

Perinton Historical Society **Historigram**

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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From Blasting Powder to Powder Mills Park – And the Bell That Survived it All –

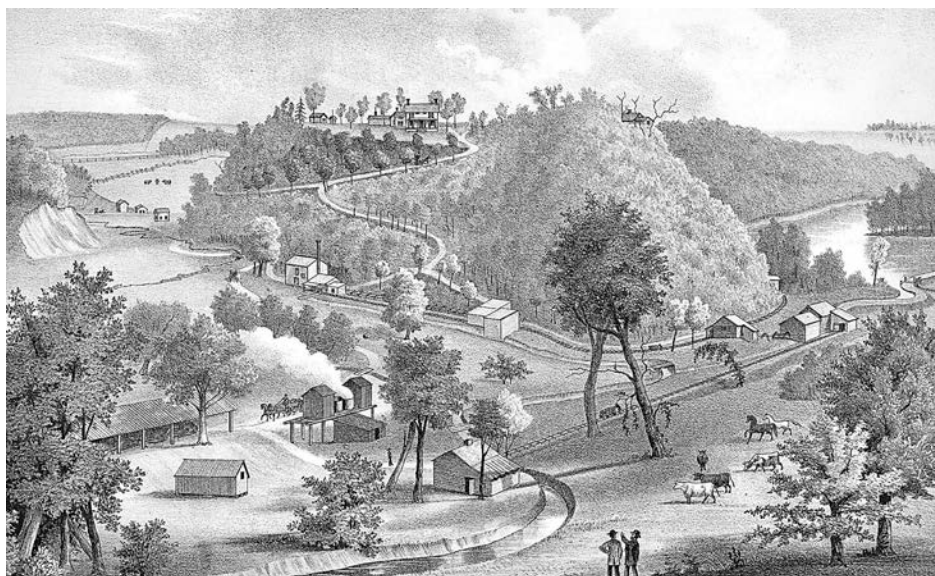
By Bill Poray

The Rand Powder Mills in southeastern Perinton, formerly Rand and Wadhams, was the manufacturer of highly explosive blasting powder.

From the time the business opened in the 1850s until it ceased to operate in 1910, several unintended explosions occurred at the site. Two of the worst were in 1887 and 1896. In the first, 3,000 pounds of explosive powder destroyed buildings, uprooted large trees, and demolished a tenant house. Fortunately, no employees were near the area at the time.

In the 1896 blast, 25 wooden kegs of powder exploded, caused by a spark from the small-gauge railroad used to move materials and finished products. Delos Collins, a 31-year old Bushnell's Basin resident and an employee of the powder mills for nine years, died as a result of injuries sustained in the blast.

In a matter of weeks after the Wall Street crash of 1929 resulting in the Great Depression, the Monroe County Parks Commission announced the purchase of the old powder mills property. A newspaper report at the time stated: "...the spot, despite its isolation and the fact that the old mill buildings have fallen into ruins, has for years attracted many artists and nature lovers." Today, despite its Pittsford zip code, almost all of the park's 380 acres are located within the confines of the town of Perinton.



1877 lithograph of the powder mills of Rand and Wadhams

Why Is There a Bell at Powder Mills Park?

A fish hatchery was constructed at the park in 1933, including a building used for the hatching of fish eggs, typically varieties of trout. Although the 89 year-old building has not been used for the hatching of eggs in decades, it is still utilized as the park's office today.

On page 4 of this article, you can see a comparison of two photos of the building, one from 1933 and a recent photo, showing one obvious difference. In the recent image, the bell is housed inside a small belfry atop the roof, while in the early photo, the belfry is not present. For those of us who revel in even the smallest of mysteries, the difference in these photos triggers a rather obvious question: When and why was a belfry and bell installed on the roof of the little fish hatchery building?

Continued on page 4



From your President

Early mornings are my favorite time of the day. The quiet stillness gives me breathing room to gather my thoughts and plan for the day ahead. The garland and lights above the fireplace give off a warm, peaceful glow

~Vicki Profitt~

while music plays softly in the background.

This morning it is Simon and Garfunkel. Much of my historical research takes place now, when I can think about the people from the past without distraction. I imagine them rising early to take the carriage or sleigh ride to their loved ones' homes for holiday celebrations. I imagine the amount of time and preparation that would take versus today's modern convenience of automobiles. I imagine the scents of the season and the laughter as they gather. In some ways, not much has changed. In others, we are a world away from those days.

Our volunteers are helping us share the history of our community: Our museum is a vibrant repository of knowledge and our membership is soaring. Thank you for joining us in this mission to preserve and chronicle the past for the future.

As the busy holiday season approaches, my wishes for you are to enjoy the scents of the season, glowing lights and peaceful stillness.

Perinton Historical Society

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MISSION

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

The HISTORIGRAM is published nine months per year by the Perinton Historical Society. The content of our newsletter is provided by PHS Board members and committee staff. Opinions expressed in any article in this newsletter are those of the author of the article alone and are not those of the PHS unless expressly stated otherwise.

<i>Editor</i>	Bill Poray
<i>Art Director:</i>	Keith Boas
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This festive time of year, the garland and lights above Vicki's fireplace give off a warm, peaceful glow, which help her plan the day.



Upcoming Programs & Events

Saturday, December 3rd at the museum

10:30–11:30 a.m. Gnome for the Holidays Children's
Crafts and Games, plus local business
GRITWORX Designs

Sunday, December 4th at the museum, 2:30 p.m.

Reconstruction of the Fairport Lift Bridge
Presenter: Dominic Sherony

Tuesday, December 6th at the museum

6:00–7:00 p.m. Final bidding on Yuletide Traditions silent
auction items. Auction winners will be announced
following the program.

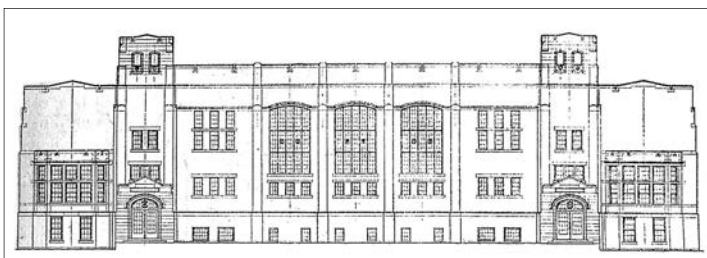
7:00 p.m. PHS Annual Holiday Party featuring
Mama Goose on the Loose

Saturday, December 10th at the museum

9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
The museum's last day open before closing for the season

Saturday, January 17th at the Fairport Public Library

7:00 p.m. Rochester's Best Kept Secret:
Unveiling the Mighty Wurlitzer Theatre Organ!
(See sign-up information on page 8.)



One Hundred Years Ago

Published in the Monroe County Mail
on December 14, 1922:

*"At a special meeting of the Board of Education held on
Saturday evening last, it was voted to build a new high school
building in Fairport. If the plans of the Board are carried out,
the new high school will be located on West Avenue, near
where the present Schummers Building now stands."*

Three months later, the sketch above was published on
the front page of the Fairport Herald. The detailed description
of the proposed new school concluded with the following
statement: "The plans prepared in the office of O.W. Dryer,
architect, of Rochester, have been approved at Albany and are
fast nearing completion."

The new high school first opened for classes in September
of 1924. It was constructed at a cost of \$340,000.



A few gnomes enjoying a recent autumn
day in Perinton

Gnome for the Holidays Yuletide Traditions for Children on December 3rd

Gnomes at the Fairport Historical Museum? Yes!
A family of gnomes have moved into their tiny home
at 18 Perrin Street.

Their mission is not to guard the many precious treasures
of the museum—protection being a more typical role for these
mythological creatures—but instead, to entertain our wee
visitors, children.

From December 3rd until the museum closes for the
season on December 10th, children (and adults) are invited to
visit the gnome home when the museum is open and enjoy
gnome-approved activities. These include an "I Spy" game, a
gnome hunt, coloring pages, and a gnome story and craft on
Saturday, December 3rd, 10:30–11:30 a.m.

The gnome home was made available by the Fairport
Perinton Merchants Association and will be at the museum at
the same time as other PHS Yuletide Traditions events.

In your local travels this month, watch for other gnome
homes in Fairport and Perinton.





The photo at left is of the current park office at Powder Mills Park, located adjacent to the fish hatchery ponds and tanks. On the roof directly above the door is a small belfry, and within it, a bell, 24 inches in diameter.

The image below left was taken in 1933. The belfry does not exist in this photo. The current office initially served as the hatchery, with a fresh water supply and tanks where the fish eggs were hatched. Eventually this activity was consolidated to another hatchery in Bath, New York. Since the consolidation, young fish, referred to as fingerlings, are trucked from Bath to Powder Mills Park, where they are nurtured in outdoor tanks and ponds until such time as they are ready to be released in area waterways, including Irondequoit Creek, which flows through the park.



There is no shortage of theories as to the reason a bell sits atop the old hatchery building. Some have said that it must have had something to do with the process of hatching the eggs. Others have reasoned that the clanging of the bell signaled to park workers that it was time for their lunch break. Finally, some speculate the building might have been used as a school at one point in its history, and that a school bell was installed. In fact, the building never was a school, although schools of fish were present for decades in the old building. While any of these theories might seem plausible, none are true.

Early in 1937, Charles G. Schoener, director of Monroe County Parks, initiated a fire prevention course for employees at Powder Mills Park. The intent was to equip park employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to fight fires. Part of the plan was the installation of a fire bell in order to alert park workers, spread across the vast acreage, that a fire had broken out. The hatchery's new belfry was constructed, and mounted within it, a repurposed bell.

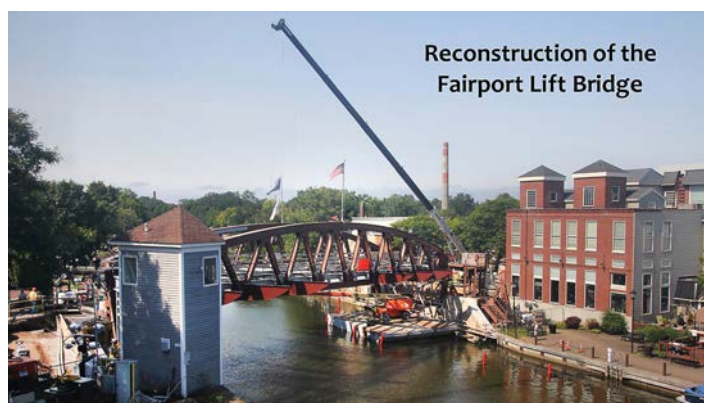
According to a news report from the 1930s, the bell first served at the Rand Powder Mills, although its original purpose was not identified. One thing is for certain, it would not have been necessary to ring a bell to alert employees to an explosion at the powder mills. The blast itself would be notice enough. Perhaps during the company's heyday, the clanging of the bell simply called workers to the dining hall, when two or three dozen men labored in the manufacture of explosive powder.

Whatever its original purpose might have been, the presence of the old bell provides a tangible connection to the old mill operation, which eventually gave its name to Powder Mills Park.



Early in 1937: The belfry is on sawhorses and about to be mounted on the roof of the hatchery building. Park foreman George Goss Smith (1877–1951) inspects the bell. A news item at that time stated that the bell "will sound the breakout to summon workmen to combat the blaze."

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle
February 3, 1937

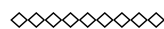


Reconstruction of the Lift Bridge

This program will be presented by Dominic Sherony at 2:30 p.m. on December 4th in the downstairs program room of the museum.

The Fairport lift bridge was rebuilt over a 22-month period beginning in September of 2019. Dominic Sherony documented this reconstruction in photographs for the Perinton Historical Society. The project involved replacing 80% of the original bridge. Dominic will describe how this was accomplished without actually removing the bridge. The reconstruction involved many steps, some with difficult problems, which will be explained. Photos will highlight the reconstruction process, as well as those parts of the bridge that are not visible from street level.

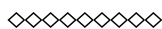
Dominic Sherony was born and grew up in northern Illinois. He attended the University of Detroit and Illinois Institute of Technology, completing graduate degrees in Chemical Engineering. During his employment of 31 years with Xerox Corp., Dominic took up bird watching as a hobby and has been an active birder since his retirement. When the reconstruction of the lift bridge began, Dominic decided to create a photo story of the reconstruction with an emphasis on what, why, and how the project was carried out.



GRITWORX Designs Team to be at the Museum

Saturday, December 3rd at 10:30 a.m.,
selling some of their beautiful artisan woodwork and custom laser designs

GRITWORX created the amazing trivets (see photos above) featuring Fairport's lift bridge and Kennelley Park. These are now for sale in the museum gift shop. For more information about this Perinton business, visit gritworxdesigns.com.



Final Bidding for Gift Baskets on Tuesday, December 6th

We are so appreciative to all the individuals, organizations and businesses that donated gift baskets to Yuletide Traditions 2022 (see page 7). Final bidding takes place from 6:00–7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6th. Visitors are then invited downstairs to the program room for the annual PHS holidays party, with entertainment by Meredith Stockman-Broadbent featuring a sing-along of Christmas tunes. Silent auction winners will be announced following the festivities.





Yuletide Traditions

The PHS holiday fundraiser

With Appreciation

to the individuals, organizations and businesses
that donated to Yuletide Traditions:

Arbor Venues
Ann & Harold Castle
Kathy Cloonan
Colonial Belle
The Corner Bookstore
Fairport Historical Club
House Tour Committee 2022
Cindy & Bob Hunt
Kay & Bob Joslyn
Suzanne Lee & Wes Harris
Joyce Lyle
Lyons National Bank
Sharon Marang
Erin McCormick
Lucy & John McCormick
Marianne & Joe Michaud
Wendy Murray
Vicki Masters Profitt
Riki's & Lucy McCormick
Renee Santoleri
Sue & Dave Scheirer
Laura Schmidt
Sue Templeton
Anonymous

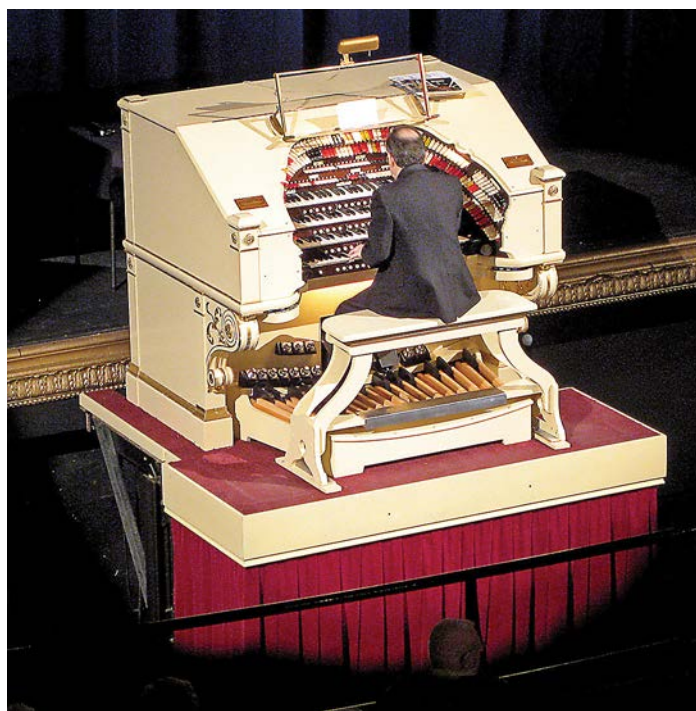
Yuletide Traditions Fundraiser

**– Nearly Three Dozen Entries –
Bidding ends December 6th**



For the Birds

Gift basket donated
by Marianne and
Joe Michaud



Rochester's Best Kept Secret **Unveiling the Mighty Wurlitzer Theatre Organ**

Witness the history and sounds of one of Rochester's best kept secrets! The Auditorium Theatre is home to a 94-year old, world-class theatre pipe organ. Installed in the RKO Palace Theatre in 1928 to accompany silent films, the Mighty Wurlitzer theatre organ entertained movie and concert-goers for years before falling silent. Enthusiastic volunteers resurrected the sleeping giant years later and rescued it from the wrecking ball before the 1965 demolition of the RKO Palace, forming the all-volunteer Rochester Theater Organ Society (RTOS). Today, you can experience the excitement and grandeur of this magnificent, historical instrument (and technological wonder!) at concerts performed by both accomplished and budding theatre organists from across the country and around the world.

Chris Van Stean has been a member of the RTOS since the 1990s and a board member since 2014. She has served as director, secretary, and currently, president. Chris is a University of Rochester graduate and was employed by the university for 37 years prior to retirement.

**Tuesday, January 17th, 7:00 p.m.
at the Fairport Public Library**

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/916202> or call the library at 585-223-9091. Registration begins December 1st.

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*Jolly
Snowman*

Donated by
Kay and Bob
Joslyn



*Serious Chocolate
Chippers*

Gift basket donated
by Lucy McCormick

Treasurer's Report

By Linda Wiener

The following is a summary of the financial status of the Perinton Historical Society for the fiscal year ended 8/31/22:

Income

Membership Dues	\$ 18,925
Donations	10,077
Grants	8,358
Special Events	6,071
Gift Shop	0,019
Other Income	1,044
Interest Income	<u>26</u>

Total Income \$ 46,520

Expense

Building	\$ 6,945
Museum Operations	5,295
Office Expense	3,833
Fundraising & Events	3,103
Museum Collections	2,615
<i>Historiogram</i>	2,134
Gift Shop	1,334
Insurance	1,333
House Tour	1,090
Membership	672
Programs	625
Chairs & Carpet	<u>13,073</u>

Total Expense \$ 42,052

Net Income/(Loss) \$ 4,468

Net Assets:

Cash & Equivalents	\$ 71,451
Gift Shop Inventory	7,563
Community Foundation Funds	<u>86,070</u>
Total Assets	<u>\$165,084</u>

Sales Tax Payable	\$ 82
Deferred Revenue	14,604
Temporarily Restricted Funds	86,567
Unrestricted Net Assets	<u>63,831</u>

Net Assets **\$165,084**

Notes:

Cash & equivalents include funds in bank accounts and CDs that are available in one year or less. Of this \$71,451 as compared to \$60,843 on 8/31/21 was held in checking and money market accounts. The Community Foundation Funds are available upon written approval from the PHS Board of Directors. These funds are considered long-term investments. The value of these funds was \$86,071 on 8/31/21 as compared to \$99,225 on 8/31/21. The interest and dividends earned are returned to PHS annually in the form of a grant, which totaled \$4,608 for 2022 and \$4,801 for 2020. Deferred revenue is exclusively related to 2021–22 membership dues received prior to 9/1/22. These funds are recorded on the balance sheet at year-end. On 9/1/22 the balance is reported as membership dues income for 2021–22.

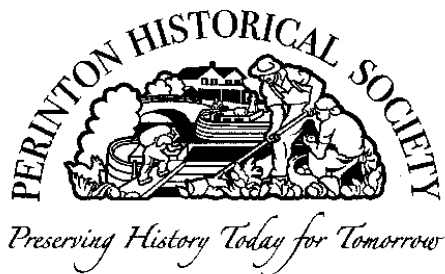
The Society's primary sources of income are from membership dues, grants and donations. Primary expenses include general operations of the museum including building maintenance, gift shop and membership programs (e.g. *Historiogram*, annual meeting, House Tour).

Income was up \$17,522 over the previous fiscal year. Due to the lifting of COVID restrictions, the Society held two successful fundraisers in 2022: Yultide Traditions and the Colonial Belle Tour, which accounted for approximately \$6,000 of this increase. Additional income from memberships was up \$2,200, donations were up \$4,900, and grants were up \$3,000.

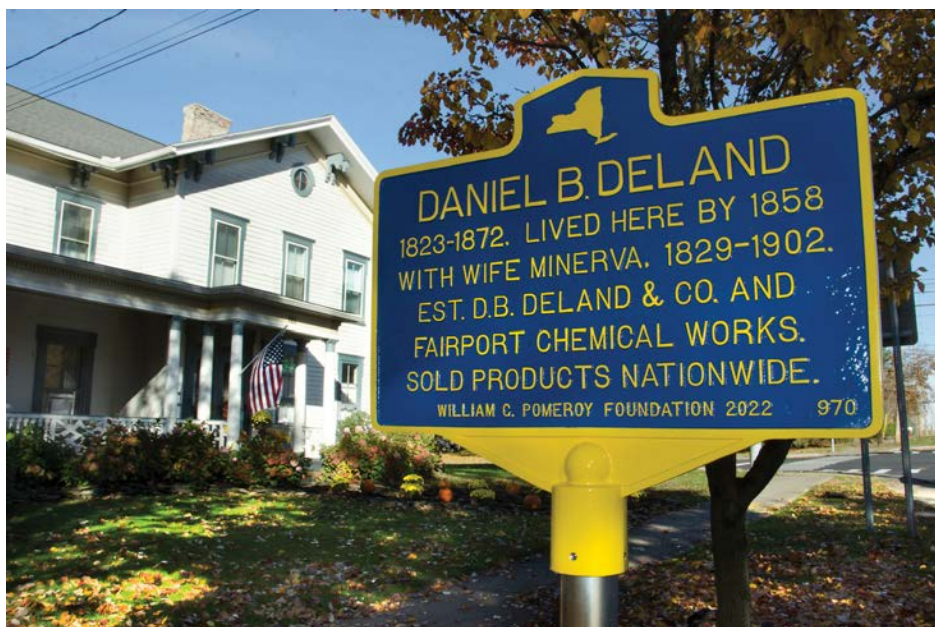
With reopening of the museum and events, expenses increased \$23,800 over the prior year. The museum purchased chairs and carpeting for the downstairs room for \$13,000. Other expenses with measurable increases include gift shop cost of goods sold (\$1,300), building (\$2,900), office (\$2,400) and special events (\$3,000).

PHS files and pays New York State sales tax annually for income related to gift shop sales, files 1099s with the IRS to report payments to certain vendors that exceed \$600, and files an Informational Return (990-N) with the IRS. These filings are current as of 8/31/22. PHS is registered with the New York State Charities Bureau but is exempt from filing an annual return.

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



Historic Marker Commemorates DeLands

Thanks to the generosity of the William C. Pomeroy Foundation, a new historic marker resides at 185 North Main Street—once the home of Daniel B. DeLand and his wife, Minerva Parce DeLand, who established the DeLand family's factory in the village. The business played a significant role in the growth of the community in the mid to late 19th century. The home, owned by Laura and Michael DiCaprio, is a designated Fairport landmark, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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

Through December 10th, museum hours are 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. After December 10th, the museum will be closed to the public for the season. It will reopen in early March of 2023. During this period, you may call Vicki Masters Proffitt at **585-233-1204** or email at director@perintonhistoricalsociety.org to book a group tour or do research.

www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org