

## Horseless Carriage verses Horse on Fairport's West Avenue

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

In Perinton, the year 1899 was a momentous one from an automotive perspective, despite the fact that not a single resident owned an automobile. In the spring, Cleveland inventor and manufacturer Alexander Winton passed through town on his way from Ohio to New York City, driving his own invention, the Winton horseless carriage. At the time, the Winton was one of America's top automobiles, with twenty-two customers in 1898 and over one hundred in 1899. Just a week later, Freeman Bettys of Rochester traveled with his family in his own Winton, navigating the rutted dirt roads to Perinton to visit country cousins. The trip made the news in Fairport, with a report that "the carriage runs along very smoothly on the level, but has some trouble in getting up hills on the country roads."



*A turn-of-the-century view of Fairport's West Avenue, looking to the west, site of the 1899 race between horse and horseless carriage. L.V. Came owned the home to the right.*

The biggest automotive event in 1899 occurred as part of the festivities surrounding the fourth annual convention of the Northern-Central New York Volunteer Fireman's Association. More than 6,000 visitors took in the parades, races and competitions between fire companies. Residents and out-of-towners consumed a massive dinner held in the old shoe factory on Parce Avenue, in the same space that just a few years later became the home of Fairport's can factory.

One of the biggest attractions of the convention was a half-mile race on West Avenue, featuring Ray Bettys, all of seventeen years old, verses fifty-year-old Lucient “L.V.” Came, of 102 West Avenue. Cheering spectators lined the dusty dirt street, for this was a spectacle, a race between a horseless carriage and a horse. Young Bettys drove his father’s Winton automobile, while L.V. Came drove his horse. Contemporary news reports confirmed that the auto reached great speeds, but “it was evident that the horse could have won the race if it had been driven to its limit.”



*A horse and carriage on West Avenue, similar to that used in the 1899 race by L.V. Came.*

Lucient Came died a hero’s death little more than five years after the West Avenue race in which he and his horse lost to a horseless carriage. While waiting at the Fairport station for a passenger train to Rochester, Came pushed an oblivious traveler out of the path of a barreling eastbound locomotive. Once the train had passed, witnesses found the lifeless body of L.V. Came, forty feet east of the station. He saved the traveler, but it cost him his own life.