



# Perinton Historical Society HISTORIGRAM

18 Perrin Street  
Fairport, NY 14450

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585-223-3989

## Major Genealogical Collection Given to the Perinton Historical Society

*By William Keeler, curator of the Fairport Museum*

There are some names that are forever connected to Rochester. Names such as Eastman, Sibley, Douglass and Anthony are very familiar to people in and around Rochester and even nationwide. Many of you can probably fill in the first names George, Hiram, Frederick and Susan B. If you have lived in Fairport or Perinton for a long time or have been a member of the Perinton Historical Society and have read the Historigram you know that the names DeLand, Parce, Bushnell, Taylor and Ellsworth are closely associated with the Town of Perinton or the Village of Fairport.

My job at the Perinton Historical Society as curator is taking care of objects, documents and displays in the Fairport Museum, accepting gifts into the collection, and handling research questions. I also work as curator, librarian and archivist at both the Landmark Society of Western New York and Rochester Historical Society. In doing my own research and helping others find information about their relatives or events that happened in the area, I have accumulated in my head several hundred names that I can connect with various communities and events around the area. Every once in awhile, I will get a phone call at one of the places where I work with someone wanting to donate an artifact or documents that they think might be of value to the museum or historical society.

It is my job to determine if the items offered can be used in the museum and are relevant to the collections. Some are easy such as artifacts that are clearly marked as made in Rochester or another local community. Other items are more obscure like things supposedly owned by a famous or not so famous person in the area, or just plain old items that someone couldn't bear to throw out.

In August of last year, I received a phone call at the Rochester Historical Society from a man in Tennessee and was greeted with the all too familiar phrase, "I've got a box of stuff that I think you might be interested in." The man began to describe the contents of the box. As he went on, I was less interested in the items than I was in the names he was dropping. Names such as Wiltsie, Potter, and Hart. I recognized these names as connected with the Town of Perinton. I told the man I was not comfortable with accepting these items into the Rochester Historical Society's collections but would accept them for the Perinton Historical Society with the provision that I could transfer the contents to another institution if I felt they were more appropriate elsewhere. He agreed and sent the box.

The donor is Karl Jost, a former Rochester area resident who received the box from a man who was cleaning out a warehouse in the 1960s or 70s and was not able to find the owner of the box. He knew that Karl was interested in history and gave him the material. The box traveled with Karl to Red Creek, NY where he was a history teacher for the public schools and made its way down to the University of Tennessee where he taught history. Karl Jost retired recently from the university and had to clean out his office.

### Our Mission

*"The Mission of the Perinton Historical Society is to promote interest in preserving and sharing local history."*

Karl called the Rochester Historical Society in hopes of repatriating the items to the community where they started.

I received the box in late August and after reviewing the contents found that all the connections lead to one couple Charles Hastings Wiltsie 1859-1935 and Harriet Potter Hart Wiltsie 1860-1933. Charles H. Wiltie was born in Pittsford and became an attorney in Rochester, NY. He was very involved in cultural and historical institutions. Charles Wiltsie was a charter member of the Board of Trustees of the Rochester Public Library and was president of the Rochester Historical Society for 14 years in the 1920's and 30's. Harriet Potter Hart Wiltsie was the granddaughter of Henry Sayles Potter and cousin of Frederick Potter of Fairport. The house in which Charles Wiltsie was born was donated after his death to the Village of Pittsford as a library and later it became the offices for the village.

The box contains a mix of items from people directly related to Charles and Harriet Wiltsie. There is a ledger book from Henry Potter's brother Charles when he worked in Canandaigua, N.Y, as an apprentice bookbinder, travel itineraries for trips to Europe and America by Charles Wiltsie, his wife and niece from 1903 to 1906, a photo album with pictures from the early 20th century of trips out West and to Savannah, Georgia and copies of the first few pages of the Wiltsie family bible. There is one packet of materials put together by Charles Wiltsie's mother Emily Ward Hastings Wiltsie who was born in Bushnell's Basin in 1834. Emily collected pictures of the various houses occupied by members of the Wiltsie, Hastings and Potter families. There is a picture of the original Wiltsie homestead in Duanesburg, NY, the home of Thomas and Rachael Brownell Wiltsie in Perinton near the bridge over the Erie Canal on Pittsford-Palmyra Road and the home of Isaac and Elmira Ward Hastings who lived in Bushnell's Basin from 1833 to 1855. There is also a picture of the original Henry Sayles Potter house on State St. in Pittsford which later became the home of famous landscape architect Fletcher Steele, as well as, Henry Potter's house at 133 South Fitzhugh Street which is now the home of the Landmark Society of Western NY.

One of the more interesting items donated is a hand written transcript of a diary written by Civil War soldier George Wiltsie. One of 11 children born to Thomas and Rachael Wiltsie on Pittsford-Palmyra Road



**Charles Hastings Wiltsie, 1859-1935,  
probable owner of the box.**

in Perinton, George Wiltsie joined up with the 11th New York Heavy Artillery in Rochester, NY. The diaries entitled Experience of a Soldier in the Army of the Potomac chronicles George's life in the army from August 1862 when he left Rochester for Washington D.C., through a grave illness in which he almost died, to several battles during the siege of Petersburg in 1864. Some of the most intriguing entries are when he was captured and put into a series of southern prisons including Belle Island, Libby and Salisbury Prison in North Carolina. George Wiltsie left Salisbury Prison in February of 1865 and died a little more than a year later in Annapolis.

The items will now be cataloged into the collection of the Perinton Historical Society and made available to researchers. Written summaries will be made and sent to Jane's Library in Pittsford which has a local history research room, the Rochester Historical Society which has genealogical papers deposited by Charles Wiltsie, the University of Rochester which has the Charles Wiltsie collection of papers and the Landmark Society so that those institutions can refer researchers to our archives for further information about the families mentioned in the records. Anyone who has an interest in these materials can contact Bill Keeler at the Fairport Museum at 223-3989.

**Excerpts from the Diary of George Wiltsie, Civil War Soldier From Perinton.  
Army of the Potomac 1862-1865.**

August 19, 1862. Left home for Rochester on my way to the army where I bid adieu to friends and old associates feeling it a duty to fight for home and its comforts and to assist in the rescue of a Government in peril.

September 22, 1862. Went to Washington with Wm. Lyke who obtained a pass for me. It was the first time I had looked upon the place by daylight and of course I had a great deal of labor for my eyes but was never more disappointed in the appearance of a city...

November 21, 1862. ...Soon after arriving at Fort Pennsylvania myself and my companion Wm. Cook were taken sick which resulted in the death of my friend after an illness of one week. I did duty until the fourth day when I was obliged to keep my bed and calling a physician he said I had an attack of typhoid fever...

April 26, 1863. Received six months and nineteen days pay the first that I have received since entering the service.

September 22, 1863. Our bread rations were cut down this morning which has caused great dissatisfaction among the men and we have drawn up and signed a petition(to our Col.) which stipulates that we shall get our full rations deemed by the government.

April 14, 1864. Broke camp in the morning and started for Culpepper near which we encamped.

May 7, 1864. The battle has begun five A.M. The Rebs are driving our pickets in. They are falling back to draw the Rebs out of the woods. We made new demonstrations until they showed themselves at the edge of the woods where we poured grape and canister and musketry into them with great fury which caused them to retreat in good earnest.

June 6, 1864. ...A flag of truce has been sent from our lines and a cessation of hostilities agreed upon for the purpose of removing the wounded from the field and to bury the dead.

June 26, 1864. Sabbath. Another week has rolled away never to return. One more week added to those already passed during which time man has been hunting down his brother man as though he was some wild animal of vicious propensities. Oh! When will this terrible war cease.

August 25, 1864. Lay in the [rifle] pits last night and till two o'clock this afternoon when the Rebels advanced on us and the battle commenced which ended in our defeat and the capture of a large number of prisoners myself among the number. We were captured about five o'clock when we marched from there for four miles and stopped for the night.

August 29, 1864. Paid adieu to Libby [Prison] this morning and went to the famous resort of Uncle Sam's boys for three days Belles known by them as Bell Island. Wrote a letter to my mother and mailed it after going to the island.

October 26, 1864. It is sixty days since my capture and I have slept under cover but three nights during the time. Thus it is the Confederacy cares for the men who are so unfortunate as to fall into its hands. Six of us have banded together and this day have commenced the erection of a mud house.

George Wiltsie was released from Salisbury Prison in North Carolina on February 22, 1865. He died in Annapolis on March 21, 1866.

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## A Clarification of a Correction in the March Historiogram

The intersection of routes 31 and 250 was known locally as Hannan's Corners as late as 1953 even though the family only occupied one of the four corners. Today you have Perinton Square Mall on the NE corner, a bank on the NW corner, a gas station on the SE corner and Perinton Hills Mall on the SW corner. The intersection was known as Antioch in 1810. James Hannan settled in Perinton in 1811 when he and David Cady bought 160 acres of land on the west side of what is now route 250. The Hannan homesteads were on the SW corner. At one time the Hannan family owned 204.1 acres and the farm was called Spruce Grove Farm. The farm was recognized as a 100 year old farm in Perinton in the 1950's because the land had been in the same family for over 100 years.

## Wanted: Volunteers for Canal Days June 7 - 8

The Perinton Historical Society is going to have a booth at Canal Days this year. We have a 10' x 10' tent which will be in the Village Landing parking lot where will be selling gift shop items and offering memberships to help pay for heating and lighting bills at the museum. The booth is being coordinated by Bill Keeler.

What Bill needs now are volunteers that can spell him for an hour or two on Saturday June 7 (9 a.m. To 6 p.m.) or Sunday June 8 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). There will be two volunteers at the booth at all times.

If you are going to be in town that weekend and can spare an hour, please call the museum at 223-3989 and leave your name and number where you can be reached. You can also sign up at the museum during open hours or fill out the form in this newsletter and drop it in the mail slot at the museum. Bill will take the names and call you Monday, June 2 before the event and arrange for a time slot.

## Looking for Member Collections and Ideas

David Wild, long time Board member of the Perinton Historical Society, has always thought that there are probably many members that have unique collections that they could display at the Fairport Museum for a limited engagement. A few years ago, David brought in his wagon jack collection which was on display in the Merriman-Clark Room for several weeks and Bill Keeler has brought in his collection of Boston Red Sox baseball cards the year the Sox won their first pennant in 86 years in 2004. Bill Keeler, curator, has now set aside several display cases in the central section of the museum for anyone in the community that would like to display their hobby or collection. There are two locked display cases 30"x36"x8 inches deep by the front door and a large horizontal case 23"x70"x3 feet tall.

The collection or hobby need not be related to Fairport or Perinton. If selected, the display will have an article written about it in the Historiogram and can be left up for a month or more. If you have a collection that you would like to display in the museum please leave a note in the mail slot at the museum with your name, where you can be reached, and a brief description of your collection.

## Museum to Offer Expanded Summer Hours

The Board of Trustees has approved additional summer hours for the Fairport Museum beginning July 9 to August 28. During that time the museum will be open Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., the first two Mondays of the month from 8 to noon and Thursday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m. These extra hours are a service to the community and this program allows tourists and residents more opportunities to visit our museum during good weather.

# Annual Meeting and Picnic Scheduled for May 13

The annual Perinton Historical Society picnic and meeting will be held rain or shine in the shelter at Perinton Park on Fairport Road near the canal at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday May 13. Hot dogs, hamburgers, decaf coffee and lemonade will be provided by the Society. Members coming to the picnic are requested to bring their own plates, silverware, and a dish to pass. Please make reservations with the form below or by calling the museum at 223-3989 and leaving a message. Please indicate:

1. How many people will be coming.
2. Whether you would like a hot dog or hamburger.
3. What dish you would like to pass (salad, hot dish, cold dish, dessert)

After dinner will be the annual meeting and election of members for the Board of Trustees.

So come join us for a pleasant evening at the park.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ number of people coming \_\_\_\_\_

I would like (indicate number) \_\_\_\_\_ hot dogs \_\_\_\_\_ hamburgers

I will be bringing (circle one):          salad          hot dish          cold dish          dessert

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This form can be delivered and dropped in the mail slot, or mailed to the  
Perinton Historical Society, 18 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 14450

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## Canal Days Volunteer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Day available:    Saturday June 7          \_\_\_\_\_ Morning          \_\_\_\_\_ Afternoon

                         Sunday June 8          \_\_\_\_\_ Morning          \_\_\_\_\_ Afternoon

Bill Keeler will call you June 2 to reconfirm and schedule you for an hour to watch the booth.

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# Goals and Objectives for a Clear Future

*by Doris Davis-Fritsch, Goals and Objectives Chair*

In an earlier newsletter, our President, Clark King, spoke of the work that the board has been doing to give the Society a “clear focus for the future.” We had several workshops to develop our mission and vision and then a committee of Gail Black, Doris Davis-Fritsch, John Jongen and Jim Unckless, was formed to develop our goals and objectives.

The group felt that the Perinton Historical Society's main focus should be 1. Museums and Collections, 2. Members, Visitors and Volunteers and 3. Education. With those things in mind the following goals and objectives were developed and approved by the board:

## **1. Museum and Collections:**

- Operate the Museum in the Village of Fairport according to the American Museum Association standards, approved by the New York State Education Department's Chartering Division. Strive to optimize the environmental conditions to preserve and display our artifacts.
- Further enhance our collections by focusing primarily on acquiring objects and artifacts related to the history of Fairport and Perinton.

## **2. Members, Visitors and Volunteers:**

- Increase visitors to the Museum by proactively generating interest in the collections and resources available for research on farming, genealogy, canal development, structures, and industry.
- Develop plans to increase membership at the museum that will encourage a broad audience to visit and learn about local history.

## **3. Education:**

- Develop plans and programs at the museum that will encourage a broad audience to visit and learn about local history.
- Continue to enhance interest in architectural history and the preservation of the local architectures.

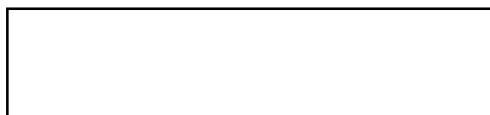
And what does all this mean? If you think about what we do today, they pretty much fit with these goals, so, we are doing a great job and can be very proud of what this group has accomplished. But, can we improve in any of these areas? If you have any ideas on how to better accomplish our goals and fulfill our vision “to be the leading, widely recognized community resource for promoting and instilling a sense of local history among Perinton residents,” please give a board member a call; we would love to hear from you.



Perinton Historical Society  
18 Perrin Street  
Fairport, NY 14450

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## FAIRPORT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

18 PERRIN STREET, FAIRPORT, NY 14450

### REGULAR HOURS

**\*Summer Hours  
7/9-8/28/08**

Sunday	2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Tuesday	2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Wednesday	2 p.m. - 4 p.m.*
Thursday	2 p.m. - 4 p.m.* & 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

The first two Mondays of every month the Archives open for Researchers only.

Visit our website:

[www.angelfire.com/ny5/fairporthistmuseum](http://www.angelfire.com/ny5/fairporthistmuseum)

*Group tours, presentations and special projects by appointment.  
Call 223-3989 and leave a message.*