

How Was My House Moved?

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10/20/2016

A surprising number of structures have been picked up and moved in Fairport and Perinton. While it is a rarity today, it was much more common in earlier times. Many people wonder how these buildings were moved, especially in earlier times before the advantages of heavy equipment.

In order to move a structure, it first needed to be raised off its existing foundation. An illustration from the November, 1873 issue of *American Agriculturist* – “House being raised by screws”, shows workers operating jacks in multiple positions to lift a building. Wheeled carriages were then placed under the structure, the wheels rolling on planks placed along the route of the move. Horses, oxen, or farm tractors were often used to pull the structure to its new location. Relocated structures have been pulled down roads of course, but also across ice, and even floated on a lake to reach its destination.



This house at 1116 Whitney Road, photographed in about 1940, was moved in about 1890 to make way for the home of Levi DeLand, which later became the Fairport Baptist Home.

Reports of house and building moves were often chronicled in our early newspapers. The Fairport Herald reported in 1911 that “the old trolley station was moved through John Street last night after the cars stopped running, being drawn by John Wemes’ team.” Some translation of this event is required: John Street later became State Street, and is now Lift Bridge Lane. Construction of the “old trolley station” on John Street was halted, in favor a preferred location on North Main Street. It sat unfinished until John Wemes purchased the partially finished building and moved it with his “team”, probably horses, to his property along the towpath near the corner of John and Parker Streets.



In 1954 this home at 110 Hulburt Road was moved by flatbed truck several hundred feet west from where it once stood (left) to allow for the construction of Minerva Deland School. Once moved, it was restored and several additions were completed.

According to a newspaper article from 1903, this small house is said to have been moved four times, and is now at its fifth location, at 18 Filkins Street. It was first on the north bank of the canal, then at two different sites on East Church Street, and then on Perrin Street.



Another 1911 building move was described in the Monroe County Mail, under the headline, “Barn on Wheels.” W. H. Boyland was the proprietor of a mill on North Main Street, relocated to make way for the above mentioned trolley station, the home of the Sew Creative store today. After the mill was moved a few hundred feet to its new location, “Mr. Boyland wished to move a small building at the rear of his mill, to his recently acquired property on John Street, and adopted a unique method with great success.” After the building was jacked up to the proper height and a structure of timbers and wheels fastened beneath it, “a steel cable was attached to the building, and by means of a trolley car as motive power, the improvised truck and its burden were towed down John Street.”

How I wish we had a photo of Boyland’s barn being towed down the street by the Rochester, Syracuse and Eastern trolley!