

Perinton Historical Society **Historigram**

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

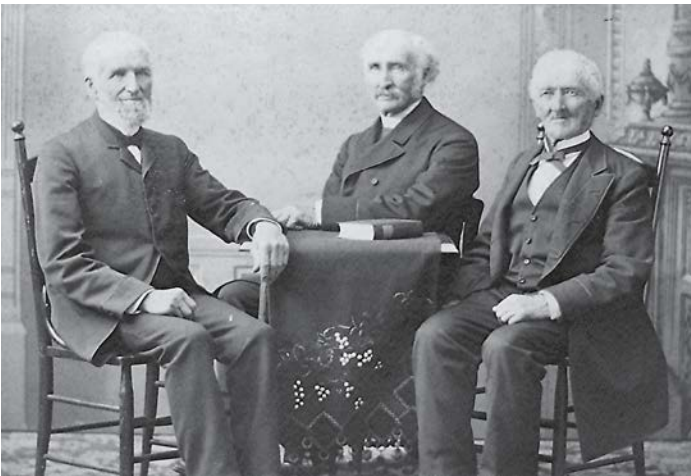
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Fairport's William Woolworth Howard **A Life of Intriguing Complexities**

By Bill Poray

Five Howard brothers, John, Ansel, Lorenzo, Daniel, and Marshal, settled in Fairport in the late 1830s to early 1840s. The family's wagon-making factory in Belchertown, Massachusetts had many customers in this area, and after inspecting the growing community, all five eventually relocated here, accompanied by their widowed father. The family grew quickly, with 26 carrying the Howard name listed in the 1860 census. William Woolworth Howard (1846–1921) was among them, and he is the subject of this story.



1882 photograph of brothers John, Daniel, and Ansel Howard. John Howard was the father of William Woolworth Howard.

Early Life in Fairport

W.W. Howard, as he was known throughout his life, was the son of John E. Howard and step-son of his father's second wife, Louisa. W.W.'s older sister, Sophia Howard, earned her degree in medicine and worked as a physician for many years. With his brother John, W.W. Howard operated a store in Fairport in the 1870s. He was wed to Mary Lucretia Ranney of the Perinton hamlet of Egypt in 1870. They had one child, John Roy Howard, born in Fairport on November 27, 1878. Less than two years later, the community heard the startling news of the death of Mrs. W.W. Howard in July of 1880, at just 29 years of age.

Traveling for Business and Pleasure

Travel and business interests consumed the next period of W.W. Howard's life. He spent a great deal of time in Kansas, which had joined the Union as the 34th state in 1861. Newspaper accounts of his frequent visits to cities and towns in the Sunflower State cast him as a wealthy New York investor and businessman. He traveled from Fairport by train, and while in Kansas, was most frequently found in the municipalities of Abilene, Lawrence, Minneapolis, and Cherryvale.



A portion of a photo from the Howard family reunion of 1882. W.W. Howard and son, John Roy Howard, are front and center.

Continued on page 4



~ Bob Hunt ~

Comments from your President

November 15, 2020

As I write this article from my office in our townhouse, I have started on my ninth decade on Earth last Thursday!

I hope everyone enjoyed the great Indian summer we experienced in early November. In researching "Indian summer," I

came across a passage written in 1817 by author John Bradbury: "The air is perfectly quiescent and all is stillness, as if nature, after her exertions during the summer, were now at rest." These words are as relevant today as they were way back then. The term Indian summer dates to the 18th century in the United States. It can be defined as "any spell of warm, quiet, hazy weather that may occur in October or even early November." Several references note that a true Indian summer cannot occur until there has been a killing frost.

Photos on the Wall

As we sit in our new dining room for the evening meal, I face a wall covered with old family photographs. On the wall you will see Emma Young, Cindy's grandmother, my mother's graduating class of 1930 from Dundee High School, and my grandfather, as a station master for the Pennsylvania Railroad's telephone office in Dundee. Others include a wedding photo of Cindy's parents, images of my mother's family, the Halsteads, and a nice shot of Uncle Lynn's baseball team. Also on the wall is Frank Wood's basketball team, and also Frank on a bulldozer. I'm sure many of you have similar photo-filled walls in your homes. Thinking about each photo, I realized that each has a story to tell.



Warren, Marian and Helen Halstead

This month I'm going to tell a story related to the Halstead photo above. It includes my uncle Warren, my mother, Marian, and Aunt Helen, when they were young children. In the *Historigram* of December 2018, I told you about Uncle Warren, who was paralyzed from the armpits down, when a car he was working on fell on him. This didn't stop him from being a highly successful businessman, who owned and operated the following businesses: lawn mower sharpening,

bicycle shop, shoe repair, gun repair, hunting and fishing supplies, and photography products. His businesses were in Dundee, New York. In about 1947 he purchased a lake lot on the west side of Seneca Lake and had a cottage built. As long as he could hold on to something, he could move around, which meant railings along walkways and a table with wheels in his shop and at the cottage. He purchased a 28 foot Steelcraft cruiser, and designed a set of stairs with low risers, which, dropped by a pulley system into the back of the boat, allowed him access.

Uncle Warren purchased a newer model of the Steelcraft cruiser in 1952, located in New Jersey. With help he could get into an auto, particularly one where the front seat tilted back, like a Nash. Soon my uncle and I were off to New Jersey, along with two other seasoned sailors, to bring the boat back to Seneca Lake. It was a four-day trip, past the Statue of Liberty, busy New York harbor, up the Hudson, and past West Point to Albany. We picked up the Erie Canal and headed west through many locks and across Oneida Lake. We continued to the top of Cayuga Lake, then along the Cayuga and Seneca Canal. The last 20 miles were down Seneca Lake, to the cottage. What a trip and experience it was for a 12-year-old.

There are many more stories about Uncle Warren but they will have to wait for another time.

Have a safe and healthy Thanksgiving. Thanks for your support of PHS, and let's chat again next month.

Bob Hunt, President, 585-415-7053
rhunt356.rh@gmail.com

Perinton Historical Society

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HISTORIGRAM

Published nine months per year by the Perinton Historical Society

Editor: Bill Poray Art Director: Keith Boas

Production & Distribution: Jim Unckless

Proofreading: Irene Poray

Upcoming Programs & Events

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

This is a pre-recorded presentation available exclusively to PHS members. Registration required

Tuesday, December 1 all day

Event: ROC the Day for PHS

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

Tuesday, January 19 at 7:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

Program: Faces of Civil War Nurses

Presenter: Ronald S. Coddington Registration required

Tuesday, February 16 at 7:00 p.m.

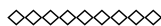
VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

Program: tbd

Saturday, March 6 from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

The museum reopens for the season.

Note that there will be no in-person Tuesday presentations at the museum for the 2020–2021 program season due to the pandemic. We are partnering with the Fairport Public Library to offer virtual presentations instead. Please see each event listing for information about registration, which is required for all virtual events.



George Wolf was recognized recently by the PHS Board of Trustees for his service of over fifty years to the Perinton Historical Society. In his tenure, George served in a multitude of roles, including president of PHS. In this photo, PHS trustee and photographer Keith Boas (left) presents George with a beautiful framed photograph of the Wolf family home in Fairport.

Mad House

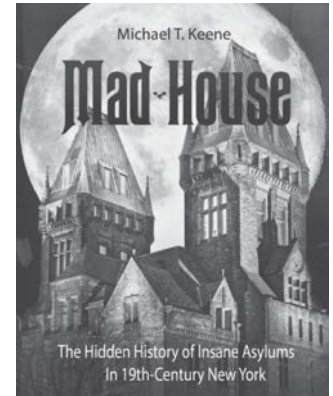
The Hidden History of Insane Asylums in 19th Century New York

Presented by Michael T. Keene
on December 1st at 11:00 a.m.

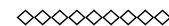
VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

Registration required

PHS is pleased to offer this pre-recorded 30-minute presentation to our members. Michael Keene, local author and frequent speaker at the PHS, has created a unique online program based on his book, “Madhouse...” His program, told through archival photos, original music and narration, explores the history of “Insane Asylums” established in New York State during the 19th century. Join Michael as he tells us stories about some remarkable people as well as revealing a secret kept hidden for more than 100 years!



To register, visit michaeltkeene.com/registration. Registered attendees will receive a link to the presentation. Registrants can watch the recording during its premiere on December 1 at 11:00 a.m. and re-watch any time after that. The museum gift shop carries a variety of books by the presenter.



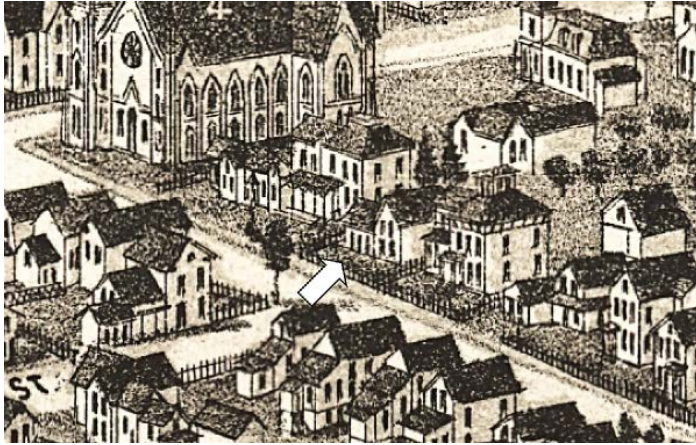
Your Support is Appreciated

Thanks to all who have renewed your memberships. In this challenging year, each membership, donation and gift shop sale helps to alleviate the financial hardships from canceling both the 2020 house tour and the Yuletide Traditions silent auctions fundraiser.

There are many ways to support the PHS:

- PHS memberships make great gifts for loved ones.
- Do you purchase items from Amazon.com? AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support the PHS every time you shop, at no cost to you. AmazonSmile is available at smile.amazon.com on your web browser and can be activated in the Amazon Shopping app for iOS and Android phones. When you shop AmazonSmile, you'll find the same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the PHS.
- ROC the Day for PHS on December 1, when the Rochester community comes together in a 24-hour event of community giving that benefits organizations in the Greater Rochester area. Information can be found at ROCtheDay.org.
- Planned Giving: Speak to your accountant or financial advisor about ways you can contribute to PHS. Or email PHS with questions at info@PerintonHistoricalSociety.org.

W.W. bought and sold land and livestock in Kansas. He dealt mostly in sheep, thousands of which he purchased in Colorado and Nebraska, and transported hundreds of miles to ranches in Kansas. Just a few months after his wife's death, W.W. reunited with an old Fairport friend, Daniel Dunbar, who took time away from his responsibilities at a large hardware store in Kansas City, to spend time in the field. Accompanying W.W. on the return rail trip to Fairport were the prizes from this hunting adventure, a large quantity of wild geese.



The arrow indicates the South Main Street home of W.W. Howard and his wife, Mary Lucretia Ranney Howard. It was replaced by the current structure at 76 South Main Street in 1892 by A.L. Beardsley. The house to the immediate right was the home of W.W. Howard's parents, and is the Fairport Federal Credit Union today.

W.W. Howard found time for the pleasures of travel, often with his sister and parents. Following an extensive trip to Europe in the summer and fall of 1883, he sold his furniture and South Main Street home in Fairport, and relocated briefly to Erie, Pennsylvania. There he partnered with another former Fairport resident, W.H. Nicholson, as officers of the Ball Engine Company, manufacturers of stationary steam engines. The company later produced steam shovels, but by then, W.W. had moved on to other pursuits.

After lengthy trips to Cape Cod, Maine, the southwest territories, California, and British Columbia, W.W. Howard briefly took residence once again in Fairport. In July of 1888, two Republican political groups, the Perinton League and the Depew Club, chose W.W. as their President. Howard and other local Republicans helped to elect Benjamin Harrison that year to be the 23rd President of the United States. Christian Churchill of East Avenue, a village trustee, did his part by installing a fifty-foot flagpole, from which flew an enormous Harrison banner.

As the first indication of financial troubles stemming from W.W.'s interests in Kansas began to surface in 1889, Fairport's champion of Republicanism waged his own campaign, seeking the nomination for assemblyman of Monroe County's 1st District in the New York State Assembly. His two competitors for the nomination were better known, and when the votes were tallied, Webster town supervisor Frank Jones

was declared the winner, ending W.W.'s brief flirtation with politics. Soon after, he left Fairport for California, where he would reside for the rest of his life.

W.W. Howard Makes his Mark in California

After establishing a permanent residence in Los Angeles early in 1890, W.W. Howard quickly became a fixture in the social notes of the city newspapers, sometimes with a lovely woman by his side. For a time he achieved a level of celebrity, such as when the Los Angeles Times breathlessly reported on details of the 44-year-old bachelor: "W.W. Howard has been seen several times of late enjoying the surf. He also is very fond of a stroll down Ocean Avenue about sunset." His diverse business dealings were also widely reported, such as a contract to supply hay for the city's horse-drawn transportation system. Howard also became well known as an investor of Los Angeles area ranch lands, as well as philanthropic pursuits. In one notable instance, when a young newsboy lost his legs in an encounter with a train, W.W. Howard paid for his nurse.

Marriages, Fortunes, and Misfortunes

In September of 1893, in one of the most fashionable locations in Los Angeles, W.W. Howard commissioned architect F.R. Dorn to design a luxurious home. Later described as "one of the most perfect, beautiful and conveniently located 10-acre suburban homes in Southern California," the estate featured indoor plumbing, a large barn and henhouse, and elaborate gardens. The home at 1007 West Adams Street was perfectly suitable for a successful entrepreneur and socially refined gentleman and his son, now a teenager.

At a nearby address lived business executive George H. Hartwell, and his wife, the former Ella Greenerd of Lowell, Massachusetts. The 51-year-old W.W. Howard promptly became the second husband of Ella, 25 years his junior. Some have said that she saw in Howard a means to reach the stage, and the limelight she craved in the theatre. Others referred to her as a gold digger. However unfair such a label may have been, any attempts by the second Mrs. Howard were likely without success. It soon became apparent that William Woolworth Howard was, as later described in the Los Angeles Daily Times, "...a man now beyond middle age, and always of expensive tastes and a penchant for getting into trouble with his creditors, of whom there are understood to be \$15,000 or \$20,000 worth in this city and elsewhere."

Several years passed, and found Mr. and Mrs. Howard still married, at least in the eyes of the state. Divorce papers had been served, but dismissed in court. By 1902, the couple reunited on a small orange ranch purchased by W.W. on the eastern outskirts of Los Angeles. There he raised chickens, but not much money in which to pay his debts. It was here that a story unfolded, which captured headlines from coast to coast.

The Abduction of a Racehorse

In a previous real estate money-making misadventure, W.W. Howard became acquainted with a well-healed businessman named Bixby. At a dinner held at the Bixby ranch, W.W.'s wife was captivated by a young racehorse with a promising future, named Bonnie Russell. At this point, the stories of the husband and wife parted ways, and were revealed in a court battle over ownership of the promising trotter, later appraised at \$10,000. Mrs. Howard claimed in court that she had purchased Bonnie Russell from Bixby, with money gained in the divorce settlement with her first husband. Meanwhile, W.W. Howard said that it was he and his agent who purchased the horse for his mother, Louisa Howard, of Fairport. A widow since 1890, W.W.'s mother appeared to be an unlikely candidate to own a racehorse. She was about 80 years old, and still lived in the old family home. This was due to an arrangement made with the husband and wife physicians to whom she sold it, Doctors Charles and Frances White, who pledged to care for her in their home until her death.

As all of this played out, Ella Howard once again filed for divorce, alleging extreme cruelty. W.W. defaulted, and the divorce was granted. Almost immediately, the racehorse Bonnie Russell was mysteriously spirited away from a Los Angeles stable on the evening of December 3, 1902. After a month had passed, an agent said to represent the elder Mrs. Howard in Fairport initiated a legal claim to the missing horse. After another month had passed, the claim was withdrawn, and Bonnie Russell was returned to the Los Angeles stable. By the spring of 1903, the former wife of W.W. Howard dispatched the horse on a wild journey of races, with many stops in Michigan and Ohio. Bonnie Russell ultimately became the possession of Danny O'Dell, a well-known horseman in New York City.

Bankruptcy and Reflection on Simpler Times

Divorced and in financial straits, W.W. Howard took residence in a modest neighborhood in East Los Angeles. There he raised and marketed what were advertised as prize-winning White Leghorn chickens, known for their egg-laying capabilities. He also sold champion-bred fox terriers. By 1906, W.W. had settled on a small ranch in San Jacinto, California, about 80 miles east of Los Angeles. While living here, he filed for bankruptcy, claiming liabilities of \$67,000 and assets of \$41,000. Now sixty years of age, W.W. combined his unblemished reputation, at least when it came to White Leghorn chickens, with a marketing endeavor which offered specialized plots of land to would-be chicken farmers.

It was around this time that W.W. Howard, perhaps nostalgic for the simpler days of his youth, penned an essay for The Monroe County Mail, published in his hometown of Fairport.

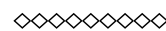
Below is a small portion of his lengthy composition:

We recall Fairport as the little village of 200 or 300 people at most, in our boyhood days, situated on the Erie Canal, then about one-half its present width and depth, with its little freight boats, others called scows, bullheads, etc., with an occasional freight boat loaded with emigrants, mostly Germans and Irish, for the west and northwest, which in those days, meant Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin. The decks of these little boats were covered with a motley crowd in their strange foreign costumes, while the little boats pulled along at the rate of three to six miles an hour. But the passenger "packet" was the boat on whose arrival for meals at Goodrich's Fairport hotel, all the boys and loafers about town were on the lookout. Coming in on a run with three or six tandem horses, which drew it day and night, at the rate of six or eight miles an hour, with relay stations for fresh horses at almost every town, the packet arrived with horses on a canter, throwing a swell that washed both banks of the canal, while a man at the bow blew pretty blasts on a horn or cornet, announcing its arrival.

In 1913 William Woolworth Howard, now 67, made a third woman his bride. Her name was Bertha W. McCracken, a 43-year-old artist from Pittsburgh. They lived the next eight years in relative peace and quiet, until his death in August of 1921. The brief, published notice of the passing of W.W. Howard in the Fairport Herald stated, "Mr. Howard will be remembered as a former resident in business in Fairport." It was a simple statement, hardly worthy for such a complicated man.



Perhaps inspired by marital bliss, W.W.'s notoriety flourished once more, when a 1917 Los Angeles newspaper report spread far and wide his novel solution "for overcoming the ground squirrel menace." The College of Agriculture at the University of California had warned farmers in the spring of 1917 that unless something were done, a "vast army" of squirrels would do immense damage to the crops of California. To the rescue came the former Fairport man, 71-year-old William Woolworth Howard, who devised a toxic concoction to eradicate the furry rodents, saving the crops from destruction. Or so the story was told.



5th in the Series:

*Notable Boats
Through Fairport*

The Niagara Prince

By
Keith Boas



Luther H. Blount always wanted to make the entire Erie Canal easily available to boat travelers. As a young man, he vowed that he would someday “build the perfect riverboat, one that could expose passengers to the historic canal.”

And he did just that! Built in 1994 by Luther Blount at his Rhode Island shipyard, Blount Marine (also makers of the *Colonial Belle*), the *Niagara Prince* features comfortable staterooms, lounge, dining room, sundeck and a retractable pilot house to make cruising on the Erie Canal possible and enjoyable. She is the only sleeper passenger boat capable of sailing the Champlain Canal from the Hudson River to Lake Champlain, and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, which connects the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River via the Illinois and Des Plaines Rivers. She has a crew of 17 and the ability to carry 84 passengers at a time.

Fairport Historical Museum records indicate that she stopped at Fairport for several hours during the summer of 1995. She passed through Fairport again, en-route to Buffalo, on August 26th of 1997, then back through on September 1st when returning to her home port in Rhode Island.

Perinton Town Historian and *Historigram* editor Bill Poray lived with his family along the canal during those years. He recalls, “Our place was a few hundred yards from the canal guard gate near Kreag Road Park. I remember that the boat had to slow to a crawl to get under the gate. It had pumps to add water to the bilge for additional weight, and thus lower her in the water. Her crew inched the ‘Prince’



The handsome riverboat *Niagara Prince* passed through Fairport several times during the mid 1990s.

along until they just barely passed under the gate. Once through, they pumped the water out, so they could get the boat back to proper weight and running more efficiently.”

The boat was refurbished in 2009, with renovated staterooms and lounge, plus a modern audio-visual system. In recent years, The *Niagara Prince* has been making round-trip cruises between Chicago and New Orleans on the Mississippi River. According to www.unitedyacht.com, she is currently for sale at a price of \$2,500,000.

Sources: RiverCruise.com

Cruise International

Blount Small Ship Adventures

www.unitedyacht.com

Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

Democrat & Chronicle, March 10, 1994,

“Cruises on Canal Planned”

Perinton-Fairport Post, August 27, 1997,

“Specially designed canal boat to visit area”

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Special Recognition Level Memberships—As of November 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

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

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

DeLand (\$100–\$249)

JoAnn Wheeler and Ronald Coker
Frank and Terry Pittinaro
Anonymous (1)

Potter (\$250–\$499)

None this month

Perrin (\$500 and above)

None this month



Decking the Halls to Shopping Malls American Christmas Traditions and How They Grew



Presented by
Chris Bensch

on December 8th
at 7:00 p.m.

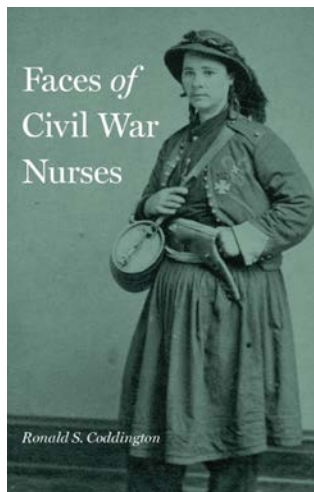
VIRTUAL
PRESENTATION

Registration
required

Although our Christmas traditions have an aura of permanence, many can actually be traced to the second half of the 19th century. This lecture explores the origins and changing styles of such standard holiday features as the Christmas tree, ornaments, stockings, and greeting cards. And the Victorian period established familiar holiday patterns for everything from favorite carols to traffic jams of shoppers.

In 1989, Christopher Bensch became one of the curators at The Strong in Rochester, New York, with responsibility for furniture and cookware, record albums and televisions, Big Mac boxes and Halloween costumes. Since 2004, Chris has served as Vice President for Collections with oversight of the museum's curatorial, conservation, and library functions and the more than 510,000 objects that make it the largest, most comprehensive collection of toys, games, dolls, and video games in the world. This event is free and open to the public, co-sponsored by the Perinton Historical Society and Fairport Public Library.

Registration is required through the Fairport Public Library and is limited. To register, visit <https://fairportlibrary.libcal.com/event/7242589>. Or call the library at 585-223-9091.



Faces of Civil War Nurses

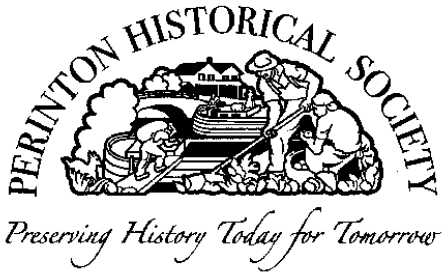
Presented by
Ronald S. Coddington
on January 19th at 7:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL
PRESENTATION
Registration required

In his newest book, *Faces of Civil War Nurses*, Ronald S. Coddington turns his attention to the experiences of 77 women who provided care during the war as nurses, aid workers and vivandières. Their personal narratives are as unique as fingerprints: Each provides a distinct entry point into the larger social history of the brutal and bloody conflict. Using identified tintypes and cartes de visite of women on both sides of the war, many of them never before published, Coddington uncovers the personal histories of each intrepid individual.

PHS is pleased to welcome Ronald Coddington in this virtual presentation as he highlights the lives of these Civil War nursing heroes. Ronald S. Coddington is an editor at *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the editor and publisher of *Military Images* magazine. He is the author of a series of five volumes about the Civil War. Visit ronaldscoddington.com for additional information.

This event is free and open to the public, co-sponsored by the PHS and Fairport Public Library. Registration is required through the library and is limited. To register, visit <https://fairportlibrary.libcal.com/event/7292234>. Or call the library at 585-223-9091.



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Fairport, NY 14450



On November 6th, 1942 an explosion and fire occurred at the Rochester Fireworks Company factory on West Whitney Road, where products in support of the war effort were produced. As a result, twelve employees lost their lives. On November 5th of this year, the dedication of a new historic marker was held at the site, honoring those who gave their lives in service to their country.

Photos by Keith Boas



Season's Greetings from the Perinton Historical Society

The Fairport Historical Museum—18 Perrin Street, Fairport—is closed to the public for the season. It will reopen on Saturday, March 6th, 2021. During this period, you may call Vicki Masters Profitt at 585-233-1204 or email at director@perintonhistoricalsociety.org to book a group tour or do research.