

## From Fullam's Basin to Perinton Park (Part 2)

After years of neglect, a former dumping ground at the old Fullam's Basin was transformed during the Great Depression to become the newly christened Fairport Park. The location, adjacent to the canal by the Fairport Road bridge, is precisely where Perinton Park is found today. The Rotary Club initiated a petition requesting that the village develop the tract of land for the benefit of residents. A committee was formed, with Rotary's Sam Jacobson at the helm. The Monroe County Park Commission developed plans, working with landscape architect Robert Chamberlain, who also redesigned the grounds at the George Eastman House. Most of the cost of the park was accommodated through the use of Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds and labor.

Fairport's new twelve acre triangular-shaped park was constructed from 1932 to 1933. The park's three sides bordered Fairport Road, the canal, and the tracks of the New York Central railroad. Roads were constructed, with access from both O'Connor Road and Fairport Road. Tennis courts were built, and were popular from the start.



Drinking fountains, fireplaces, and picnic tables were placed on the grounds, and hundreds of trees and shrubs were planted. A parking area with capacity for sixty cars was added, and just enough land was left for a baseball diamond. In the first year, picnicking and tennis proved to be the most popular activities at the park.

The American Legion, with help from the Rotary Club, devised a plan to place an eighty foot flagpole and two decommissioned cannons adjacent to the canal. The 1,800 pound guns were procured from the Watervliet arsenal. The cost of the flagpole was \$220, and was paid for through donations.

Clark Bly, a laborer at the can factory on Parce Avenue, was the first to camp at the new park. Upon returning from a trip to the Adirondacks, he came home to discover the new recreation spot, and pitched his tent. It was reported that Bly was “fully satisfied that it is OK and like a great many others believes it will prove a great asset for Fairport”. Along with campers, tennis and baseball players, and picnickers, scores of hunters and their dogs also roamed the park, primarily in search of pheasant.

In June of 1934, Rotary’s Sam Jacobson noted, “There can be little question that the park is a more desirable landmark than the old dump was”. But as the Depression dragged on, funding to maintain the park was a low priority, and it soon became overgrown and neglected. Without watering, trees and shrubs planted just two years earlier died. The final nail in the coffin of Fairport Park was driven by liability fears of an accident or drowning. A fence was recommended to protect visitors from the canal, and finally, municipal leaders had enough. With the exception of the baseball diamond, the park was essentially abandoned.

Next: A derelict park comes back to life

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