

## Keepers of Local History

*By Lucy McCormick*

*Perinton has been fortunate with its stellar cast of town historians, documenting, preserving and making history come alive. This month's Historigram features two historians of South Main Street, in anticipation of next year's house tour and in honor of the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage.*



Home of Lynn Barber at 234 South Main Street.  
*Photo by Lucy McCormick*

### **Electa Griffith Barber, 1910–1988** **234 South Main Street**

Electa Barber embraced a variety of community initiatives. She was actively involved in the rededication of the Civil War monument in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in 1962, as part of Perinton's Sesquicentennial celebration. An active proponent in the Save Hart's Woods campaign and a member of the Perinton Greenland's Association, she believed that "true vision, cooperation, and understanding can prevail to the preservation, for ourselves and our children, of the benign and quiet beauty that is Hart's Woods."

Another local cause to which she lent her voice was the preservation of landmark village buildings, especially when urban renewal threatened to raze structures significant to the community. In a local news article, she compared an exhibit of photographs of early 19th century Rochester to the Fairport landscape. She referenced the words of Sean Sculley,

architectural representative and guide to the Rochester exhibit: "I think it [the exhibit] has a hard message: it looks at the preservation of architecture not as an artifact but as an essential part of the city. We've found in leveling cities for urban renewal that we've destroyed points of reference—people feel disoriented."

Electa Barber was a member of the Perinton Historical Society. She was recognized in 1969 as a founding member of the National Historical Society headquartered in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Appointed historian of the village of Fairport in 1971 and in office until 1973, Barber published a series of columns in the Fairport newspapers under the title "The Village Green."

Electa Barber was a long-time steward of an early historic residence, known as the Abner Wight home, at 234 South Main Street. Her mother and father, Margaret Louise Ferris Griffith, and Russell Benedict Griffith, purchased the home in 1937 and lovingly restored it. Margaret was an avid antiquer, often enjoying this hobby with a friend, Ruth Webb Lee. Perhaps Margaret and her friend came across this home in their antiquing pursuits.

Electa was the only child of Margaret, from Spencerport, and Russell, from Rochester. Russell was a patent attorney at the patent law firm of Church and Rich, whose clients included the Eastman Kodak Company, the Taylor Instrument Companies, and Gleason Works. He also served in the New York State Assembly, representing the Pittsford area.

She attended Allendale Columbia School, the Harley School, and graduated from Pittsford High School. A graduate of the Parsons School of Design in New York City with a degree in fashion design, her education at Parsons included advanced studies in London, Paris, and Brussels.

In Rochester, Electa worked as an advertising copy writer



## Comments from your President

October 15, 2020: Once again, I'm writing from my office in our townhouse. We are still venturing out for car rides a couple time per week, usually with no set destination. However, a few weeks back we headed northeast on route 104 with a destination of Ontario Orchards Market, which is just south of Oswego.

~ **Bob Hunt** ~

Oswego. It is a market for nice fresh produce, fruits, and bake goods. But the reason for the trip was that it has the best extra sharp cheddar cheese to be found anywhere. More recently, this past week, we headed south through the Bristol Hills to enjoy the fall colors. Our final destination was Naples, where we purchased a grape pie from Cindy's Pies. Delicious.

I think you know of our enjoyment in bicycle riding, but as we age there are a number of our favorite rides that have become too difficult for us, because of hills or if it is a windy day. So a month ago we made a decision to purchase e-bikes from RV&E in Fairport. What a difference, as these bikes provide just a bit of electrical assistance when riding up a hill or trying to battle a headwind. The bikes can be ridden with no help at all, or one can turn on varying levels of assistance. You still must pedal to receive the help, for when you stop

pedaling, the assistance turns off. We recently had a nice 48-mile round trip ride along the canal path to Newark for lunch.

I enjoy reading the Old Farmer's Almanac, and under its calendar for October is a story about a man named Ben, known as the "Pumpking" from northern Vermont. Ben started growing pumpkins when he was in first grade. That first year he grew 24 pumpkins and earned \$24. Ben is now in his 30s, and has grown the business to over 6,000 pumpkins of 20 different varieties. He displays the pumpkins on the front lawn of Snug Valley Farm, located in East Hardwick, Vermont. Ben's Pumpkins opens the first week of October each fall and has become a tradition for both locals and visitors to Northern Vermont. The farm also sells pork and beef products under the slogan of "The best meat comes from happy animals." Information about Ben's Pumpkins is from the Old Farmer's Almanac and the website of Snug Valley Farm.

On Saturday, October 10th, Cindy and I participated in a two-mile walk in support of the Alzheimer's Association, starting at Perinton Park and doing a loop which took us by the museum. There were a few who needed a pit stop, so I let them into the museum. Most of the walkers had never been in the museum and were amazed at the building and collection. I handed out membership applications, so maybe we will get a new member or two.

Thanks for your support of PHS, it is appreciated. I'll chat with you again next month.

Bob Hunt, President

585-415-7053, rhunt356.rh@gmail.com



Participants in the recent Alzheimer's Association Walk at the Fairport Historical Museum

Photo by  
Bob Hunt

## Upcoming Programs & Events

**Tuesday, November 17 at 7:00 p.m.**  
**VIRTUAL PRESENTATION**

Program: Thanksgiving Trivia  
Presenter: Jack Kowiak  
Registration required

**Tuesday, December 1 at 11:00 a.m.**  
**VIRTUAL PRESENTATION**

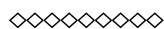
Program: Mad House—The Hidden History of Insane Asylums in 19th Century New York  
Presenter: Michael T. Keene  
To register, please visit  
<http://michaeltkeene.com/registration/>

**Note:** This is a pre-recorded presentation available exclusively to PHS members.

**Tuesday, December 8 at 7:00 p.m.**  
**VIRTUAL PRESENTATION**

Program: Decking the Halls to Shopping Malls: American Christmas Traditions and How They Grew  
Presenter: Chris Bensch  
Registration required

Please note that there will be no in-person Tuesday presentations at the museum for the rest of 2020 due to the pandemic. We are partnering with the Fairport Public Library to offer Zoom presentations instead. See each event listing for information about virtual presentation registration, which is required.



Thank you cards sent to museum director Ms. Vicki from homeschoolers Eamon, Ellimere and Elliot

## Visitors to the Museum

On a beautiful autumn day in September, the museum was visited by homeschoolers Eamon, Ellimere and Elliot accompanied by their mom, Nina. Museum director Ms. Vicki enjoyed speaking to the kids and showing them the artifacts on display. Thanks for visiting!

If you are interested in scheduling a private tour, please contact museum director Vicki Masters Profitt at [director@PerintonHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:director@PerintonHistoricalSociety.org).



## Thanksgiving Trivia

**VIRTUAL EVENT—REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED**

Perk up the conversation at this year's holiday meal with some little-known facts about our Thanksgiving holiday. Many of our time-honored traditions of Thanksgiving are not related to the Pilgrims, but are from some other surprising sources. Join us for an eye-opening presentation about Thanksgiving.

Jack Kowiak is a retired market research manager from Eastman Kodak Company who enjoys researching and presenting topics that he finds interesting, from plants to history. He has given many talks around the Rochester area.

This event is free and is open to the public, co-sponsored by the PHS and the Fairport Public Library.

Registration is required through the library and is limited. To register, call the library at 585-223-9091.



## Garden Club Sale

7th District Federated Garden Clubs held a sale of gardening and flower arranging products on the sidewalk of the museum in September. An interesting array of books, gardening implements, plant markers and pots were available to the public. Many members of the 7th District are also members of the Greenbrier Garden Club, which maintains the gardens at the museum. Before the crisp fall weather turns too chilly, take a walk around the gardens at the museum and enjoy the efforts of our local garden club.



Left: Electa Barber, former historian of Fairport  
Right: Margaret Louise Ferris Griffith, Electa Barber's mother  
at 234 South Main Street

at Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn. She was also an assistant librarian at the Times-Union newspaper in Rochester. It was at the Gannett Building that she met her husband, James W. Barber, of New York City. They married in September of 1946. Electa and her husband lived with her parents for a year or so while their home at 35 Briggs Avenue was being built. After living on Briggs for a few years they moved back to 234 South Main Street after her father passed. They had one child, Lynn Griffith Barber, the current owner and active steward of 234 South Main Street.

Electa Griffith Barber passed away on December 10, 1988. Her legacy includes numerous columns in the Fairport newspapers, articles promoting preservation of Fairport's rich architecture and honoring those who shaped our local history.

## **Susan Collins Roberts** **208 South Main Street**

How fortunate for Fairport and Perinton that Sue Roberts made a pivotal career move! She graduated from St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing in Syracuse in 1964 and specialized in intensive care and emergency nursing, including seven years at Strong Memorial Hospital's Emergency Room. Her next educational pursuit, however, was not in the field of medicine, but rather in history. Roberts graduated from Nazareth College with a degree in history in 1982. In 1983 she became the historian for the town of Perinton.

A thorough keeper of the records, Sue organized town records, making them more accessible to employees and residents. In 1985, she initiated the task of locating and preserving Perinton's World War II records. No small feat, she unearthed ledgers buried deep in a trunk, original documents of profiles, newspaper clippings, and other vital information about families and service records of the 518 residents who served in the armed forces in World War II. Sue also helped preserve records of local vintage structures by assisting with the Landmark Society's survey of pre-1902 buildings.

Roberts' efforts in educating the public about Perinton can be measured in miles—on land, sea and the world of 9-year-olds. She led many walking tours for the Fairport Library, the Landmark Society, and for other community groups and



Home of Sue and  
Ron Roberts at  
208 South Main  
Street

*Photo by Bill Poray*

Sue Roberts, dressed  
appropriately for  
Perinton's Bicentennial  
celebration in 2012



tourists. Day-long bus tours for senior groups and the Landmark Society also kept her busy. She narrated tours on the Colonial Belle and the Emita II and began interactive sessions for fourth graders studying local history. She delivered presentations on local history to many community groups and authored many weekly columns on Fairport's history for the local newspapers. She placed historic photos in town businesses, restaurants and the Town Hall, as well as planning for Perinton's 175th anniversary celebration.

A crusader for preservation, Sue worked on the writing of the Perinton Historic Preservation Ordinance, adopted in 1987, and was a member of the Historic Architecture Commission, whose foremost goal was "protecting and enhancing the landmarks and historic districts, which represent distinctive elements of Perinton's historic, architectural and cultural heritage." She lent her voice to ensure preservation of the Potter Carriage Barn when the new Teen Center was built. In a February 11, 1987 letter to the editor of the Fairport-Perinton Herald Mail, she wrote, "It seems to me the village board and Lions Club could better serve the village community by improving what we have and cannot be replaced rather than discarding a landmark in favor of a similar structure—one that could never complement the Potter Community Center as well as its original companion."

Roberts retired her historian's badge in 1997, but not before working tirelessly to expand Perinton's identity as a community separate from Fairport. She identified town landmarks, historic districts, and important citizens, and authored hundreds of weekly columns on these topics in the Fairport Herald Mail and the Perinton Fairport Post.

Life after fourteen years as Perinton town historian has been busy and community driven. She became the Perinton

town clerk, serving from 1997 through 2008, a position that enabled her to continue preserving Town records and making them available for historic research. Perinton Town Supervisor Jim Smith described her as the “glue that holds the day-to-day business of the town and the Town Board together.” From 2009 to 2019, she was secretary of the Fairport Perinton Senior Living Council. In 2010 to 2012, Sue co-chaired, with others, a committee planning another significant Perinton celebration, the Bicentennial. In 2020, she assumed the role of president for the Fairport Historical Club.

Sue was raised in the Mohawk Valley village of Clinton, NY, where her love of architecture and history began. She is a long-time resident of Fairport, living here for 51 years with her husband, Ron Roberts. The Roberts have three children and two grandsons, boys fortunate to have a grandmother who has given them a priceless gift: a love of history.



## Special Recognition Level Memberships—As of October 14, 2020

### Business (\$100)

**Lucien A. Morin II, Partner, McConville Considine Cooman and Morin, Attorneys and Counselors at Law**  
100 Packetts Landing, Fairport, NY 14450  
Phone: 585-223-2170, Web: [lmorin@mccmlaw.com](mailto:lmorin@mccmlaw.com)

**Barranco's Clothing and Shoes**  
32 North Main Street, Fairport, NY 14450  
Phone: 585-388-1270

**Fairport Village Inn, Wayne and Patty Beckwith**  
103 North Main Street, Fairport, NY 14550  
Phone: 585-388-0112, Web: [thefvi.com](http://thefvi.com)

**Robert Ruhland (aka Mr. Perinton), Keller Williams Realty**  
2000 Winton Road S. Bldg. 1, Rochester, NY 14618  
Phone: 585-303-6607, Web: [bobruhland.yourkwagent.com](http://bobruhland.yourkwagent.com)

### DeLand (\$100-\$249)

Duncan Moore  
Jonathan Sokolov

### Potter (\$250-\$499)

Fairport Rotary

### Perrin (\$500 and above)

Non this month



## Gift Shop Clearance Sale

Unique gift ideas can be found at the museum gift shop. Stop by to view puzzles, autographed books, artwork and even custom-made stained glass featuring local landmarks! The shop also boasts a new clearance section filled with interesting items for all occasions.

Gift shop sales help fund the operation of the Fairport Museum. The gift shop is open during regular museum hours on Sundays and Tuesdays 2:00–4:00 p.m. and Saturdays 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Cash and checks are accepted. We appreciate your support!



### Perinton Historical Society

## Mission

To promote interest in preserving and sharing local history through education and accessibility.

# U.S. Navy PT Boat 728

## Passed through Fairport in 2012

*By Keith Boas*

*On August 10, 1945, the keel was laid for **PT 728** at the Annapolis Yacht Yard, Annapolis, Maryland. The World War II era patrol-torpedo boat was intended for lend-lease to the Soviet Navy, but the war ended prior to delivery. The boat never entered the war and was decommissioned by the Navy in November of 1945.*

The PT (Patrol-Torpedo) boats of World War II were small, fast, and inexpensive to build. After the war, many were no longer needed, so the Navy sold them at very attractive prices. *PT 728* was sold by the Navy as war surplus in August of 1947.

This particular PT boat has had several names and owners since she departed the Navy. An internet search revealed that in 1953, she was purchased by Adolph Jordan of Medford, MA and used as a fishing boat named *The Infant*. In 1956, Scotty Warren Boats in Fort Lauderdale, FL bought her to use as a passenger vessel and renamed her *Scotty Warren IV*.

In 1963, she was purchased by Marolyn Fishing Boats, Inc. of Wildwood Crest, NJ and renamed *PT 109*. It was during this era of the mid 1960s that the boat was occasionally rented for film work, including frequent appearances in the ABC television series *McHale's Navy*.

Then in 1972, she was purchased by Capt. Frank Smiths Enterprises, Inc. of Miami Beach, FL and renamed *Sea Runner*. In 1977, she was renamed *Blue Seas*. In November of 1977, David K. Tuttle of Mayport, FL took ownership and renamed her *Capt. Dave*. She was sold in 1978 to Conch Republic Flamingo Fleet, Inc. of Key West, FL and changed back to her original Navy name, *PT 728*.

Eventually, during the early 2000s, she was owned by a Mr. Bomfouk who had taken out a bank loan, which later defaulted. *PT-728* was repossessed by the bank and offered for sale. The new owner, Robert Iannucci, motored her from Key West, FL up the east coast, then up the Hudson River to Kingston, NY and her new home at Iannucci's boat restoration business, Fleet Obsolete. For



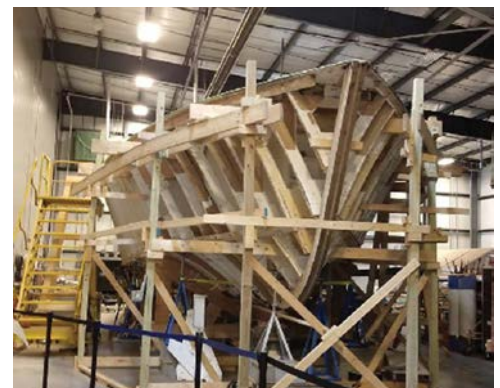
On its way to Ohio in 2012, *PT 728* came through the Erie Canal.  
*Photo taken near Fairport, courtesy of Robert Iannucci, Fleet Obsolete*

several years, his company used *PT 728* for sight-seeing tours, charters, public events and films, mostly on the Hudson. The boat could carry up to 49 passengers.

In June of 2012, Robert Iannucci sold *PT 728* to the Liberty Aviation Museum in Port Clinton, Ohio. A crew of five men from the museum piloted the vessel to its new home on Lake Erie, by way of the Erie Canal and, of course, Fairport!

At the museum, the boat has been undergoing major restoration back to the original PT boat configuration of 1945. She now carries the nickname *Thomcat*, with “Port Clinton OH” painted on the stern.

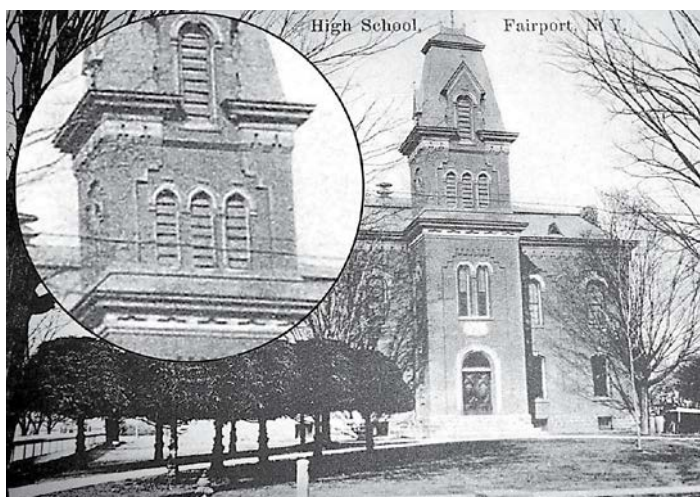
Article details obtained from—  
Wikipedia  
[www.pacificwrecks.com/ships/ptboat](http://www.pacificwrecks.com/ships/ptboat)  
[www.libertyaviationmuseum.org](http://www.libertyaviationmuseum.org)



PT 728 / Thomcat under major restoration at the Liberty Aviation Museum shop in 2018.

*Photo courtesy Liberty Aviation Museum*

During World War II, shipyards in the Great Lakes also built hundreds of naval watercraft for the war effort. In 1942 alone, 414 completed military vessels passed east through the Barge (Erie) Canal.



Fairport's first high school, once located at 38 West Church Street, was razed in 1955.

## Where is the Old School Bell?

*By Bill Poray*

I have had the opportunity to meet with thousands of students from all the fourth grade classes in the Fairport schools over the past eight years. We talked about many topics related to our town's history, including the Erie Canal, railroads, agriculture, and business. We also explored the history of education in our town, from the earliest one room schoolhouses to the buildings where students currently attend classes.

The students, typically nine or ten years old, love seeing the old photographs of the early Perinton schools that they would have attended, had they been born in an earlier time. In talking about our community's first high school, a mystery becomes apparent, one that I have been unable to get to the bottom of. In fact, I've recruited the fourth grade students to help solve the mystery.

With the rapid growth of our town and village population in the late 1860s, came the realization that larger and improved educational facilities were required. The Fairport Union Free School District was formed in 1870, and land was purchased on West Church Street. Initially named the Fairport Classical and Union School, the large brick building was opened in 1872. The school featured a grand central tower containing a school bell, loud enough to be heard from great distances. The tower supported a cupola, and on top of it, a golden feather weather vane. The cupola was removed in 1939 after years of water damage, but the bell tower remained.

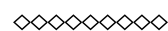
Over the years the school was enlarged and modified, reflecting the area's growing population, and became known as Fairport High School. In September of 1924, a new building for the upper grades was opened on West Avenue. The building on West Church Street was modified for use as an elementary school, and carried on in that fashion for about thirty years, until district centralization and the opening of

Johanna Perrin School.

In the fall of 1955, the School Board made the decision to raze the old high school, and hired John Fly and Sons to do the job. The Fairport Herald-Mail reported on the demolition with the headline "School Bell Tower Silenced Forever." The story provided the following clue: "The bell from the tower has been delivered to the High School where it will be kept for the time being. The Board of Education will decide what to do with it in the future."

A search of the Board of Education meeting minutes from the summer of 1955 through 1961 found no references to the bell. In December of 1959 the financial records of the school district listed the "sale of junk," at the same time the former high school on West Avenue was undergoing some interior modifications in preparation for its new role as the Martha Brown Junior High School. If the bell was stored at the school, perhaps it was disposed of at this time. However, I have talked to several people who attended or worked at the school in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and none can recall seeing the bell. So the trail has gone cold. The whereabouts of the bell, first heard in 1872, remains a mystery.

I have instructed the fourth graders of Fairport to be on the lookout for the 148-year-old bell. It could be hanging from the rafters of a local barn, or gathering cobwebs in the corner of a garage. Of course, it may have been relocated to a distant place decades ago, or worse, melted down for scrap metal. Let's hope not. It would be wonderful to hear the old bell ring through the streets of Fairport once more.



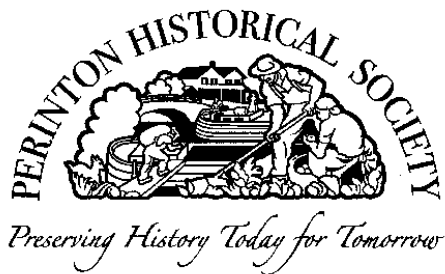
## Above the Line Charitable Deductions for 2020

*By Linda Wiener*

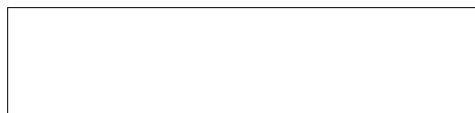
The CARES ACT provides for an "above the line" deduction of up to \$300 in cash contributions to non-profit organizations. This deduction is allowed by the IRS even if you are claiming the standard deduction. An "above the line" deduction reduces your taxable income. This \$300 deduction is in addition to the standard deduction. If you are itemizing, the \$300 can be claimed on either Schedule A or above the line.

In order to claim the deduction you will need proof of your contribution, such as a cancelled check or receipt of payment made to a non-profit organization. This is your opportunity to reduce your taxable income and at the same time give a gift to your favorite charity.

The Perinton Historical Society is a non-profit entity that qualifies you for this deduction. Please consider a donation to help us maintain our museum.



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



**Thanksgiving**

**Sale...**

**Friday and  
Saturday,  
Nov 19th. 20th**

**Smart Winter Hats**

Such lovely colors—red, copper, pheasant, blue, henna, brown and the darker shades. ¶ The turkey won't bring it to you so why not drop in and see it?

**Fairport Hat Shop**  
MISS E. P. BENNETTE, Prop. 42 West Avenue

One hundred years ago in Fairport, any well-dressed woman considered a stylish hat a necessity, especially with Thanksgiving just around the corner. And the best place to buy was the Fairport Hat Shop. This advertisement from November of 1920 identifies the shop's location on 42 West Avenue, in a building that still stands today. Ella Pricilla Bennette Carpenter (1885-1952) operated the Fairport Hat Shop for about forty years.

**Fairport Historical Museum, 18 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 14450**

The museum is open to the public on Saturdays, from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. and Sundays and Tuesdays from 2:00–4:00 p.m. Free admission. Group tours, presentations and special projects are by appointment. Please call and leave a message at **585-223-3989**.

[www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org)