to the program room. These mats and the new desk chair are thanks to a donation by one of our members—thank you!

Also of note: On a recent Saturday morning, the museum had 35 visitors. Also, please review the upcoming programs at the museum and add them to your calendar. Encourage your friends to join you in attending our programs, and also to consider becoming members.

Thanks for your continued support of PHS, and we will chat again next month—with the conclusion of the escape of John Fillmore from Captain Phillips.

Bob Hunt, President
585-415-7053 — rhunt1@rochester.rr.com



The 2015 Perinton Historical Society Scholarship has been awarded to two Fairport High School seniors. Below is Daniel Smith's winning submission. Daniel will be attending Rochester Institute of Technology, and has received a \$1,000 scholarship.

Perinton and the Underground Railroad

By Daniel Smith

While it is very well-known that anti-slave abolitionists Frederick Douglass lived in Rochester and Harriet Tubman lived nearby in Auburn, it is not as widely publicized that Perinton was the home of several people instrumental in aiding slaves escape to freedom on the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a secret trail of safe places along a route from Wilmington and Baltimore, through Philadelphia, New York City, Syracuse, Rochester, and finally to St. Catherine's, Ontario, Canada.

Slaves could not stop in the northern states, because slave catchers from the south were allowed to recapture slaves in all states. It began operating in the 1830s and was run by white people, black people, and people of all different denominations. The Underground Railroad stations could be anything from a hollowed-out tree, to a barn, church, or house.

It took about a day to walk between stations, and they were usually marked by a candle or light. In the mid-to-late 1800s, several Underground Railroad stations operated in Perinton. One was a house that still stands today at 173 Mason Road, owned by Gideon and Jeremiah Ramsdell. Gideon Ramsdell was a Quaker, who did not believe in slavery and who opened his home to fugitives on their way to Canada.

Another local connection is mentioned in a newspaper article that tells about a gatepost near the intersection of Turk Hill Road and Steele Road. Elizabeth Shilling's mother is reported to have put sandwiches there for fleeing slaves. Her family also gave money to a conductor, Samuel Williams, who in turn gave it to needy slaves. A large hollow tree at the same location is gone now, but probably served as a hiding spot for the runaways.

The Isaac Talman house at 2187 Whitney Road and the Darius Tallman/Butler House at 2381 Whitney Road are both considered stops on the Railroad. Darius Tallman is one of Isaac Talman's sons. A second son, John lived in the house at 2187 Whitney Road. His son, John Jr., referred to his father as a "Black Republican" and shared stories of families that were hidden at the house and then transported under blankets by lumber wagon to the next station. John was a banker who also owned the Talman building, which was used by Frederick Douglass to publish his Underground Railroad paper, The North Star. Frederick Douglass was a prime stationmaster,



Ramsdell house on Mason Road, a documented stop on the Underground Railroad

and both his office and home were used as stops. Mary E. Fitzhugh was married to John Talman. She and other Fitzhugh family members aided runaway slaves in nearby Rochester, along with Quakers, Isaac and Amy Post, Presbyterians, Samuel D. Porter and his sister Maria, and Congressman Gerrit Smith.

According to stories passed down through the years, the Collins family house at 1041 Pittsford-Victor Road was also a stop on the Underground Railroad. The Perinton maps of 1852, 1858, and 1872 list that property as belonging to H. Collins. The H could refer to Harkeline, his brother Hiram, or his brother, Homer. In 1989, the home was designated as a Perinton Historic Landmark.

While researchers disagree on the actual list of all stops in the Rochester area, it is clear that there were definitely several in the Fairport, Perinton area. I feel proud to be part of a community that bravely aided in the fight to abolish slavery.



For more information on the Underground Railroad in Perinton, see the 1939 letter and 1858 map on page 6.



Franklin Ellsworth, grandson of William Pratt Ellsworth, holds the old broad axe used to hew the beams for the early buildings on the family farm. This photo was likely taken during the 1936 PHS tour.

"First House Tour.." continued from page 1

was purchased in 1834 by William Pratt Ellsworth of New Caanan, Columbia Co., New York, whose descendants still possess it.

A grandson, Frank now occupies the homestead standing in the southeast corner who showed us not only hand scored and hewn timbers in both house and barns, but also the broad axe which helped to do the work. We also went into the first cheese factory which used to do a thriving business and saw in another building (now a cattle barn) where a cider mill was operated. Many treasures are in their original places of use.

On the northwest corner stands the remains of a small building owned by Isaac Arnold which was once a tavern where some of the first town meetings were held. (See photo on page 1.)

Across the road, northeast, is the original holdings of the Knickerbocker family and the quaint little house where Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Palmer lived so many years still remains.

Farther east stands the Ayrault homestead, yet in possession of that family, which has been carefully preserved and holds many treasures in its present rooms, while on its porch stands the old well curb and the still used well.

Northeast of here lies the old Lyndon farm and house. This land was cleared about 1800. When the frame house which stands definitely back from the road on the top of a gentle slope replaced the log cabin, the barns were put where they would shut off the bleak north winds and in the yard grow the ancient honey locusts whose blossoms fed beef which every settler had or wanted.



The Staples Tavern on Pittsford Palmyra Road. It was torn down in 1974 when the Quailbush subdivision was established.

Some of the building's architectural components were salvaged for use at the Genesee Country Museum.

Now turning west, we soon reached the Mason road where stands the large homestead built by Gideon Ramsdell which during the Civil War times was one of the Underground Railroad stations. The room in the cellar where the fugitive slaves were hidden may still be seen. The older generation of today speak of this place as "The Hannah Mason farm" although Lawrence and Margaret Tooley are its present owners.

Because of interested lingerings, we were now behind on our schedule so we hastened to our last call at the Staples Tavern standing on the Palmyra road west of Egypt whose present owner is Mrs. Burt Blood. Here there are two high lights to Oh! And Ah! About; the ballroom and the attic where the curious roof construction of saplings amazed us.



View of the "curious roof construction of saplings" in the Staples Tavern. The joists were maple, and the ridgepole was of pine.

Now the afternoon was waning and we hurried away to the home of our president, Mrs. Paul Merriman, on the west Ayrault road, where we were greeted by her daughter, Mrs. James Davis who pleased and instructed us with an interesting illustrated talk on the geological glacial, geographic and social development of the township. Mrs. Davis evidently knew and loved whereof she enthusiastically spoke, telling us many strange facts, explaining how the present land formation had been built up through successive eras by water and glacial action until we have for our village an unusual foundation which Professor Herman Fairchild in his book "Geologic Story of the Genesee Valley and Western New York" calls The Fairport Channel.

Having been intellectually fed, we then fed our bodies with the delicious food provided by our picnic committee. This and the chatter which went with it ended a perfect afternoon.

Secretary



Carl Peters Murals on Show

Our own Carl Peters will be celebrated this fall at the Memorial Art Gallery with the blockbuster exhibit *Art for the People: Carl Peters and the Rochester WPA Murals*. The exhibit opens October 18th and runs through January 3rd, 2016.

Carl Peters (1897–1980) moved from Rochester to Fairport to a small farm on Jefferson Avenue when he was fourteen years old and lived here the rest of his life. As an adult, he spent his summers at Rockport, Cape Ann, Massachusetts—painting ocean and sky—then returned to his studio in Fairport to paint local winter scenes. Besides his individual oil paintings, he is best known locally for the 13 magnificent historical murals he painted as part of the national Works Progress Administration project. One of these murals resides in the Fairport Historical Museum. The others are located at three schools in Rochester.

Carl is recognized as a regional scene painter working in the impressionist style. His works are well known and collected nationally. The Village of Fairport owns one of his oil paintings, "Winter Stream," presently on display at the Fairport Museum.

In addition to the exhibit at the Memorial Art Gallery, beginning on October 18th at 3:00 p.m. and repeating again on November 15th at 2:00 p.m., the gallery is presenting a documentary film entitled *Enough to Live On: The Arts of the WPA* by Michael Maglaras of 217 Films, which features two of the Peters murals. A bus tour of the four mural sites is also planned. Contact the Gallery Council at the Memorial Art Gallery for details. For more information regarding the Peters exhibit and additional exhibit events at the Memorial Art Gallery, go to mag.rochester.edu/exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/.



Help Needed!

We are still in need of volunteers to activate our new-fangled TV and video set up prior to the monthly program presentation. You will need to be at the museum one evening a month for approximately two hours on a rotating monthly schedule. Training will be provided. One of the volunteers already doing the job would be glad to talk with you and provide details.

If you are interested, please respond at info@perinton-historicalsociety.org or call and leave a message at the museum, 223-3989.

The Technology Committee

The letter below, related to Underground Railroad history in Perinton, is from the archives of Marjorie Snow-Merriman, the first president of the Perinton Historical Society.

Editor

Fairport, NY
March 4, 1939

Dear Mrs Bown,

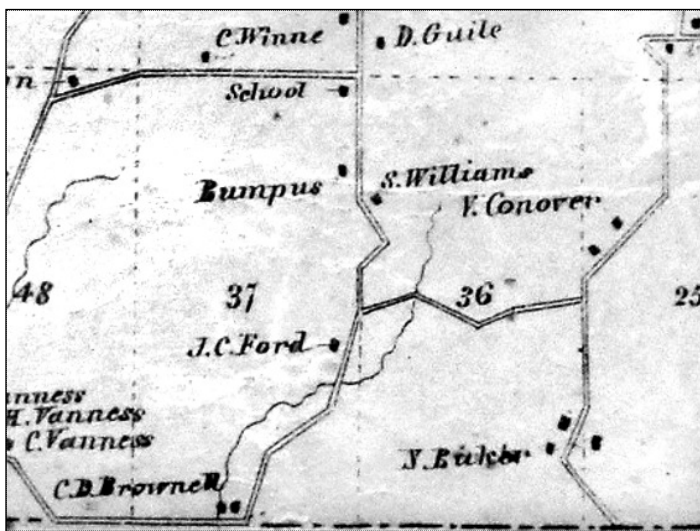
As I am laid up with a broken arm, I spend much time reading over old letters and papers and have learned some things I never knew before. They are from the pen of my brother, Charles Wesley Ford, who died January 17, 1928.

He writes in a letter written in 1856: "Our folks had company on Saturday afternoon. They were Mr. and Mrs. John Woolston, Mr. and Mrs. William Woolston and Mr. and Mrs. Erastus Ford. Of course they talked politics.

A fugitive slave law was then in force—that everyone must turn out with horses and dogs, with hue and cry at the call of United States Marshalls, pursuing runaway slaves. It also imposed a fine of \$1,000.00 and two years in prison for refusing to join in arresting or in feeding or helping fugitives.

Our mother vowed she would feed fugitives, officials or no. They would not keep her long in jail or get any dollars from her. She actually put sandwiches on our gatepost by the path across the swamp into the woods for strangers to help themselves. I remember some years afterward that very early one morning our neighbor, Mr. Samuel Williams came to our back door with a young colored man saying: "We must help this man. We can't give him any money, but we can lend him some", which they did, including also a lunch. Some twenty or more years later, this brother heard a colored man tell of an experience of his describing the place, the woods used at the time, the swamp, the path across the swamp into the woods, and he felt it must be the same man. This happened on the Turk Hill Road about five miles south of Fairport. Very few people living know the truth of this.

Elizabeth N. Shilling



The partial 1858 map of Perinton shows the location of the Ford home near the corner of Turk Hill Road and Steel Road.
The family aided runaway slaves on route to Canada.



The College at Brockport Lends a Hand

On August 29th, the Perinton Historical Society partnered with The College at Brockport for its fifth annual Saturday of Service. Thirty-two freshmen visited the Fairport Historical Museum to lend a hand by dusting, sweeping and spraying to make the museum sparkle. We appreciate their enthusiasm and their elbow grease! Special thanks to PHS member Catherine Angevine for assisting with the task.

Special Recognition Level Memberships—As of September 16, 2015

Business (\$100)

Ed Bradford, Liftbridge Financial Advisors

6 North Main Street, Suite 400w, Fairport

Website: <http://liftbridgefinancial.com>

Suzanne Lee Personal Histories

33 Chesham Way, Fairport

Phone: 585-267-6189

Website: <http://SLeePersonalHistories.com>

Fairport Village Inn, Wayne and Patty Beckwith

103 North Main Street, Fairport

Phone: 585-388-011

Website: <http://www.thefvi.com>

Robert Ruhland, Keller Williams Realty

2000 Winton Road S. Bldg. 1, Rochester, NY 14618

Phone: 585-303-6607

Website: <http://bobruhland.yourkwagent.com>

DeLand (\$100–\$249)

Joyce and Charles Cowden

Ed and Gail Rybicki

Lynn C. Scott

Jack and Nancy Slaybaugh

Potter (\$250–\$499)

Bob and Cindy Hunt

Drew and Carol Saum

Upcoming Events

Now through October 18th during regular museum hours
World War II Memorabilia, from David Wild's collection

Sunday, October 4th, 1:00–5:00 p.m.

House Tour: Potter Place—Past and Present

Open to PHS members. For information about joining, stop by the museum or visit our website:
www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org

Tuesday, October 20th, 7:00 p.m. at the museum

Program & book signing

Question of Sanity: The True Story of Female Serial Killers in 19th Century New York

Presenter: Michael T. Keene. Mr. Keene will sign copies of his books immediately following the presentation. Five titles available at \$20.00 each. Cash and checks accepted.

Tuesday, November 17th at the museum

6:00–7:00 p.m., Yuletide Traditions

Opening bids accepted for silent auction holiday items

7:00 p.m., Historic Highlights & Heartwarming

Discoveries: Collection of Stories

Presenter: Bill Poray

Saturday, November 21st, 10:30–11:30 a.m. at the museum

Children's craft with Suzanne Lee and a visit from Santa. Bring the kids to create a fun holiday-theme craft. Santa will be making an appearance during the craft time.

Sunday, November 22, 2:30–3:30 p.m. at the museum

Book Signing by local author Louis Malucci

Mr. Malucci will sign copies of his book, *B-47 Statojet*. The book sells for \$26.00. Cash and checks accepted.

Saturday, December 5th, 10:30–11:30 a.m. at the museum

Book Signing by author Donovan Shilling who will sign copies of *A Towpath Tale*, *Rochester's Movie Mania* and *Made in Rochester*, plus several other titles. Cash and checks accepted.

Sunday, December 6th, 2:30–3:30 p.m. at the museum

Art Sale by Fairport artist Susan Prenner

Susan Prenner will be on hand to sell her artwork, which comes just in time for the holidays. Various prices. Credit cards and cash accepted.

Tuesday, December 8th, 6:00–7:00 p.m. at the museum

PHS Yuletide Traditions: Final bids accepted for the silent auction. Winners will be announced at the end of the evening's program.

Annual Holiday Party & Program: History of Band Organs & Christmas Sing-Along

Presenter: Tim Wagner

Please bring a dessert to pass.

Yuletide Traditions Celebrating in Style

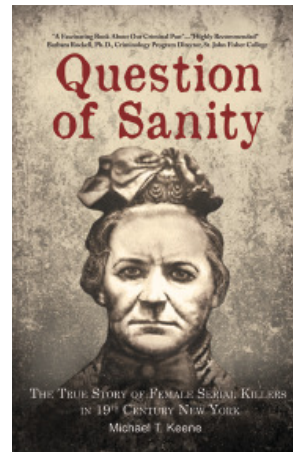
The Perinton Historical Society plans to celebrate the holidays in style and you can join in the fun! Gain recognition for your business or organization by donating a decorated tree, wreath or gift basket for our Yuletide Traditions fundraiser. Your donation supports the Perinton Historical Society's educational programs, exhibits and operation of the museum.

Registration runs through October 24th, with drop-off days on November 14th & 15th. The silent auctions take place November 17th–December 8th during regular museum hours. Winners will be announced at the conclusion of the PHS holiday party and program on December 8th. Information and registration forms are available at the museum or on our website under the 'Fundraising' tab.

Question of Sanity: The True Story of Female Serial Killers in 19th Century New York

Tuesday, October 20th, 7:00 p.m. at the museum

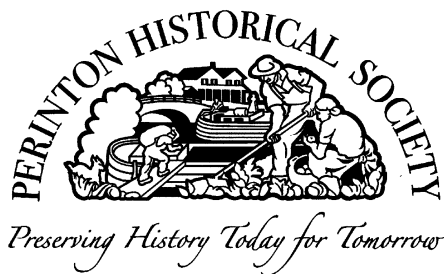
Presented by Michael T. Keene



Award-winning writer and film maker Michael T. Keene's latest book, *Question of Sanity*, examines the lives and times of seventeen female serial killers and their heinous murders set in New York during the nineteenth century. The women who serve as the subjects for this book all share compelling stories. Most of them are from North Central New York, living along the Erie Canal in small, isolated rural communities. Some of the women chronicled include Lizzie Halliday, convicted of murdering nine of her own family members; Catherine Claus, who boasted of killing 15 infants in her care; Caroline Sorgenfrie, charged with the murder of her four husbands; and Ella Holdridge, the teen thrill killer who enjoyed looking at her victims because, "They looked so nice dead."

Michael Keene is the author of *Folklore and Legends of Rochester*, *Murder*, *Mayhem and Madness*, *Madhouse*, and *Abandoned*. Keene is also the producer of the award-winning documentary series, *Visions*, as well as the recently released MP3 audio recordings of his books.

His books will be available for \$20.00 each.



Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 149
Fairport, NY 14450



Early interior image of the
Fairport Public Library, now the
Fairport Historical Museum

Fairport Historical Museum

18 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 14450

The museum is open to the public on the days and hours listed below:

Saturday 10:00 a.m.–Noon Tuesday 2:00–4:00 p.m.
Sunday 2:00–4:00 p.m. (closed Oct 3rd for House Tour) Thursday 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Group tours, presentations and special projects are by appointment. Please call and
leave a message at **585-223-3989**.

www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org