

From Fullam's Basin to Perinton Park (Part 3)

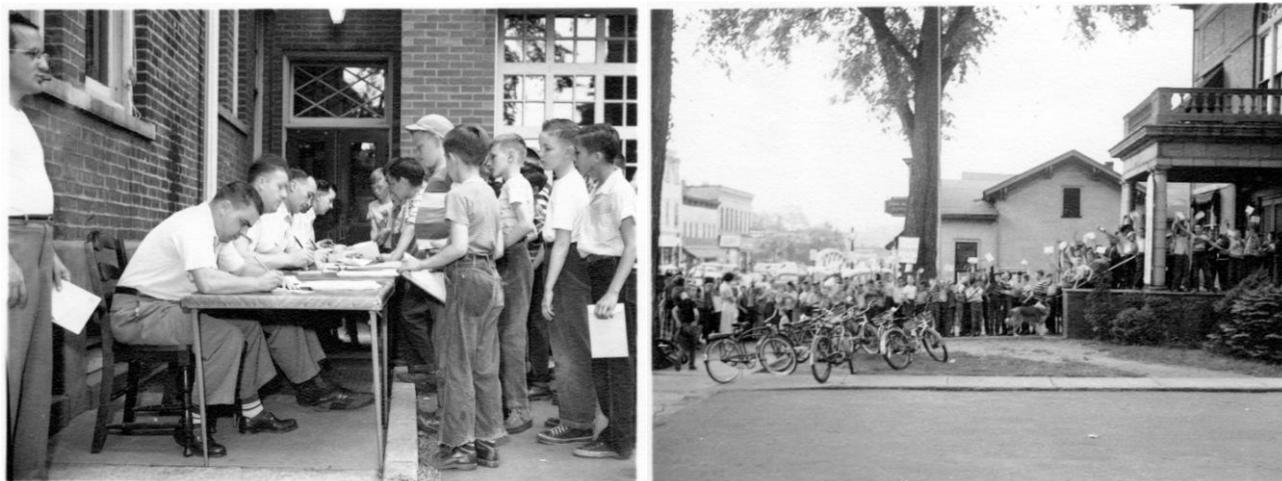
The topic of two previous columns centered on the creation of Fairport Park, established in the midst of the Great Depression on the parcel of land where Perinton Park now resides. This land was once part of the early canal hamlet known as Fullam's Basin. A beautiful recreation area was created, but without funding to maintain the park, it soon became neglected. Fairport Park disappeared under a tangled mess of overgrown vegetation. Meanwhile, when Frederick Potter died in 1943 he left his home and grounds to the village for the establishment of a community center. This was a wonderful gift, but the creation of a new park just a half mile east accelerated the decline of Fairport Park.



May, 1951: volunteers clear trees, brush and debris from Fairport Park to create first Little League field

The establishment of Little League baseball in Fairport helped to revive the abandoned park at Fullam's Basin. Fairport Rotary was a driving force in creating the park in the early 1930s, and almost twenty years later Rotary was involved again, when members Hal Scoby, Leslie Harris and Doctor James Welch were appointed to develop a plan for the league. A proper playing field was a necessity, and the southwest corner of the overgrown park was selected for the location of the new ball diamond. The Fairport Little League Executive Board, led by Todd Malcom, encouraged "those interested in the kids' welfare" to pitch in and help, and "bring shovels, rakes, picks and muscles". The volunteers worked to clear the overgrown jungle, transforming it into a fine playing field.

The new league consisted of four teams, sponsored by Rotary, Fairport Fire Department, the Lions Club and the Masons. With great fanfare the new diamond hosted its first game on June 28th, 1951. The VFW band led a parade from the West Avenue High School to the park. Cub Scouts manned the concession stand, and the VFW color guard raised the American flag. In the first game at the new field, 600 fans saw John Masciangelo pitch a one hitter, as the Rotary team routed the Fireman.



1951: Boys sign up for the first year of Little League at the Town Hall on South Main Street, Fairport

Two years later, the Fireman defeated the Lions on Opening Day of 1953, behind the shutout pitching of another Masciangelo, this one named Roger. After all these years, his fastball may have lost a bit of velocity, but Roger still gives a darn good haircut on North Main Street. Just prior to the game, the diamond at Fairport Park was officially named Marsh Field. The honor was bestowed upon David Marsh, a thirteen year old local boy, whose strength in the face of great medical challenges was an inspiration to the community. He died in 1964, a few days before his 24th birthday, and is remembered with a historic marker at the site where countless kids played baseball on Marsh Field, in Fairport Park.

Next: From Little League to Perinton Park

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

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