



PERINTON HISTORIGRAM

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EDITOR Ruth Ewell

Calendar of Coming Events

Tuesday, May 16 -- Annual Picnic and Election of Officers (details below).
Saturday and Sunday -- June 3 and 4 -- Fairport Canal Days. Museum open
10 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Saturday and 2-4 p.m. on Sunday. Society Booth on
Main Street open both days. See sign-up sheet at end of this bulletin for
opportunity to sign up to help with booth.

Annual Meeting and Picnic, May 16, 6:30 p.m., Perinton Park

We have once again reserved the Perinton Park building by the canal for our picnic. We will hope for good weather, but if it is rainy, we will be grateful that the building is enclosed. We will have the same great cooks as last year -- Derryl and David Johnston.

The society will serve hamburgers and hot dogs and provide coffee, tea, and lemonade. Members are asked to bring a dish to pass (salad or dessert). They should also bring their own plates, cutlery and cups. There will be a charge of \$1 per person, or \$3 per family. Reservations are necessary and can be made by calling Helen Matthews at 377-8456 or Bernadette McDonough at 223-7991. They will need to know (1) name, (2) how many in your family coming, (3) choice of hot dogs or hamburgers, (4) what dish you will bring to pass. Deadline for reservations is Thursday, May 11.

After we have finished eating, the annual meeting and elections will take place. Jim Unckless, chairperson for the Nominating Committee is pleased that all of last year's Executive Committee, except for the Second Vice-President, have agreed to serve again. There is one vacancy for a five-year term on the Board of Trustees. Nominees for these openings will be announced at the meeting and, of course, there is always the opportunity for nominations from the floor.

2000 House Tour -- Sunday afternoon, October 15, in the Village of Fairport

Lorry McMahan, coordinator of the house tour, is pleased to have four houses signed up to be open in October. Now she needs people to serve as House Captains. The House Captain's task is to talk to the homeowner about the history of the house, determine how many hostesses will be needed, decide what route visitors will take through the house, write up the history of the house for the Historigram and newspapers (plenty of research material available on houses at the museum), assign the shifts for the hostesses. Call Lorry at 223-6034 if you are interested, to get more information on the tasks involved, and to volunteer. We will be signing up hostesses later in the summer, but we need to get the House Captains in gear now.

Report of March 14, 2000, Meeting

Members of the Perinton Historical Society enjoyed a delightful pot-luck supper in the Merriman-Clark Room at the museum. There was a wonderful assortment of delicious salads, main courses and desserts. It was hard not to eat too much!

After the supper, Town Historian Jean Keplinger took us on a visual tour of Perinton's historic sites. Three different types of markers are used to identify places in our area -- state, county, and local. Local markers are located at the historic districts and the designated landmarks recognized by the Perinton Historic Architectural Commission which was formed in 1987. Some of the criteria for designating a landmark are: the property has esthetic value or historical significance or has housed a person important to the town or is of distinct architectural interest. When a property has been designated as a landmark there are no restrictions on interior change but the outside can be changed only in an appropriate manner.

Perinton has four historic districts: Bushnell's Basin, Baird Road, the Ranney-Ramsdell house and farm, and the South Perinton Methodist Church and cemetery. There are 23 designated landmarks. In the last month another district has been created in Egypt.

Some of the high points in our slide tour were:

Bushnell's Basin, the first historic district named, was a booming canal town and then an early suburb.

The cemetery on Ketchum Road (which is now route 96) has very early graves but it unfortunately lost all its trees in the recent Labor Day storm.

The World War I bunker up Bunker Trail off Garnsey Road had been used back then for target practice. It is hoped that, someday when the place is more accessible, a marker can be placed there.

Egypt was one of the two earliest settlements and is now a historic district.

The Ranney-Ramsdell house, with its surrounding buildings, is also one of the historic districts. Its Federal architecture is rare in this area.

The South Perinton Methodist Church is the only church in the town which has its own cemetery; there are very early graves there. The Mason Road cemetery, established in 1828, is the only one in town which has a potter's field.

The Baird Road historic district is our earliest suburb. The houses were small, middle class, with many of the inhabitants working in East Rochester. They got to work on the trolley, which had a stop at Baird Road.

Near Spring Lake Park were mills on Irondequoit Creek, one of our earliest industries.

Perinton Center cemetery, located on Ayrault Road, contains the graves of some of Perinton's original settlers.

Mrs. Keplinger's talk and slide show gave us all the desire to get out and tour the town to see if we could find some of the places she mentioned. We are certainly rich in historical sites in Perinton; we are fortunate to have someone as knowledgeable and enthusiastic as Mrs. Keplinger to tell us about them.

Report of March 14 Meeting (continued)

Before and after the meeting there was much interest in the bulletin board display arranged by Bill Keeler showing some of the work that is being done by the group who are putting together a book on Fairport.

Bill and Helen Matthews are to be congratulated on all the arrangements they made for this supper which everyone enjoyed so much. They put a lot of time and labor into it -- setting up the tables, decorating them, preparing the coffee and juice and, of course, tending to the inevitable clean-up. Thank you, Bill and Helen!

Museum Garden (by Mary Ruth Smith)

Twenty years ago, in the spring of 1980, the Greenbrier Garden Club was looking for a new civic beautification project. As several of our members were active in the Perinton Historical Society, we decided to plant a historic herb and flower garden at the new museum. Our goal was to have plants that might have been grown in Perinton gardens in the mid-1800s. A member of the club, who was a landscape designer, did the original plan. It consisted of a round herb garden and a flower border that extended part way across the back fence.

A Boy Scout troop helped us dig up the sod and prepare the beds for planting. Most of the plants came from members' gardens. A few years later, we enlarged the herb bed to its present oval shape and extended the flower garden the full width of the lot. Many of the original plants are still thriving, but others have had to be replaced. The club does a major clean up of the garden in spring and fall; each member takes a week during the growing season to be responsible for maintenance. We label the plants, so the garden is educational as well as beautiful. We hope all the members of the historical society will visit the garden this summer. It's Fairport's best kept secret!

Report of April Meeting

The topic of the Civil War drew a large audience to the April 11 meeting at the museum.

President Bill Matthews' five minutes of history concerned the rejuvenation of a railroad to the Adirondacks from Utica to Old Forge to Lake Placid. He remembered trips he had taken by rail in the '40s to the Adirondacks and was pleased that this railway is now once again in operation. He has brochures and timetables to share with anyone interested.

We had four presenters, all in authentic dress, to talk to us about the Civil War. They were Kevin Gorman, Alex Johnson, Jerry Ernst and Renee Gore. Kevin belongs to the 155th New York Volunteer Infantry Reenactment Regiment, part of Corcoran's Irish Legion. He has taken part in many reenactments, but he says that although there are many aspects of the war you can recreate, you can't recreate the terror. His segment of the presentation dealt with the "living history" of the war -- the many museums, markers, books, genealogy, internet references. Those who fought the war formed groups to be sure their sacrifice would not be forgotten. The Corcoran Legion to which Kevin belongs has these elements in common -- American, New Yorker, Buffalonian, Irish, Catholic. He feels the war lives through reenacting. There are around 35,000 people involved in reenacting in this country. It costs about \$1,000 to get equipped; there is an entire industry which has been created to supply the "army."

Report of April Meeting (continued)

Last year Kevin's group marched in the Memorial Day parade in Fairport and ended up at Mt. Pleasant cemetery (at the top of Summit Street) where the soldiers' monument there was one of the first erected after the Civil War. There were 265 residents of Perinton who fought in the Civil War, 40 of these died. They were members of the 13th, 108th, and 140th regiments. Kevin quoted from T.S. Eliot: "The Civil War is not ended. It is a question whether any civil war ends."

Alex Johnson, who teaches 4th grade in the Rochester schools, is a member of the 140th regiment. He talked about the soldier's clothing and equipment. What Alex was wearing was the year-round uniform of wool. Each soldier was issued two shirts a year; all clothing was of natural material. His Enfield rifle was imported from England and weighed about 12 pounds. He demonstrated how it was loaded. The bayonet was not usually used in battle but rather served as a way to hold up a tent or as a candle holder. Soldiers carried a haversack for their rations which consisted of hardtack, 10 or 12 pieces a day, also called "worm castles"; green coffee beans to be roasted in a frying pan; a tin plate and utensils, including a three-tined fork; salt pork or fat back or beef jerky; dried rice and beans. The haversack also carried a leather wallet, a "housewife" or sewing kit, tooth brush and powder (which was baking soda), comb, religious articles, and a journal. Soldiers wrote often in their journals, and many such records are still preserved.

Renee Gore is a reenactor in the 140th regiment. She told us of life in Rochester in the 1860s during the war. She spoke of meetings at Corinthian Hall, of the factories which manufactured belts, shoes and banners, and of the conditions of women in those times. Most women had never been involved in money management in the family, and when their husbands went off to war it was a new experience for them to handle the money. In fact, some soldiers designated another family member to get their pay rather than their wives, as they feared the women would not know how to handle the money. This made it very difficult when a woman needed some cash for a necessary article.

Jerry Ernst is a musician who recreates the music of the Civil War. He was wearing a Zoave uniform, based on the French Algerian army. He demonstrated the drum rolls used for reveille and for food calls -- "Peas on a trencher" was one and "roast beef" another. The soldier's life was regulated by music. Some of the songs they sang were political, such as "Dixie," "Maryland, My Maryland," and "Bonnie Blue Flag." A very sad and plaintive song was "Somebody's Darling" while "Rally Round the Flag" was a stirring one.

It was a fascinating program from which we learned much. We will look forward to seeing the 155th march again this year in our Memorial Day parade -- in fact, Kevin invited anyone in the audience who wished to do so to join them. Several members had brought in Civil War artifacts which were displayed in the museum showcases.

Helen Matthews organized the refreshments. We are grateful, too, to Martha Van Zile for her contributions to the "goodies" we all enjoyed.

New Members:

We welcome Beverley and James Pierson of Fairport.

Happenings at the Museum

Fourth graders from Northside School have been visiting the museum in April as part of their history curriculum. Jean Keplinger, dressed as Minerva DeLand, has a program for them downstairs in the Merriman-Clark Room, while Matson Ewell greets them in the museum itself and talks to them about the mural. The students do a mystery identification quiz about artifacts on display. They are accompanied by teachers and parents. In May several groups from Brooks Hill School will visit us.

We are pleased that the chairs we are no longer using since we got the wonderful gift of "new-to-us" chairs from the Fairport Library have found a good home. They are now at the Clarendon Historical Society which was thrilled to get them.

Summer hours will commence at the museum on Tuesday, June 13. We will then be open 2-4 p.m. every day but Monday and 7-9 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. These hours will probably extend until Labor Day. We also plan to add special hours during the World Canal Conference which will be held in Rochester September 10-15.

Canal Days 2000

Fairport Canal days will be June 3rd and 4th. For the third year in a row the Perinton Historical Society and Fairport Historical Museum will have a booth next to the bank near Main Street. We have a new banner for the booth, and we will again be selling candy to the children as well as gift items from our shop.

I am again looking for volunteers who would like to help man the booth for an hour or two. I also need someone to help set up the booth on Saturday morning and help me take it down Sunday evening.

If there are any members or non-members who will be in town that weekend and would like to spend a pleasant afternoon selling candy, please sign up on the form below and leave it at the museum. I will be contacting volunteers and signing people up for specific times the week before the event. Thanks.

Bill Keeler
Canal Days Booth Coordinator

To: Bill Keeler, Fairport Historical Museum
18 Perrin Street, Fairport, New York 14450

I would like to work at the Perinton Historical Society and Fairport Historical Museum booth on:

June 3 _____

June 4 _____

I would like to help set up or take down the booth _____.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Perinton Historical Society
18 Perrin Street
Fairport, New York 14450

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