

A New Home for the Pigeons

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

In search of an adventure, two young friends, both residents of High Street, met on the sidewalk and began the westbound walk down hill, toward North Main Street. Both boys, about ten years old, knew the area well. On the south side of High Street, they passed Felix's Market, and the lure of candy or a slice of pizza. The boys continued on, and crossed the street after a pre-war Dodge sputtered by. Though tempted by the aroma of fresh treats from Sam Sozio's bakery, the boys did not allow themselves to be distracted from their mission.



**FRESH FROM
SAM'S OVEN
TO YOU!**

. . . In fact SO fresh that SAM'S bakery goods are oftentimes still warm when delivered to your door. That's one of the secrets for SAM'S glorious success with you homemakers.

Sam's Bake Shop
73 High St. Fairport Telephone 31-W

The boys cut through the back lot of the old brick Catholic Church, and made their way to the double front doors, just off the sidewalk on East Avenue. Although each had been there countless times before, on this trip, the church was quiet. The boys swung open one of the tall doors, and stepped into the church, illuminated only by sunlight passing through beautiful stained glass windows.

The towering steeple was directly above the front doors. After a few steps, they passed through a second door, then up a few stairs, and finally, through a third, much smaller door. From here, there were no more doors or stairs. In order to proceed higher in the steeple, the boys would need to climb the wooden framework of the tower. Above them, they could see the large church bells, centered between four enormous louvered panels.



Built in 1882 and dedicated the following year, the Church of the Assumption fronted on East Avenue in Fairport. After almost one hundred years, it was replaced by the current church in 1981.

The boys climbed higher up the framework, until they reached the fresh air and light passing through the louvered panels. It was there, high in the steeple, in which they found their prize. The panels not only allowed sun and light to pass through. Pigeons also entered the building through the openings, and roosted high above the congregation.

The boys maintained their balance in the tall steeple high above the earth, and carefully, each gently captured a pigeon. The youngsters began their careful descent, retracing the climb in reverse. They reached the door to the steeple, down the few stairs to another door, and finally, left the church the same way they had entered a few minutes earlier.

The two pigeon-carrying boys ran through the church lot and up the hill on High Street, to one of the boy's homes, where the birds would take up residence. The house was on the south side of the street, with a deep lot that extended all the way to the railroad. The pigeons were carefully placed in the finest homemade coop that ten-year-old boys were capable of building, assembled from scraps of chicken wire and discarded lumber. Subsequent trips to the steeple added to the population, and soon, another generation of pigeons magically appeared in the coop. The newest residents of High Street were well fed. The enterprising boys gathered corncobs from an endless supply spilled from overfilled railway cars, a stone's throw behind the coop.

It is an obscure story, to be sure, and one I could not share, if my barber, Roger Masciangelo, had not told it to me. You see, seventy years ago, he was one of those boys.

Published in December, 2019