



PERINTON HISTORIGRAM

PUBLISHED BY THE PERINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
18 PERRIN STREET FAIRPORT, NEW YORK 14450

March 2002

VOL.	NO.	EDITOR
XXXIV	6	Ruth Ewell

Calendar of Coming Events

- Tuesday, March 12 -- Alan and Mary Isselhard, "Sleighing in New York State."
7:30 p.m. at the museum (details below).
- Tuesday, April 16 -- Talk on Erie Canal by John Groves (details next month).
- Tuesday, May 14 -- Annual Picnic.

March Meeting -- Tuesday, March 12, 7:30 p.m. at the Museum

Alan and Mary Isselhard will be our speakers in this program about sleighing in the 19th and 20th centuries in New York State. They will present some historical information about the migration of early upstate settlers and will identify the various types of sleighs commonly produced and used in New York State. They will show black and white photo enlargements produced from original glass plate negatives of horse drawn sleighs, sleigh advertising and catalogs, sleighing illustrations from 19th century publications, slides of area sleigh rallies, and share with us sleigh bell, chime and plume information. They promise to tell sleighing stories -- both happy and sad.

The Isselhards live in a circa 1850 Greek Revival brick home on 10 acres in Clarendon, New York, about 5 miles west of Brockport. Alan is retired from Eastman Kodak where he worked for over 30 years, and Mary is retired from Rochester Telephone/Frontier, her employer for over 29 years. Alan is interested in old cars, auto racing and photography. Mary's passions are antiques and flowers.

Come and experience what it was like to live in a quieter age. This should be a fascinating meeting. All are welcome!

A Member Writes Us

Francis Northrop, who lives in Saint Charles, Missouri, saw the announcement in last month's Historigram about horse drawn sleighs and sent us a copy of a photograph of a honeymooning couple traveling by horse and sleigh to the Nichols Hotel in North Chili. The couple were Stanton Purdy Ellsworth and Eva Celia Worden Ellsworth; Eva was Francis Northrop's grandmother.

The caption under the photograph reads: "There was lots of snow on the ground and cold, about six degrees. It was approximately eight miles from East Penfield to North Chili and that is why warm clothes and a horse blanket were necessary for that type of travel. They were to be gone two weeks, after which a reception was given at the old Ellsworth homestead where the newly wedded pair was to set up housekeeping. Purdy was an expert with horses because he was raised on a farm with lots of animals, especially with horses. In his day all work was done by horse power."

We are grateful to Mr. Northrop for sharing this bit of family history with us.

Report of February Meeting

A large audience greeted Bob Marcotte, our speaker on February 12. Although his topic for us was the Civil War, he is also noted for his columns in the Democrat & Chronicle on birds, horticulture, and his answers to the "Just Ask It" questions.

Mr. Marcotte has done a great deal of research on the role of the 108th New York Volunteer Infantry in the war, and specifically on the soldiers from Perinton who served in this group. He quoted from Chester Hutchinson of Fairport, who wrote about the soldiers sitting at the edge of a stream to take off their shoes and socks, wading across, and then sitting down again on the other side to put the shoes and socks back on -- much to the disgust of their officers who wanted them to move more speedily. But they did eventually get to the site of the battle of Antietam, their first engagement, where they found a corn field of rebels, a real shock to these soldiers who had been mustered only thirty days before. The total number of men killed at Antietam on both sides is 23,000, the bloodiest day on American soil. The 108th went on to fight at Fredericksburg, Chancellerville, Gettysburg, the Battle of the Wilderness, and Cold Harbor, pursuing Lee's army all the way to Appomatox.

Mr. Marcotte has found the following sources useful in searching for names of those who served in the Civil War: the New York State Adjutant General's Office reports of the 1890s; the 1865 census, which has a special index of names of soldiers and sailors; an 1892 regimental history written by one of the soldiers. He has found 28 names of residents of Fairport or Perinton who he is reasonably confident served in the 108th. Only four of these went through the entire war without being killed, wounded, sick, or ending up in Confederate prison camp. Chester Hutchinson was wounded in the Battle of the Wilderness.

Sickness was very prevalent in the Civil War. Two soldiers died of disease for every one killed in battle. Those who were wounded found that surgical methods were very primitive. There was little understanding of antiseptic methods. After 1864 many Union soldiers who were captured died in Confederate prison camps. At the beginning of the war young men rushed forth eagerly to volunteer, but toward the end of the war, as word got back about the hardships the soldiers faced, volunteers were hard to come by. In some cases people paid bounty money to a volunteer substitute to escape having to serve.

The Union army had the advantage of numbers. There were many more men in the north who were available to fight. Also, industry in the north was able to keep the army supplied with the materials needed, whereas the south had little manufacturing ability and had to get most of its materials through the blockade runners. The south had the advantage in that they were defending their homes and that made them more dedicated fighters. It is interesting to note that most Union soldiers did not enlist to free the slaves but to save the union.

Mr. Marcotte spoke of several other groups which had local connections. In the 13th New York two brothers from this area, Ebenezer and William, were wounded at the battle of Bull Run; their brother, David Jerrold, was killed. A local hero is Patrick O'Rourke of the 140th. He was the son of Irish immigrants, a fine student, who went to West Point and distinguished himself at Little Roundtop at Gettysburg, where he was killed. There is a bronze bust of him at Gettysburg. Mr. Marcotte wondered why the nose on the bust was a different color from the rest and discovered that

Report of February Meeting (continued)

it was a custom with visiting groups of students to rub the nose, which was supposed to give them academic success.

Mr. Marcotte recommended the books "Sons of Old Monroe," the story of the 140th New York, and "The Last Citadel" by Noah Trudeau which tells of the battles of Deep Bottom.

There were many audience members who were very knowledgeable of the Civil War. They asked insightful questions, and Mr. Marcotte was kept busy answering them for quite a while after his formal presentation. He has written a book about local connections to the Civil War. It is in the process of being published, hopefully to appear this summer.

We thank Helen Matthews and her corps of fine bakers who provided us with delicious refreshments.

Perinton Historical Society Receives Certificate of Commendation

Every year the Western New York Association of Historical Agencies confers Awards of Merit to historical societies and organizations in recognition of outstanding accomplishments in the fields of state, local and regional history. The Perinton Historical Society received a Certificate of Commendation for the writing and publication of Perinton, Fairport and the Erie Canal, which made local history more accessible to the community. The book, published by Arcadia Press a year ago last month, revealed some previously unpublished photographs and documents from our collection. The book has resulted in a significant increase in research inquiries into the history of Fairport and Perinton by both drop-in visitors and e-mail.

Six other awards were given out by the WNYAHA. Recipients include the LeRoy Historical Society, Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum, Williamsville Historical Society, Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society and the Holland Land Office Museum.

New Members

We welcome John and Sally Connors of Fairport and Marilyn VanSlyke of New Bern, North Carolina.

A Remembrance -- by Bill Matthews

I've long thought that a public meeting room such as the Merriman-Clark Room needed an American flag, even before the tragic event of September 11. To think is not always to do, but gradually the flag appeared and then the standard, as well as the concept of dedicating it to my World War II company commander, the late Captain Millard Brooks Hayes. Far from the John Wayne-General Patton types, Captain Hayes took over "G" or George Company, a collection of about 200 citizen soldiers after our disastrous "baptism of fire" in which we lost several killed, captured and wounded, including 7 of 8 officers. From that November day in 1944 in the forests of France, Captain Hayes was loved and respected by every one of us, as the 100th Infantry Division continuously fought through the Vosges Mountains and across the Rhine River into southern Germany, where we ended combat in May 1945 in the suburbs of Stuttgart.

My mental picture of Captain Hayes, still clear after this past half-century, is of a small man with horn-rimmed glasses, a steel helmet that seemed too large, wearing a green field jacket with a rifle grenade protruding from his left breast pocket, and, of

A Remembrance -- by Bill Matthews (continued)

course, his ever present .30 caliber carbine. Soft spoken, this native of Florida was the embodiment of the phrase "an officer and a gentleman." His motto, put into practice, was that of the Infantry School: "Follow me." We followed. And most of us made it home again.

We now continue with another of Bill Keeler's articles entitled "What I Left Out." Bill wrote these to accompany the book Perinton, Fairport and the Erie Canal, of which he was the editor.

The interurban trolley system was a public transportation network of several trolley lines that was developed in the early 20th century. At one time, a traveler could take trolleys from New York City through Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, all the way to the New York State line. One leg of this system was the Rochester, Syracuse and Eastern Railroad, which started from Culver Road in the city of Rochester and traveled to downtown Syracuse.

In Perinton, the RS&E trolley had 8 stops, including the Fairport station. You'll find several pictures of trolleys or trolley structures in the book. Page 9 shows the trolley bridge near Turk Hill Road and stop #14. On page 15 you will see the fence erected along the towpath in the village of Fairport to keep the trolleys from frightening the mules. Page 22 shows newly laid tracks and a trolley near stop #18 in Egypt. A trolley traveling down Commercial Street in East Rochester between stop #10 and 11 is on page 40, and on page 123 you can see the Rochester, Syracuse and Eastern station in the village of Fairport around the 1920s.

Besides providing a quick and reliant means of transportation for businessmen and travelers, the trolley also opened up the lands around the stops for development of housing and entertainment. One of these suburban housing developments was on Baird Road, shown on page 28.

In 1906, the year the trolley opened, Carl Patterson, a German carpenter, bought the Sunnyvale Fruit and Berry farm on Baird Road, just up the hill from stop #11. Carl divided the farm into building lots and sold several on the east side of the road. Beginning around 1908, Carl started to build houses, one by one, on the west side of the street. After he would finish a house, he would move into it with his family until it sold, and then they would move next door into the next newly finished house. Patterson built four houses on the west side of the street. The picture on page 28 shows Carl in front of the last house he built, at #2737 Baird Road.

Carl Patterson met with an unfortunate accident in 1913. He had been hired by A.G. Filkins to help repair the roof of the Fairport Herald Mail building on West Avenue in Fairport. The 12/3/13 edition of the Fairport Herald Mail reports: "The men were on the roof making ready for repairs, when in some way a support of the chimney was disturbed and the column of brick toppled over, striking Mr. Patterson on the head. He was rendered unconscious and the wonder was that he was not killed outright." Carl never fully recovered from the accident and left the neighborhood with his family around 1915.

"What I Left Out" by Bill Keeler (continued)

The other housing community that sprang up around stop #11 was the Midvale Sub-division. This area was not only a housing development but also an entertainment destination for people from the city and surrounding area.

George Higby, brother-in-law of Walter Parce (page 36), owned 50 acres of land between Irondequoit Creek and Thomas Creek. Midvale was developed as a "trolley community" by the real estate firm of L.D. Woodworth & Co. of Rochester in 1911. The property was laid out for 80 "bungalow plots," but the lots along the creek were reserved and maintained as a picnic grounds. People from the city of Rochester would travel to stop #11 and spend an afternoon on the grounds near Thomas Creek. A small grocery store between the trolley overpass and the railroad tracks on Baird Road was available to purchase food and refreshments.

Spring was an especially busy time at stop #11. Across the creek from the picnic grounds was the Steubing Farm where strawberries were raised in the low lying land where the old mill pond once was that supplied water for the Jefferson Mill (page 24). The Steubings hosted what was called "Strawberry Socials" in the back of their house on the hill overlooking the valley on Baird Road. Visitors could pick their own strawberries, using specially constructed flats, or they could sit at small tables and be served strawberries and shortbread by Lillian Steubing and her daughters.

The increasing popularity of the automobile and the improvement in the roads throughout the country led to the demise of the trolleys in America. The Rochester, Syracuse & Eastern ran their last trolley in 1931, just 25 years after their first run in 1906.

Yes, he has more! Watch for future issues of the historiogram for more articles of "What I Left Out."

Perinton Historical Society
18 Perrin Street
Fairport, New York 14450

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