

## BAIRD ROAD

### *First of three columns*

The history of the Baird Road parallels that of Perinton itself, first as a pioneer community, then as a rural, farming community, and finally as a residential area, a “trolley subdivision.” Significant areas of farmland and several 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses were located on Baird Road north of Whitney. Baird Road between the Old Rochester Road (Fairport Road) and Whitney Road included a schoolhouse which was established in 1815; the site of one of Perinton’s first mills, built in 1810; a federal-style house built in the 1860's; a stone railroad underpass built in the 1850's; the site of Rochester, Syracuse, and Eastern trolley stop #11; and a number of smaller middle class homes.

The Northrup family was the first to settle in the section of Baird Road south of Whitney. Isaiah Northrup built a sawmill on Thomas Creek in 1810. The Northrup site can be found on the property at number 2729. Northrup’s mill was sold several times and was used as a grist mill, a plaster mill and a flour mill well into the 1880's. Another sawmill was built by Ebenezer Lewis in 1817 on the east side of the road. A group of properties formed around this mill in the 1830's and was referred to as the “Northrup Settlement.”

In 1866, the Northrup lands were sold to Alonzo Cook, who farmed and sold produce for a living. The land was subsequently sold to J.J. Richards, who operated it as Sunnyridge Fruit and Berry Farm. The family ran the farm until 1906. The Wilbur and Hawkins farms bordered Thomas Creek. Herman Steffen owned the farm house at number 2783 and built greenhouses there in 1912. Herman’s son George expanded the farm and grew squash, which he sold to a baby food manufacturer. He also grew tomatoes, raised bees, and grew chrysanthemums, which were sold at Hart’s Flower Shop in Rochester. During World War II, George employed German POW’s from Clyde. When field work was slow, he had them painting his house. However, when a neighbor, who had been supposed to do the painting, complained that the POW’s could not do work which could be done by available Americans, the work stopped. The Steffen land was sold in 1960 and became Island Valley Golf Course. The greenhouses were demolished in 1968 . The Dannenburgs at number 2758 grew cherries, pears, and apples. They also raised annuals in their greenhouses. Their house was torn down in 1970.

Fish’s store, located just south of the railroad overpass, provided groceries and other goods to this self-sufficient community. The farms provided seasonal work for the children and women who needed it. The Midvale School, built in 1883 as a two-room school located at the south end of the district, was not only the educational center, but also the community center. All the children from Baird Road and Midvale Drive attended. The maintenance and support of the school involved the entire community, as did the various school functions. The annual Harvest Dinner would draw all the families in the area who would each contribute a dish to pass. The school was enlarged in 1926 with the addition of three new classrooms and a new front entrance. In the 1940's a basement lunchroom was built and hot lunches were provided. Classrooms in the school were used until 1955. Today the store is gone, but the schoolhouse remains and serves as an office building.

*To be continued*



*Early mill on Baird Road*