

From Fullam's Basin to Perinton Park (Conclusion)

Previous columns described the rise and fall of a Depression-era Park on the parcel of land where Perinton Park now resides. After years of neglect the abandoned park virtually disappeared, except for one corner, carved out in 1951 for the use of Little League baseball. A 1957 editorial in the Fairport Herald remembered Fairport Park: "A committee headed by Sam Jacobson undertook its beautification and face lifting. With the aid of WPA (Works Progress Administration) funds and an inspired group they cleared and established a picnic area, tennis courts, and other facilities. It was a great place for an outdoor picnic on a hot summer night. Hundreds of people enjoyed it."

The 1957 editorial challenged the community's citizens and leaders to revive the park, stating, "If Fairport has any aspirations whatsoever toward being a garden spot or a beautiful village it had better get underway." And the community listened, as both the town and village considered the possibility of reestablishing the old park.



Citizens line the bank of Perinton Park during the sesquicentennial celebration of 1962

The establishment of the town's Recreation Commission in July of 1959 led to the creation of several parks and playgrounds within the community. The commissioners (Chairperson Walter Muench, Betty Edwards, Faith Kipers, King Phillips and Pete Pierce) were enthusiastic about bringing the old park back to life, and upon their recommendation, the Town Board agreed. In the spring of 1961, Perinton Supervisor Ken Courtney announced that the new recreation area would be called Perinton Park, although another name, Fullamtown Park, was also considered.

High school students were hired to help clear the land and beautify the property. The Rotary Club, a driving force in the creation of the original Fairport Park, took charge of rehabilitating the abandoned tennis courts. John Dixon of Filkins Street built 12 picnic tables and delivered them to the park, and was paid \$380 for the effort. A rustic Adirondack-style sign was made by the Shepard Showcase Manufacturing Company.

On September 26th, 1961, Lt. Governor Malcom Wilson participated in the rededication of the park. The local newspaper applauded the efforts put forth by the town and community volunteers, stating: "Perinton Park gains the increasing approval of the local citizenry. Neat as a pin and showing signs of good planning, the park is bound to increase in popularity. The town fathers can take a well deserved bow."

Perinton Park was a centerpiece of the town's sesquicentennial celebration in the summer of 1962, when enormous crowds lined the canal's bank to witness an elaborate parade of boats. Perhaps 95 year old Sam Jacobson, who led the initial drive to create the park in 1932, was able to enjoy its reawakening. He passed away a few months later, in December of 1962.

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

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