



# PERINTON HISTORIGRAM

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## Calendar of Coming Events

Tuesday, January 18 -- Meeting at the Fairport Public Library, 7:15 p.m. Registration is a must! (See details below.)

Tuesday, February 15 -- Meeting at the Museum, 7:30 p.m. Change in speaker & program-- We will have Peter McDonough with us to talk about antique toys and toy collecting.

Tuesday, March 14 -- Pot Luck Dinner and Auction at the Museum. Start looking around now for items which would be fun to have at the auction to stimulate bidding. We've had some great things donated in the past.

## January Meeting -- 7:15 p.m. at the Fairport Public Library

Note that the meeting will be at the library, not at the museum, and that it will begin at 7:15 p.m. so that we can be out of the library by their closing time at 9. Registration is a must for this January 18th meeting. Call the library at 223-9091 to register.

Our speaker will be Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck, who is the Rochester City Historian. She has recently written a book about the Genesee River called "Runnin' Crazy," in which she tells of her search for the spirit of the river. She will also talk about the lore of the Erie Canal as it relates to the river.

This should be a fascinating talk. It will be publicized to the general public, so if you want a seat, be sure to register!

## New Members

We welcome Cynthia Coupal of Fairport and also Judy Roach of Fairport. We hope to get a chance to greet them at future meetings.

## A Wonderful Gift

The Perinton Historical Society recently received a check for \$500 from the Fairport-Perinton Merchants Association, Jan Dwyer, President. The letter said "In recognition of the Perinton Historical Society's service to our community. We hope it will assist you in reaching your goals."

Anne Johnston is the society's representative to the Merchants Association. She is working hard with this group in their endeavors. We're sure the donation is due in no small part to her presence in the association.

We are certainly grateful to the merchants for their recognition.

## Report of November Meeting

President Bill Matthews drew the audience's attention to the bulletin board where photographs were posted of the recent move of "Stop 22" to a place down nearer to the

### Report of November Meeting (continued)

canal bank docks. Those familiar with "Stop 22" will recall that it was one of the shelters used by the Rochester, Syracuse & Eastern Railway, the trolley line that ran through Fairport in the early 1900s. It was discovered out in the country by Bill Matthews several years ago and given to the Perinton Historical Society by its owner, Nancy Baldwin. Bill spent many hours restoring it, after which it was given by the society to the Village of Fairport and placed in Packetts Landing for use as a dock-master's office. Bill has turned the shelter into a small museum. When it is open again in the summer, those of you who have never visited it should stop by and take a look around inside. It is a fine example of individuals working to save historic structures which can be adapted to a new use.

Bill's "historic five minutes" concerned his delving into a trunk in his home recently to find some photographs for a niece. He found that many of the interesting photos had no identification. He urged us to be sure to identify people in the photos we save so that future generations will know who they were. He also urged everyone to go see what they have in their attic.

Our speaker, Charles Miller, had a fascinating tale to tell us. Mr. Miller's hobby is researching the presidents of the United States. He has visited almost all of the homes of the presidents and collected pictures, historical facts, and amusing anecdotes about these men. His particular topic on this evening was the campaign of 1840, which he described as "the wildest political campaign ever." The Democratic candidate was the incumbent, Martin VanBuren. He had been Andrew Jackson's vice president. When he was elected to succeed Jackson he was the last sitting vice president to be elected until George Bush. Running on the Whig party (which later became the Republican party) was William Henry Harrison, whose main claim to fame was that he had defeated a band of Indians at Tippecanoe in 1811. In those days, people called "slam wangers" were hired to do the campaigning. No candidate ever campaigned for himself. But Harrison did, the first one to do so. His running mate was John Tyler, hence the slogan "Tippecanoe (as Harrison was known) and Tyler, Too." Harrison won the election, but just 32 days after the inauguration festivities he caught pneumonia and died. John Tyler succeeded him and turned out to be a very flamboyant president. His second wife, Julia, was 30 years younger than he. She loved to promote herself. After the Civil War she became friends with Mrs. Grant, to whom she gave a portrait of herself. Mrs. Grant had it hung at the White House, thus beginning the tradition of a First Ladies gallery there.

Mr. Miller was a wonderful speaker. We can't wait to have him back again sometime. One of his topics is "Presidential Scandals" which everyone thought would be most enticing.

Helen Matthews provided the delicious refreshments after the meeting.

### Report of December Christmas Party

The Merriman-Clark Room at the museum was beautifully decorated for Christmas by Anne Johnston and May Thomson. Guests sat at small tables, each table adorned with a holiday centerpiece and a red candle.

Bill Matthews welcomed all, and reminded us that this was a special day -- Pearl Harbor Day. He had put up a display of World War II posters from the museum collection. Bill talked a bit about the numbers of casualties and the ships which had been sunk on that day.

Report of December Christmas Party (continued)

We were delightfully entertained by a string quartet of Fairport High School students, all pupils of Ken Brown who is not only a teacher at the high school but also a member of the Perinton Historical Society. The group played pieces by Vivaldi, Dvorak, and Bach, ending with a selection of Christmas carols which the audience enjoyed singing. It was especially instructive to have Ken Brown tell us a bit about the background of the pieces performed.

We were all struck by the talent of the young performers. Jerrold and Marjorie Gearhart, who are grandparents of the first violinist, were in attendance, beaming proudly as they had every right to do!

Helen Matthews, Bernadette McDonough, and Jean Wilson served the especially tasty holiday goodies.

It was a fine way to start the Christmas season.

Bill Matthews Writes a Letter

Dear Mrs. Merriman:

In these last days of the 20th century, I'm reminded that it has been sixty-eight years since the Trolley last rumbled across North Main Street in Fairport, and an era passed into oblivion. And it has been about sixty-one years since the Fairport Public Library opened its doors on Perrin Street to serve the community -- but I hardly need to remind you of that since your name is incised on the wall of the foyer.

Sixty-four years have passed since you and some other ladies began to do some local historical research, and in due time the result was the Perinton Historical Society. Since you charted the course of the society for many years, I'll fast-forward to the late 1970s, when it became possible for the society to lease the library building from the Village of Fairport and thereby obtain a home that could and did become the Fairport Historical Museum. Not only did we get a place to meet and display our artifacts, but we became stewards of a marvelous architectural gem, an artifact in itself!

As the new century begins, we are involved in researching material for a pictorial history of Fairport, something that has been needed for some time. Computers, never dreamed of even a few years ago, are coming to the museum now. These are machines for storing data of all kinds and, according to the experts, we can't get along without them. Somehow you and Miss Clark managed.

Another acquisition coming our way in the near future is a genuine old-fashioned out-house, built of brick, no less. Moving and restoring this quaint little building will be a challenging project in the new year. And canal history, long a staple of the society, will get another boost in the summer of 2000 when an International Canal Conference is held in Rochester.

I've forgotten to mention to you that another twenty-year-old tradition is the annual tour of homes each October when generous people open their homes to society members.

So, you see, what you brought into being is still going on, thanks to knowledgeable and caring people down through the years.

Sincerely,

Bill Matthews, President  
Perinton Historical Society

For those who are new in the society, a word of explanation about Bill's letter might be in order.

Marjorie Snow Merriman was born in 1886 in the DeLand mansion (now the Green Lantern Inn). Her home from 1925 on was in the salt-box style house adjacent to the post office on Ayrault Road. She became a student and researcher of Perinton lore, contributing her extensive material to the historical society, which she helped found. Her name is not only on the Provisional Charter in the museum but also carved on the same wall as a member of the Library Board in 1938. Mrs. Merriman died in 1966.

Her friend and associate, Adelaide J. Clark, is also listed on the 1950 Provisional Charter. Miss Clark was born in 1897 and died in Florida in 1988 at 91 years of age. One of her many accomplishments was the design of the historical society seal, or logo, which was adopted at the first trustees' meeting October 5, 1950. She also did the drafting work for the 1852 Perinton map researched by Mrs. Merriman, a legacy that we have for sale in the museum gift shop.

These ladies were honored in 1997 when the downstairs meeting room of the museum was named "The Merriman-Clark Room." Portraits of them with brief biographical information hang on the east wall of the room.

Perinton Historical Society  
18 Perrin Street  
Fairport, New York 14450

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