

Amicitia Club of Fairport 1921–1969

By Nancy Antell Slaybaugh

Amicitia is Latin for “friendship.” Finding a poem titled *Origin of Amicitia Club*, by Margaret Alcorn Hodgson, among family papers, piqued my curiosity. I learned that this was a club my grandparents belonged to and that the poem was written in 1946 for the club’s 25th anniversary. The poem spoke of friendships made during high school, having fun and giving to others—all the things that made Amicitia Club, a purely social club whose members had been close friends while part of the Fairport High School classes of 1907 and 1908, a success for 48 years.

Martha Alcorn was one of 19 graduates of Fairport High School class of 1907. In March of 1921, Martha, by then Mrs. Fred Hodgson, conceived the idea of forming a social club based on old friendships with high school classmates, as noted in the article below from *The Fairport Herald*:

“At a meeting of several of the younger ladies of the village Thursday evening at the home of Mrs. Clark Burlingame on West Avenue, it was decided to organize a club to be known as the Amicitia club. Already about forty members are enrolled. The officers are as follows: President, Mrs. Fred Hodgson; vice president, Mrs. J.B. Hannan; secretary, Miss Irmagarde Burns; treasurer, Miss Martha Fuller; chairman of entertainment committee, Mrs. Hiram Ranney. It is the purpose of the club to meet the second Thursday afternoon of the month, when the gentlemen will come in for the evening.”



A few future members of the Amicitia Club are identified in this photograph, including Stella Hannan at far left and Jesse B. Hannan at far right. To his left is his wife, Lucille Parce Hannan. The view is to the east, and includes the predecessors to Fairport’s Main Street lift bridge and the Parker Street bridge, faintly visible in the distance.

Photo provided by Nancy Antell Slaybaugh

Only five members of the club could be identified as FHS graduates. Other members had probably been part of a class, but left before graduation. For example, my grandfather, Jesse B. Hannan, was to have graduated with the class of 1907, but left school in 1906 so that he could manage the Hannan family farm. My grandmother, Lucille Parce, was to graduate with the class of 1908, but eloped with Jesse in March of that year, thus ending her high school career.

Two members were singled out in the *Origin* poem. One was Jess Fox, a Rochester resident who apparently printed a yearly program booklet for the club. The other, “Dr. Dan,” was Daniel Mellen, an FHS football star of the class of 1907 who became a physician in Rome, New York. The other men of the club were either farmers or business men and at least five served the Town of Perinton in various capacities. Except for a couple of teachers and



Comments from your President

February 15th, 2017:

Greetings, and I hope all had a Happy Valentine's Day. You could correctly conclude from some of my previous articles that I love the four seasons and the variety and beauty each brings to our area. But the headline in the Democrat & Chronicle this morning regarding 25 feet of snow and counting would probably cause me to say "Uncle—I give." The article covered the snowfall for the season in the small community of Redfield, located on the Tug Hill Plateau in Oswego County, east of Lake Ontario. They just hit the 300-inch mark for this year and are in hopes of breaking their record of 424.5 inches. So only 125 inches to go, which is more than the 100+ inches received in the Rochester area on an annual basis. This area regularly receives very high levels of snow, because it is located where lake effect snow storms are a regular occurrence. "Uncle!"

~ **Bob Hunt** ~

The full moon, which occurred on February 10th, was called the Snow Moon, since the heaviest snow usually falls during the month. Some Native Americans also called the February full moon the "Full Hunger Moon" because of the difficulty in hunting for their food. The full moon coming up on March 12th is called the "Full Worm Moon," because with warmer weather, earth worms begin to appear, heralding the return of robins. Although some robins never leave.

A few weeks back I received word that high school seniors were seeking volunteer opportunities to satisfy their community service requirement for graduation. So I sent off an email to Stacie Miller, the contact name I had, and wow, within a couple of days, I heard from 13 students. Some will help us in the reorganization of our museum files with new folders and file names. At the same time, the contents of the folders will be digitized in order to establish a computerized database for easier subject searches. In addition, several students are interested in becoming docents at the museum. I'm very pleased with the number of students looking to get involved and I will keep you posted on how this all works out.

Democrat & Chronicle columnist Jim Memmott was the speaker at a recent Rotary meeting. Jim told some amusing stories uncovered in his research for his article on "Remarkable Rochesterians." At the end of his talk to the Rotarians, Jim listed who he considered in his opinion to be the top five male and female Rochesterians. The list of men included Frederick Douglas, George Eastman, Tom Golisano, Robert Wegman and Hiram Sibley. His selection of remarkable Rochesterian women were Susan B Anthony, Kate Gleason,

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HISTORIGRAM

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Renee Fleming, Elizabeth Holahan and Abby Wambach. As Jim was speaking, I wondered who would be the top Fairportians or Perintonians if we were to come up with a list. A number have been featured in past issues of the *Historigram*, but give me your thoughts as well. Feel free to email me at the address listed below.

In closing this month, I would like to leave you with one of my favorite poems. It was written in Sanskrit in 1200 BC, and is just as meaningful today:

*Look to this day
for it is life
the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all
the realities and truths of existence
the joy of growth
the splendor of action
the glory of power.
For yesterday is but a memory
and tomorrow is only a vision.
But today well lived
makes every yesterday a memory of happiness
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day.*

Thanks for your continued support and we will chat again next month.

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



For information on becoming
a member of the Perinton Historical
Society, visit our website at—
www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org.



Fixer-Upping at the Museum

A merry band of fixer uppers has descended upon the museum attic and reference library on Thursday mornings. Its mission: to organize the collections in a way that will make them more user-friendly and facilitate the completion of an upcoming inventory.

Some of the tasks completed or near completion include creating a labeled scheme of the museum bays and shelves, checking the contents of boxes to ascertain that items listed are actually there, sorting the school yearbook collection, straightening the *Historigram* notebooks, updating the house tour notebooks and reorganizing the research library.

One of the many interesting items we have discovered is an 1888 course of study from the Rochester Business University. Emulating this school's approach to imparting "Useful Knowledge" in a systematic fashion, our approach to organizing the museum's resources is "careful selection, thorough sifting and harmonious arrangement."

The merry, tenacious ten are museum members Sam Bartolotta, Ann Castle, Joyce Hawkinson, Karen Junker, Nan Notar, Nancy Slaybaugh, Jolene Smith, Jean Whitney, Catherine Angevine and Lucy McCormick.

Museum News

Beginning in March, the Fairport Historical Museum will extend its hours on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Look for a Perinton Historical Society exhibit at the Fairport Savings Bank throughout the month of March.

An exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary of America's entry into World War I opens on March 4th. The exhibit features artifacts from the collections of the Perinton Historical Society and the Perinton Town Historian.

A postcard exhibit also opens March 4th. It features beautifully illustrated postcards from 1909 and 1910. These postcards are from the collections of Carolyn Blyler French and Bob & Cindy Hunt. Additional information will be available in the April edition of the *Historigram*.

The PHS is pleased to welcome the Greenbrier Garden Club to the museum on Thursday, March 9th for a *Fun and Fascinating Fairport Facts* presentation. Members of the Greenbrier Garden Club generously give of their time to maintain the gardens at the museum throughout the season.

Upcoming Programs & Events

Saturday, March 4th, 10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

The museum opens for the season.

Saturday, March 4th, at the museum

Opening day of the postcard and World War I exhibits

Monday, March 13, 6:30 p.m.

At the Spiegel Community Center, Room 101, Pittsford

Program: *Lasting Legacies: Three People Who Preserved Civil War History*

Presenter: Vicki Masters Proffitt

PHS members are invited to attend this presentation, which is hosted by Pittsford Caleb Hopkins Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Tuesday, March 21st, 7:00 p.m. at the museum

Program: *The New York Woman Suffrage Centennial*

Presenter: Christine Ridarsky

Tuesday, April 18th, 7:00 p.m. at the museum

Program: *Celebrating Fairport Village's Sesquicentennial*

Presenter: Village of Fairport 150th Anniversary Committee

Tuesday, May 16th, 6:00 p.m.—Perinton Park Pavilion

Event: Perinton Historical Society Annual Meeting and Picnic

Tuesday, June 13th, 7:00 p.m. (Place to be announced)

Program: *Annual Illuminated History Cemetery Tour*

Wednesday, July 19th, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

At the Fairport Public Library

Program: *An Evening with Miss Susan B. Anthony*

Presenter: Jeanne Gehret

This program is co-sponsored by the Fairport Public Library and will be held in honor of the VoteTilla event happening late afternoon and evening of July 19th.

We Need You!

Museum volunteers work one shift per month greeting and assisting visitors. New volunteers are paired with veterans for each shift, and training is provided. We are always looking for new volunteers to staff the museum, and especially need volunteers on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and Sundays from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. If you can give of your time just a few hours a month, please contact PHS Volunteer Coordinator Sue Scheirer by phone at 585-377-3789 or at dscheir1@rochester.rr.com. We look forward to adding you to our volunteer roster!

a nurse, the women did not work outside the home. Several club members were related, including twin sisters Bertha Bortle Beal and Florence Bortle Sampson; four members of the Watson family, Clarence, Merrill, Ruth and Dorothy Hull; Stella Whitman, sister of Jesse Hannan; and Howard Ranney with his sisters Claire Castor and Mary Baumer.

Below is a portion of Margaret Alcorn Hodgson's poem, *Origin of Amicitia Club*:

*Years ago in Fairport High
There was a joyous clan
Who came from north, south, east and west*

*Even from Egypt-land,
If I should tell you of all their fun
And of all the parties, too,
About the old orchestra and all,
'Twould take all the evening through.
So I will only say that when
The school days were over and done,
The clan broke up with fond regrets,
Gone were the days of fun.*

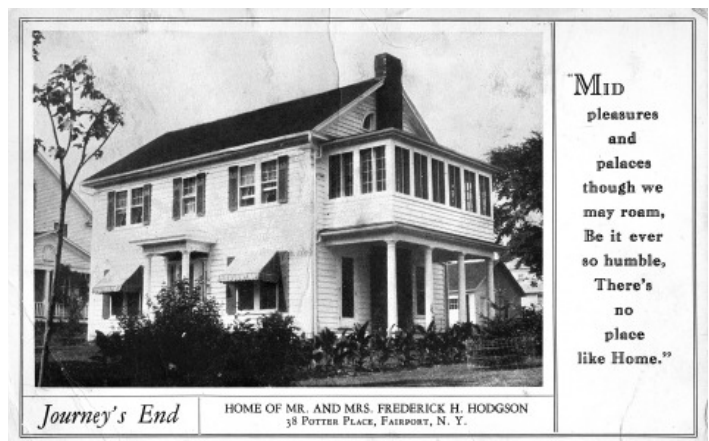
*Years went on; as the merry clan
Went on its separate ways
Some to college, some to work;
But the memory of those days
And the friendships made in F.H.S.
Did not fade away with the years.*

*For the friendships formed were true and real,
And real things do not disappear.
We wondered why we should not try
The good old times to renew,
So the clan was called together,
With the plan of a Club in view.
A Club built on old friendships;*

Upon Amicitia true.

Women were the officers of the Amicitia Club, being elected at a business meeting each spring. They would plan the activities for each club year's monthly meetings. Most of the second Thursday meetings in the early years were held at members' homes, which had to be large enough to accommodate an average of 30 to 50 attendees—or 62 to 75 as occurred in the 1930s. These gatherings always included dinner prepared by three hostesses during the afternoon and served to the membership at about 7:00 pm to accommodate the working husbands.

Each dinner was followed by entertainment—planned by three other women—which often included music, dancing, or cards, euchre being a favorite. Some evenings had creative



Home of Frederick and Martha Hodgson, 38 Potter Place. Martha conceived the idea of forming the Amicitia Club as a way to maintain friendships with classmates of Fairport High School.

Image provided by Nancy Antell Slaybaugh

themes including a "poverty party," a "stunt night," a "night club party," a "stag and hen" and a "backward party." Other theme parties were held for holidays such as Valentine's Day, Halloween and Christmas. And, by 1946, the club had celebrated 19 silver wedding anniversaries of its members. Annual events included picnics, sausage roasts, progressive dinners and a year-end banquet.

Early special events were held at Bown's Hall, the Fire Hall or the Municipal building, today's Village Hall. After the Perrin Street library opened in 1938, the basement meeting room became a frequent place for monthly gatherings. Likewise, Potter Memorial was used after it became a community facility in 1944. Raymond Baptist Church was another frequent site for dinner, but entertainment would take place at a member's home or other venue after.

Dues must have been assessed to support the club's activities as well as an annual \$5.00 merit award to an FHS senior, which was given for 37 consecutive years. The first such award, given in 1931, was "\$5.00 in gold to the senior who has worked most diligently for the class." The last award—given in 1969—still \$5.00, was for "showing outstanding improvement in effort, achievement, and citizenship."

My source of information about the members and activities of this club, historic newspapers, contained hundreds of articles about club activities, some of which are included in this document. Member obituaries were also found, recording at least one death in each decade of the club's existence. In the 1960s, 14 deaths occurred, leaving only five members living in 1970.

Margaret Alcorn Hodgson died in 1947, one year after writing *Origin of Amicitia Club*, her ode to the club she founded based on life-long friendships. As its members ceased to exist, so did Amicitia Club cease to be part of the social fabric of Fairport and Perinton.



Amicitia Club members
Jesse B. Hannan and
Lucille Parce Hannan,
pictured here in the
1930s.

*Photo provided by
Nancy Antell Slaybaugh*

Special Recognition Level Memberships

As of February 15, 2017

Business (\$100)

Fairport Village Inn, Wayne and Patty Beckwith

103 North Main Street, Fairport, NY 14450

Phone: 585-388-0112

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

Forever Financial Advisors, LLC

Annie McQuilkin, MS, CFP®

140 West Church Street, Fairport, NY 14450

Phone: 585-598-1377

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

The Inn on Church

11 West Church Street, Fairport, NY 14450

Phone: 585-678-1106

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/theinnonchurch>

Robert Ruhland, Keller Williams Realty

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

Phone: 585-303-6607

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

Ed Bradford, Liftbridge Financial Advisors

6 North Main Street, Suite 400w, Fairport, NY 14450

Website: <http://liftbridgefinancial.com>

Pixos Print

75 Goodway Drive, Rochester, NY 14623-3000

Phone: 585-500-4600

Website: ReadytoRun@pixosprint.com

Suzanne Lee Personal Histories

33 Chesham Way, Fairport, NY 14450

Phone: 585-267-6189

Website: <http://SLeePersonalHistories.com>

Joel Cuminale, Turning Point Signs & Design

7 East Avenue, Fairport, NY 14450

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

DeLand (\$100-\$249)

Arthur Alvut and Mary Ockenden

Listed below are the names of members most frequently mentioned in newspaper articles with FHS graduation date in () and death dates in [] noted. Husbands are in the left column and wives in the right column, where applicable.

Men	Women
Frank Barnhart [1938]	Virginia Ruckdeschel Barnhart [?]
Howard Baumer [1972]	Mary Ranney Baumer [1969]
Willis P. Beal [1933]	Bertha Bortle Beal [1980]
Bruner G. Bown (FHS1905) [1965]	Margaret Case Bown [1968]
Clark Burlingame [1978]	Josephine Watson Burlingame [1963]
	Irmagarde Burns (Miss) (FHS 1907)
Bernal O. Castor [1977]	Claire Ranney Castor [1962]
John Drake [1951]	Gertrude Watson Drake [1959]
Jesse Fox [1981]	Marion Preston Fox [?]
	Martha Fuller (Miss) [1941]
Ellis Gay [1971]	Agnes Thistlethwaite Gay (FHS 1907) [1987]
Charles Gibke [1970]	Hazel Huber Gibke [1966]
Jesse Hannan [1961]	Lucille Parce Hannan [1966]
Frederick Hodgson [1964]	Margaret Alcorn Hodgson (FHS 1907) [1947]
Edward Hull [1956]	Dorothy Knapp Hull [1969]
Hiram Ranney [1945]	Nellie Schrader Ranney [1993]
A. Warren Reynolds [1956]	Orpha T. Reynolds [1978]
George A. Sampson [1956]	Florence Bortle Sampson (FHS 1908) [1968]
Clarence D. Watson [1969]	Delia Tabor Watson [1924]
J. Merrill Watson [1969]	Jane Templeton Watson [1975]
	Ruth C. Watson (Miss) [1931]
Howard Whitman [1945]	Stella Hannan Whitman [1960]
W. Donald Williams [1973]	Nettie Barnsdale Williams [1995]





The canal break of 1911 flooded Marsh Road on the right. (The view is looking west.) Utility poles were swamped, and many subsequently washed away. Several hundred feet of the north bank was washed out, as well as the tracks of the Rochester and Eastern interurban trolley, only minutes after a car had passed. Workers repaired the break and the canal reopened about four weeks later.

Pictures of Perinton

By Bill Poray

Bushnell's Basin suffered canal breaks in 1911, 1912, and 1974. Although it can be difficult to identify which of the early breaks is depicted in photographs, I believe those published here are from the disaster which occurred on May 19, 1911.

As reported in the Monroe County Mail of May 25, 1911:

"The most destructive canal break in this section for years past, occurred at Bushnell's Basin Friday afternoon, resulting in heavy loss and a tie-up of traffic for at least three weeks. About 4 o'clock, John McCarthy, a laborer on the Barge canal, discovered water pouring through a narrow crack in the canal bank just west of the bridge at Bushnell's Basin. McCarthy realized the necessity for stopping the leak and ran for a plank and shovel, but before help could be summoned the boards which he was able to find were swept away and the break widened beyond the possibility of quick repair."



This view is to the east, toward Fairport. Flood waters from the canal break have subsided. It was reported that the break occurred just west of the arched bridge, predecessor to today's Marsh Road bridge. At left, you see a concrete pillar, recently formed, for the replacement bridge.



In this view, looking east toward Bushnell's Basin, the flood waters caused by the break have mostly receded, revealing significant damage to the banks of the canal.

The railroad tracks were temporary and related to the Barge Canal construction project to widen the waterway.

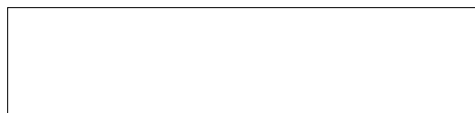


This photograph appears to have been taken from the Rochester and Eastern trolley interurban bridge, with a view to the west, toward Pittsford. Erosion from the canal break eventually compromised the northern wall of the canal. In addition, the support for the arched bridge on its south side, seen in the photo at the bottom of the previous page, collapsed soon after that picture was taken. As a result, the old bridge fell into the canal ditch prior to the planned installation of its replacement.

All photos are from the collection of the Town of Perinton



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Workers in 1937 prepare to build the foundation for the Fairport Public Library on Perrin Street. The building has for many years been home to the Perinton Historical Society.

*From the collection of
the Perinton Historical Society*

Fairport Historical Museum

18 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 14450

The museum is open to the public on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at the hours below:

Saturday 10:00–1:00 p.m. Tuesday 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Sunday 2:00–4:00 p.m. 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