

GEORGE FILKINS – FAIRPORT DEVELOPER

George Southworth Filkins was born in 1838 in Penfield, New York, to Isaac and Catherine Southworth Filkins. The Filkins family had come from England in 1697 to settle in Dutchess County. By the early 1800's, they had relocated to Penfield in western New York. Isaac was a cooper and his products filled a large demand created by the newly opened Erie Canal. He could fashion at least 3 barrels a day out of the area's abundant hickory and oak.



Filkins farmhouse, formerly on the site of Minerva DeLand School

Isaac and Catherine had at least five children: Thomas, Isaac O., Mary Elizabeth, Jacob, and George Southworth. Relocating in Michigan, Thomas was a cooper by trade and also had a freight business. Isaac and his family settled in Texas, Mary Elizabeth married and moved to Wayne County, and the youngest two sons remained in Fairport. Like most young men his age, George enlisted upon the outbreak of the Civil War. He served two years with the 113th New York Volunteers, Company B, seeing active duty in a number of battles. Mustered out in 1865, by 1869 he had settled in Fairport at 43 West Church Street and had married Adah Benedict.

George and Adah had two children, Allen G. and Ernest. Blessed with prodigious energy and personal integrity, George “hewed his way to success and to an honored place among his fellow men.” He began development of a large tract of land south of Church Street now known, appropriately enough, as Filkins and George Streets. He liked working in brick, and between 1874 and 1876 had built two houses, 166 South Main, where he lived until 1881, and 164 South Main Street. He most likely built #160 as well. He also built commercial structures further to the north on South Main Street.

Meanwhile his father and mother had moved to Fairport, and when his father Isaac died in 1874, his mother Catherine and a granddaughter Annabel moved in with George and his family. George himself suffered a loss several years later in 1879 when Adah died at the age of 38 leaving behind her husband and two children aged 8 and 11. Catherine stayed to care for her two grandchildren.

In 1881 George and his family moved to Filkins Street and in 1883 he married Mary E. White. They had three children, Anna May, Clarence, and Howard. Grandmother Catherine lived with them until her death in 1886, after which granddaughter Annabel took over the task of housekeeper. By the 1890's, Allen and Ernest were running a grocery and market in the Filkins building at 45 South Main Street. George continued to buy land and build houses. The 1902 map shows much of Filkins and George Street developed with the empty parcels owned by Filkins.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Filkins family was farming a large parcel of land on Hulburt Avenue in the vicinity of today's Minerva DeLand School. Their farmhouse was subsequently moved to 110 Hulburt Avenue where George lived with his sons Clarence and Howard, his daughter Anna May, and his niece Annabel, who kept house.

George Filkins died in 1917 at the age of 78. Remembered as a successful entrepreneur, he was also a village trustee for many years and a member of the Raymond Baptist Church (Fairport Community Baptist). His legacy lives on in the several brick houses and elegant farmhouse at 110 Hulburt Avenue that still stand and in the two streets he named for himself.

