



Perinton Historical Society Historiogram

18 Perrin Street
Fairport, NY 14450

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The History of Fairport's Only Statue

By Brady Meixell

The 2012 Peter McDonough Memorial Scholarship was awarded to two Fairport High School seniors this year. Below is Brady Meixell's winning submission. It has been edited to meet space constraints in the HISTORIGRAM. You can read the complete essay at www.perintonhistoricalsociety.org. It is also available in hard copy at the museum.

Since its incorporation in 1867, Fairport has always been a hardworking jewel of a town in upstate New York. Kings of commerce, such as the DeLands, have resided here. A classical composer, Christopher Rouse, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music while living in the area. A graduate of Fairport High School has one an Academy Award for Best Actor (Philip Seymour Hoffman). A watercolorist has captured the mood of the environs, and his posthumous reputation has begun to soar (Carl Peters). Besides its physical beauty, Fairport's history runs deep, from the whispers of the Freedom Trail to the folklore of the Erie Canal.

With so much fame and heritage, no doubt the village is awash in statues glorifying its past. After all, cities and towns and hamlets everywhere are fond of sculpted tributes to their founders, heroes, their favorite daughters and sons. So what does Fairport have in the Statue Department? Well, there are some close approximations. For example, there is a Civil War monument up in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, but it is more of a column or elongated tombstone than a statue. There are cannons at Potter Park, flags and a Huey helicopter and a tank at Freedom Hill. There is also Sal in front of the Police Station, but he is from a Monroe County community art fundraiser known as "Horses on Parade."

No, there is only one real honest-to-goodness chiseled or metal-cast commissioned statue in Fairport. And who does it honor? Mice. Three of them.

"I guess we're not big on statues," Perinton Town Historian Jean Keplinger appraised. "We tend to name streets in honor of people instead" (Keplinger). But wait a minute.... mice?

Bronzed for posterity, they stand in Kennelley Park, in a landscaped garden alongside the Fairport Public Library, near the windows to the Children's section. One of the figures is



Author Ellen Stoll Walsh with scholarship winner Brady Meixell

holding a large artist's paintbrush. Another is stepping forward, as if in mid-lecture, like a rodent version of a Greek orator. The other has its arms spread wide, almost as though signaling a baseball runner is safe at home. They are indeed cute little critters, and certainly worthy of our historical inspection

Because a hundred years from now, people visiting the village of Fairport will pause and ponder these bronzed beauties. They are in a privileged spot, overlooking Main Street and the historic lift bridge, with great views of the nearby bandstand where summer concerts are staged.

Where did they come from? What do they mean? How did these mice invade the annals of Fairport to become the only statue in town?

Continued on page 3

HISTORIGRAM

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~ *Our Mission* ~

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



~ **Bob Hunt** ~

Comments from your President

Greetings! Autumn is my favorite season, with cool clear nights, warm sunny days, and fall colors changing on a daily basis. At this time of year, the farmers' markets are teeming with vegetables, flowers and fruits. We just bought a variety of apples for apple-sauce—always a delight.

We have been busy at your Historical Society as we start another fiscal year, which runs from September 1st to August 31st. Thus memberships are being renewed, we are reviewing and adopting our spending plan (budget) for the coming year, and are planning another exciting year of programs for your enjoyment.

As mentioned in my last column, the board adopted new job descriptions for the museum curator and museum director. Bill Keeler will continue as our curator and Vicki Profitt will be assuming the position of director starting January, 2013. In brief, Bill will be dealing with our collections, preparing exhibits, providing educational programs, overseeing the gift shop, writing historical articles and following best practices suggested by the American Museum Association and the New York State Education Department. The museum director, Vicki, will be providing leadership with the various committees of the society, improving the communication and technology aspects of the museum, seeking out and applying for grants in support of the goals and objectives of the museum, and looking for ways to increase our membership with new approaches to marketing and public relations.

To help us move toward this new direction, we will be holding a special strategy planning meeting on September 25th during which we will be discussing many of these issues and establishing realistic goals. I will provide more information in my next column.

One of our realizations is that our budget will need a bit of additional funding, as we develop these goals for improvement to our museum. Such an opportunity to help raise funds for PHS is coming soon where we are again being asked to provide assistance in serving beverages at the Oktoberfest. We have provided this service in the past with our efforts being rewarded with a check to PHS based on the number of hours worked. So if you can help out on Friday, October 5th, 4:00—11:00 pm, Saturday, October 6th, 4:00—11:00 pm or Sunday, October 7th, noon—6:00 pm, please let me know and I will assign you to a shift. Last year, we made a bit over \$500, but we can do better. Thanks in advance for your help in this area. Past participants have said that it was an enjoyable time.

Lastly, please do not forget our house tour featuring nine homes on West Church Street, 1—5 pm on Sunday, October 14th. This is one of the benefits of membership, so I look forward to seeing you there. Encourage a friend or neighbor to join you and become a member of PHS.

Thanks and will chat with you again next month.

Bob
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Perinton Historical Society

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Let's start with its accompanying plaque. It reads:

Mouse Paint

*Based on the characters from the book, Mouse Paint, by Fairport author Ellen Stoll Walsh. Commissioned by the Fairport Public Library
Dexter Benedict, Sculptor
April 2002*



Two of the three statues and plaque in Kennelley Park

She lives in a home somehow appropriate for a classic children's book writer, complete with a diagonal square tower — a kind of small turret — above the front porch. Officially the house was built in 1902 by C.F. Parmalee, though some have claimed it was established in the late 1800s. The previous owner, from the 1930s to 1977, was Bessie Kinney, who was the Principal at the old Midvale School on Baird Road. No doubt the educator would approve of the current inhabitant ("West").

After knocking on her door, Ellen Stoll Walsh nearly bounded down the stairs and let me in with a smile. (I had called ahead for an appointment, and she was expecting my arrival.) In her sixties, she appears younger and at times almost ageless because of her inquisitiveness and flow of creative energy. At first she may seem slightly shy, but then you realize she is busy thinking all the time. There is a positive feeling about her — a kind of overriding fascination with the world.

We sit down in her living room and begin with the general facts. She's written seventeen children's books, half of them revolving around her famous mice characters. "That's what people want," she says with mock resignation.

Most of the stories are illustrated using cut-paper assemblies of vibrant colors. The characters appear to be simple, but close scrutiny shows otherwise. Each animal connotes a motion and expression with remarkably spare details. With

equally sparse but beautifully crafted words accompanying the panels, her style creeps up on the reader and involves the imagination. *Evocative* might be the best description of her pictures and prose. Also fun and educational.

The plots, likewise, seem simple. Mice spill paint and their little feet mix the pigments into new color evolutions. Frogs and salamanders get crazily uneven on a teeter-totter to teach us about balance in life. Animals constantly have to adapt to unexpected changes. Their Eden becomes troubled, then through adjustment or understanding, the landscape becomes livable and satisfying again. The reader slowly realizes: there are layers here, complexities, inner lessons going on beneath the surface. The books often seduce, then surprise and challenge us. They underscore awareness and responsibility. They are pleasant, yet thought-provoking, much like Ms. Walsh herself.

Her books have now been translated into a whopping thirteen languages and are distributed across the globe. "I'm very proud of all the translations," she tells me, "That just doesn't happen a lot with this kind of children's book." Because of the prose style, most of her readers probably range from six-months to five years old.

I ask about the number of books out there.

"I'm not really sure of the sales figures," she admits, "I was told quite some time ago that *Mouse Paint* has sold over a million copies. But that was years ago. I'm not sure what it's at now. It remains very popular."

Her books also are a mainstay in libraries, and in the classroom, where they have become ideal teaching vehicles. It seems staggering... *seventeen* books, in *thirteen* languages? And just one of them has sold well over a million copies? Some of the best books in publishing history never came close to that number. *The Great Gatsby* originally had meager sales: when F. Scott Fitzgerald died in 1940, it was no longer even in print. And very few authors ever have their fictitious characters put on pedestals in parks and town squares. Maybe Huckleberry Finn. Scrooge and Tiny Tim. Alice in Wonderland. Perhaps Harry Potter, a Cat in the Hat, or a Hans Christian Anderson homage somewhere. This is rarified air indeed. I quickly realize that in tandem with all her talent, Ellen Stoll Walsh is also quite humble about all this.

(To read Brady's entire paper, visit www.perintonhistoricalsociety.org or visit the Fairport Historical Museum)



The Buffalo

Fairport's Vintage Fire Truck

By Keith Boas

*From 1936 to 1960, one of the major pieces of firefighting equipment for the Fairport Fire Department was a heavy-duty, open-air pumper, affectionately called **The Buffalo**.*



Fairport's vintage 1936 Buffalo pumper
Photo, circa 1950, from the archives of
the Fairport Fire Department

The versatile GMC-chassis truck was given that nickname because it was assembled at the Buffalo Fire Appliance Corporation located in, of course, Buffalo, New York. Founded in 1895, the corporation made an array of firefighting products and served many of the equipment needs of fire departments until 1948 when it manufactured its last firefighting apparatus.

The Buffalo Comes to Fairport.

On June 6, 1935, the *Fairport Herald-Mail* reported that a petition was being circulated for purchasing a new heavy-duty fire truck to replace the fire department's present light-duty truck. Nine months later, in March of 1936, the newspaper wrote "A new fire truck, costing \$4,950, was purchased and paid for out of current funds."

For several years, the Buffalo truck was stationed at the main fire station, now part of the Fairport Village Hall on South Main Street.

But eventually, as newer, larger trucks came on the scene, the Buffalo was relegated to the little Northside Fire Station on North Main Street, which had been constructed in 1938. According to an April, 1938 article in the *Herald-Mail*, the village board budgeted \$2,000 for the building, to be located between the railroad tracks and Parce Avenue.

Fairport Herald-Mail April, 1938

The proposed building is of brick and concrete blocks, one story high, 17 by 62 feet, standing on the 20-foot front lot owned by the village, and will be a splendid addition to the firefighting facilities on the north side of the village. It will have a 12-foot opening in front and will be large enough to house two trucks if need be, and also furnish a polling place for election purposes in the future.



The Northside Fire Station, once home of the fire department's vintage Buffalo pumper, is now the headquarters of the Perinton Food Shelf. 2012 photo

After the completion of Fairport Fire Station No. 2 on East Whitney Road in the 1970s, the little Northside Fire Station was no longer needed by the fire department. Not wanting to part with the aging Buffalo truck, the fire department continued to find indoor space for it, moving it, from time to time, between its East Whitney and East Church Street stations. The Buffalo even spent time in a Walworth barn during the major remodeling of the East Church Street station in the late 1990s.

Currently, the old Northside station serves as the home for the Perinton Food Shelf.

The Buffalo Keeps Running.

According to long-time veteran firefighter Jack Peck, the Buffalo received a “new” engine back in the 1950s. The engine was salvaged from a Fairport village dump truck which, while carrying a load of road salt around a curve in the road, met with an unfortunate accident. Speculation has it that the load was a bit too heavy for the truck’s speed at the moment. Damaged extensively, the truck went to the junkyard, but not before its engine—still in good condition—was salvaged and reinstalled into the aging Buffalo.

The Buffalo Retires.

The Buffalo’s time to step down from firefighting duty eventually came, 24 years after arriving in Fairport. On May 4, 1960, the *Herald-Mail* printed the following:

Village Buys New Pumper for North Side

Bids on a new fire truck Monday evening were awarded to American LaFrance Co: The Village Board accepted a bid of \$23,821 for a pumper with a 500-gal. water tank, 275 H.P. and 6 cyl. engine. The new pumper will replace the old Buffalo fire truck in the north-side firehouse.

Since the Buffalo’s retirement from fighting fires back in 1960, members of the Fairport Fire Department have continued to use it for parades, ceremonies, and each year in December, transporting Santa to the Kennelley Park Gazebo to greet local children.



Larry O’Meal, Fairport Fire Department Band drum major, gives a final salute to Don Fox as fellow firefighters carry him from the Buffalo to his gravesite at White Haven Memorial Park in 2009.

Photo by Keith Boas

The Buffalo also has been used at funerals to transport the caskets of several deceased Fairport firefighters. On one occasion, in April of 2009, the old fire truck carried 75-year-old firefighter Donald H. Fox from funeral services at the Church of the Assumption in Fairport to his gravesite at White Haven Memorial Park. Don, who was affectionately known by most people as “Foxy,” was for many years an important firefighting official, at both the local and New York state levels. He also had been one of the custodians of the Buffalo, responsible for its upkeep and frequent community appearances.

In addition, Don was the proud founder of the Fairport Fire Department Band in 1972. His wife, Pat, proudly remembers how Don, when he was healthy, attended every band rehearsal and performance over the span of more than 37 years.



Although retired from active-duty firefighting service now for 52 years, the Buffalo continues to serve our community. Pictured here with the Buffalo is the Fairport Fire Department Band, prior to the July 4th parade in 2011.

Yes, the Buffalo *is* in this photo—somewhere!

Our thanks to the members of the fire department who, for more than a half century, have taken exceptional care of the Buffalo so that residents can continue to enjoy seeing it occasionally on the streets of Fairport.

2011 Photo by Michael Boas

The Ontario Black Cap Raspberry

By William Keeler

Curator of the Fairport Museum

Over the years, plants and plant varieties have been discovered, developed and propagated in the fertile soil of Fairport and Perinton. Among the many discoveries here was a single stalk of red wheat, which was found in the middle of a rotting stump. The seed from this plant was sown for several years and developed into a new strain of hardy wheat. In the 1930s, George Hart found a mutation in a shipment of Talisman roses. He took the mutation and developed the Mary Hart Rose in 1932. This rose went on to become the first New York State rose to be patented under the new United States Plant Patent law. Another rose breeder, Thomas Motose, developed 10 different varieties of roses from his home on Pleasant Street in the village from 1954 to 1958. In the 1870s, Thomas Ramsdell found a unique apple tree growing on his farm on Mason Road and named it the Rose Red. Thomas sold grafted trees of this variety from his nursery in Egypt and shipped them west to his other nursery in Adrian, Michigan.

One chance discovery of a unique berry was by a farmer by the name of Edmund E. Lord. In 1866, E.E. Lord discovered a unique seedling of a black raspberry on his property just outside the village of Fairport. The raspberry varied in color. It could range between a light color purple to a dark purplish brown with white on the inside of the cap when picked. The berries measured nearly three quarters of an inch in diameter. They were sweet, rich in flavor, firm with few seeds, and the cane was highly productive. Lord was encouraged by his friends to develop the variety. He took the berry bush to the family farm just west of the village of Newark in Wayne County between Mud Creek and the Erie Canal. Here he put the plant through a series of trials to see if it would be productive in different soil and weather conditions. Six years later, E.E. Lord was ready to have his new variety examined by pomological experts. He named the variety the Ontario Black Cap and sent samples to the most famous horticulturists of his day, Charles Downing and J.J. Thomas. Both gave good reviews of the berry for personal use. Thomas, however, considered the color of the berry to be too dull and unappealing to be of use in the marketplace. By 1873, the plant was recognized in Michigan and New York State Pomological Societies as a viable raspberry variety.

In 1871, the Ontario Black Cap was being offered for sale to nurseries and amateur growers across the country from Lord's small berry farm in Newark. An advertisement in the *Newark Courier* in 1871 calls the Ontario Black Cap the "Very Best Yet in Cultivation." The plants were sold individually for 30 cents a plant or \$3.00 per dozen. Testimonials



The Ontario Black Cap Raspberry plant from the *Second Annual Report of the Michigan State Pomological Society, 1872*

about the berry would be sent by mail or by visiting the Clark Company Mitten Factory in Newark where the brochure could be picked up.

There is no mention of this raspberry after the 1870s and no nursery seems to have carried the plant in their catalogs. Like many local varieties from the 19th century, the Ontario Black Cap Raspberry is no longer cultivated in the United States. It fell out of favor and has not been seen in decades. However, it is still possible that the plant survives today in the wild in some remote corner of Perinton or Newark, New York.



42nd Annual House Tour

By Deb Mabry

As you all know, our 2012 House Tour will showcase some of the beautiful homes on West Church Street. This event will be held on Sunday, October 14, 2012, from 1:00 to 5:00 pm.

In addition to the eight homes (numbers 17, 48, 84, 88, 116, 117, 128 and 140) that were previously reported to be on the tour, we are thrilled to add 100 West Church Street, which will make the tour one of the largest we have ever held. The tour is a wonderful benefit to members of the Perinton Historical Society, and you must have your brochure, which is your ticket, with you to gain admittance to the nine homes. Your brochure is being mailed to you under separate cover, so be on the lookout for it in your mailbox.

If you want to have friends and family join you on the tour, they need to become members of PHS. We have provided membership forms at the Fairport Historical Museum on Perrin Street, the Fairport Library, Perinton Town Hall and the Fairport Village Hall. I will also be offering memberships at the Fairport Farmers' Market on Saturday, September 29th. In addition, we are holding a reception with refreshments at the Fairport Historical Museum from 2:00 to 5:00 pm on the day of the tour. Please stop in and join us.

We hope that you will enjoy your visit to West Church Street, as you participate in this extraordinary event. Please note that you will probably see folks with gold name tags; they are the owners of our lovely tour houses. Please take a



100 West Church Street



48 West Church Street



140 West Church Street

moment to thank them for opening their beautiful properties to PHS members. The people with orange name tags are our volunteer tour docents— don't hesitate to thank them as well, for contributing to the effort! We wouldn't have the tour without them. I've given them approval to bump the lines to the homes so please be gracious and let them do so.

As Committee Chairperson, I will be reaching out to the house docents with their scheduled assignments, so if you haven't heard from me by October 1st, please call me at 738-7866 or e-mail me at dmabry@nixonpeabody.com.

Thank you,

Deb





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Fairport Historical Museum

18 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 14450

The museum is open to the public on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays on the hours listed below. If you want to do research or have other needs at the museum on other days and/or times, you may make an appointment. Call and leave a message at 585-223-3989. Group tours, presentations and special projects are by appointment.

HOURS

Sunday 2 pm - 4 pm

Tuesday 2 pm - 4 pm

Thursday 7 pm - 9 pm

www.PerintonHistoricalSociety.org