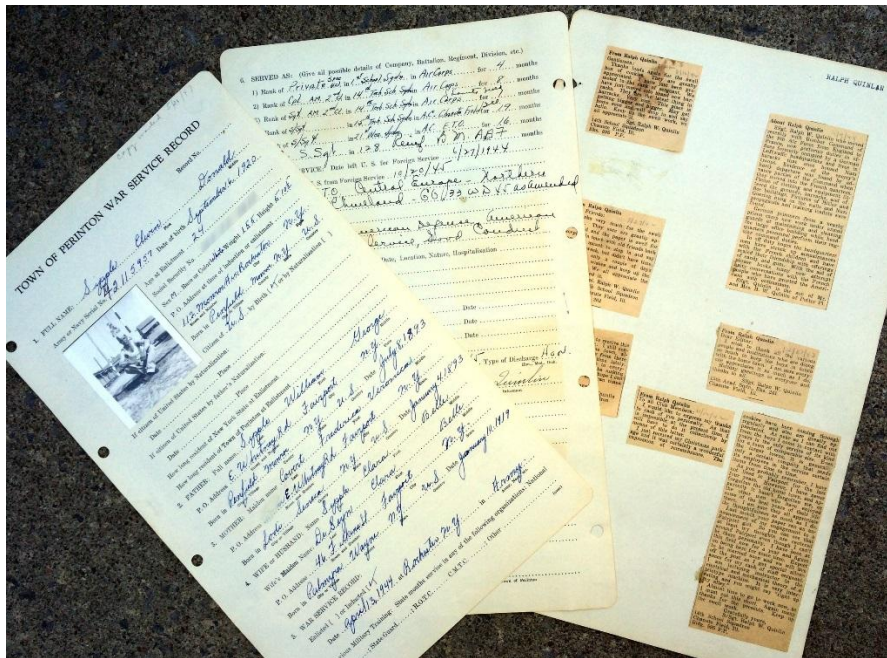


World War II Archive of Perinton Soldiers Shared with Community

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

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A Perinton woman told me recently of her frustration in trying to find records related to her brother, who served in World War II and was killed in battle. Contacts to several government agencies came up empty, and she had given up hope of learning more about her brother's service and military record. For this woman, and many others, the efforts and determination of a war-era town clerk and historian have provided answers and satisfaction. And the answers were right in her hometown.



*An example of
Perinton's WWII
War Service
Record
documentation*

Charlotte Clapp served both as Perinton's historian from 1921 to 1955, and as town clerk from 1924 to 1955. With the surrenders of Germany and Japan in 1945, Clapp began a project to collect information on the service of Fairport and Perinton veterans of the war. The initiative was communicated to residents in Fairport's newspaper in July of 1945: *"Service men and women and their families should be interested in the new record system being kept at the Town Clerk's office by Town Clerk Charlotte Clapp, who is also the official historian for the Village of Fairport and the Town of Perinton. An effort is being made to compile a complete War Service record of every man and woman in Fairport and Perinton. Information about these service men and women and the part they played in this war may be of great value in the years to come."*

Hundreds of individual records reside in the collection, from Raymond Abbot to Edward Zuller. Most of the records include a photograph, names and address of parents, a detailed military service record, and clippings from newspapers during the war. Soldiers typically came to Clapp's office upon returning from service to provide information for the record. In other cases, family members contributed the information, at times after the death of their loved one.

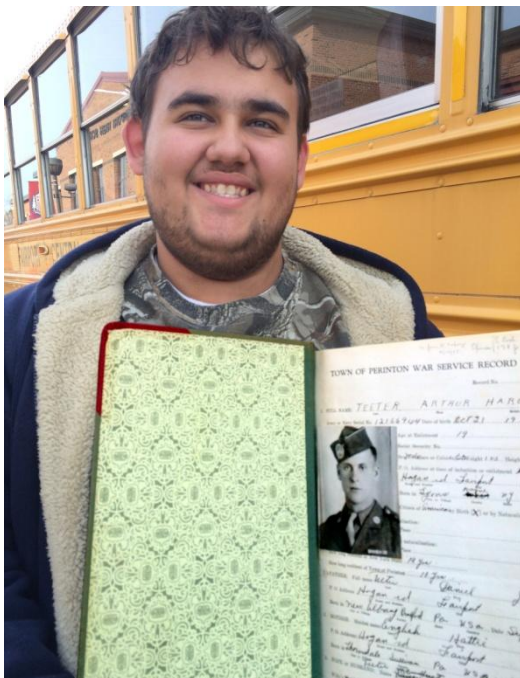
The collection is contained in several large ledger books. For many years after Clapp's tenure the collection was lost and forgotten. A 1986 inquiry by a family researcher led then historian Sue Roberts to track down the collection, which she found in a trunk buried under books in a corner of the town hall's lower level.

This past summer a project was initiated to digitize the collection. The benefits are many, including the creation of a computer backup of the collection, and the ability to easily share the contents with researchers and family members.



Photographs were often included in the Perinton War Service Record for each soldier. Pictured above from left: 1st Lt. Gardner Soule, Cpl. Marie Crane, SSgt. Joseph Saporito, and TSgt. Leon Coon.

Diana Batchelor, a History major at Nazareth College, began the process of digitizing the records, photographs and clippings in the collection, and completed almost half of the documents before returning to college for the fall semester. She plans to continue participating in the digitizing project, and hopefully other volunteers will step forward to participate in the process.



Perinton appears to have been fairly unique in creating such an extensive war service record of its sons and daughters. As opportunities arise, copies of service records have been made available to both veterans of the war and their families. The archive helped Fairport High School student Jeremy Teeter learn of the heroism of a relative. Sgt. Arthur Teeter sustained wounds during the D-Day Invasion and a few months later in Bastogne, Belgium. He was killed while engaged in the Battle of the Bulge on Christmas day, 1944. Sgt. Teeter was 22 years old.

War Service Records of Six Brothers

Joseph DiRisio made his home at 33 Water Street in Fairport. A widower, he raised ten children, while also providing a home for several other family members upon their arrival from Italy. The 1930 census listed 15 family members in the household. Among the hundreds of names in the Perinton WWII service records are six sons of Joseph DiRisio: Albert, Marco, Anthony, Charles, Floyd, and John. The first draftee in Fairport was Albert, known as “the Hawk”.

As the war dragged on, Joseph received a letter from Congressman Joseph J. O’Brien, himself a veteran of World War I. The letter stated in part, *“May I grasp this opportunity to salute you as an outstanding American citizen whose patriotism and the patriotism of your family is worthy of national recognition. Any father and mother who have six sons in the service proves in a very conclusive manner that the ideals and traditions of our great country will never be jeopardized by those who do not fully appreciate the privileges of living in this great Republic. I do hope when the war is over that Divine Providence in His infinite wisdom will return to you and the other members of your family your six sons.”*

The hope of Congressman O’Brien was soon realized. All six DiRisio boys returned home after serving their country.