



HISTORIC BRIGHTON

CELEBRATING OUR TOWN'S HISTORY AND
EDUCATING OUR COMMUNITY ABOUT BRIGHTON'S PAST

Volume 17

Winter 2015 -2016

Number 1

Newsletter and Journal

Allen's Creek: One of Brighton's oldest communities

By Mary Jo Lanphear

One of the oldest communities in the Town of Brighton, Allens Creek was first settled briefly by Captain Timothy Allyn of Massachusetts. In 1790 he built a log cabin on a tract of 500 acres on the creek that is his namesake but after a summer in the wilderness he became discouraged, sold out, and went to Geneva where he became a successful businessman. He left behind, in what would become Brighton, a strategic location on

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James Breck Perkins of Brighton: "Nature's Nobleman"

By Marjorie Barkin Searl

Renaissance man James Breck Perkins, while barely known today, was one of Brighton's most prominent citizens at the turn of the 20th century when he was featured in a June 11, 1898 *New York Times* interview with writer Charles Mulford Robinson. In "Authors at Home. XXIX. James Breck Perkins in Rochester," he paid a visit to the Perkinses' gracious country residence, located at what is now the corner of East Avenue and Ambassador Drive. "A visit to the homes of the rich and famous" was a popular literary format

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Marion Folsom



Allen Creek No 6 Brighton.



James Breck Perkins
(1847 -1910)

Picture from Wikipedia

Social Security at 80 years: Brighton's Involvement in its beginning

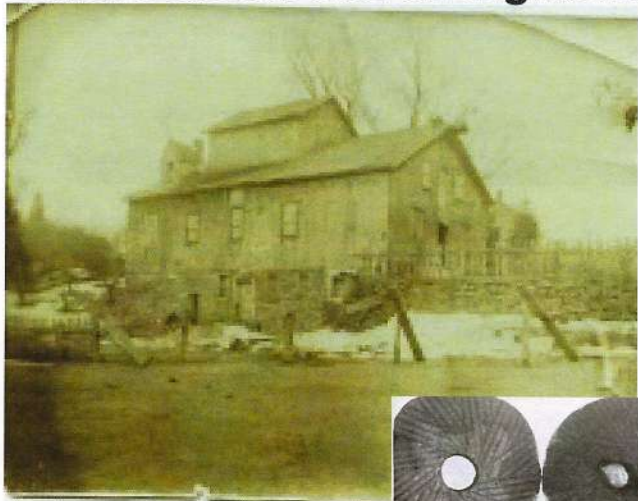
Based on Kodak's Employee Benefits Program

By Elizabeth Brayer

When President Eisenhower named Marion Bayard Folsom Secretary of Health Education and Welfare he was "writing the last act of a personal drama and putting his seal of approval on the great revolutionary process of our times." So wrote correspondent Joseph Alsop in 1955. But Folsom was also the last man in the world you would pick as a likely participant in a revolution.

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Allen's Creek: One of Brighton's oldest communities *(continued from page 1)*



Isaac Barnes's mill and his millstones
that are now on display in the Monroe County Office Building

a major trade route – the road from Canandaigua to the Irondequoit Landing. The road to the Landing followed today's Landing Road North and South. Tryon town, established in 1797 at the Irondequoit Landing, became the center for Canadian trade in Genesee country flour. It also became the source of supplies for the storekeepers of Canandaigua. In 1804 those merchants extended the road from the Landing to the Genesee River. Today's Merchants Road in Rochester is a remnant of that early thoroughfare.

Two hundred and twenty-five years later, Timothy Allyn's name remains, slightly altered, in the southeast corner of Brighton near the Pittsford line. Allen's Creek, accessible from Irondequoit Bay through its connection to Irondequoit Creek, provided water power. John and Solomon Hatch, who purchased Timothy Allyn's land, built a saw mill on the creek in 1806. A succession of millers followed them, most notably Isaac Barnes, who came from Stockbridge, Massachusetts in 1800 and built a mill on Allen's Creek, using the Ebenezer "Indian" Allan millstones. (Those stones are now on display in a wall of the Monroe County Office Building.) Isaac Barnes' descendants kept the business going until 1953 when the dam went out and it became known that the Eastern Expressway would be built through the mill site.

Marshfield Parsons was another early settler. In 1825 he moved in with his friend, Enos Blossom, whose house was on the location of today's Brighton #1 Fire

Hall, and eventually married Eliza Blossom in 1837. Parsons operated a powder mill on Allen's Creek until 1848 when an explosion killed several workers. He sold his equipment to the Rand company in what is now Powder Mills Park.

Prospering in his new community, Marshfield Parsons built a large brick Greek Revival farmhouse on East Avenue. His heirs sold the house and farmland to the Country Club of Rochester after that organization was founded in 1895. The Parsons house was the first clubhouse. It burned down in 1902.

The country club is associated with a twentieth century athlete who grew up on Allen's Creek in Brighton. Walter Hagen, born in 1892 in what is now 66 Glen Road, was introduced to golf at the age of three. He became a caddie at the country club when he was eight, the position earning him playing privileges. Promoted from caddie to assistant pro when he was fifteen, Walter Hagen went on to win the U.S. Open in 1914 and 1919 and, in 1922, became the first native-born American to win the British Open. His tally of eleven professional tournament wins is third behind Jack Nicklaus (18) and Tiger Woods (14).

Walter Hagen was one of hundreds of children who attended Allen's Creek School. Founded in 1815 as Brighton District #6 school, it held classes in private homes until 1818 when a one-room school was built to accommodate scholars aged five to fifteen from November through March. That early school building was succeeded by a stone building from 1841 through 1879 and a frame building from 1880 through 1929 when the present brick school was built. The photograph shows the remodeled frame school building around 1910. Celebrating its bicentennial this year, Allen's Creek School became part of the Pittsford Central School District in 1958.

Mary Jo Lanphear is the Town of Brighton Historian. This article originally appeared in the Democrat & Chronicle. Reprinted with permission.

"Marion Folsom of Eastman Kodak Co.: a good man with a kind of social mind," said Frances Perkins. Folsom on Eastman: "He made you think for yourself"

He Sparked a Revolution

A Washington correspondent's penetrating report on Marion Folsom, who recently took over the hot seat Mrs. Hobby vacated in the Eisenhower cabinet.

By Joseph Alsop



Left: Ike shows new cabinet member Marion B. Folsom his seat in an article by Joseph Alsop in The Saturday Evening Post, 1955.

Right: Folsom's wife, Mary, was a member of the Lobster Quartet, young matrons who lunched with George Eastman on Saturdays.



In 1914 Folsom was graduating from Harvard Business School (founded 1908) when he was personally hired by a visiting George Eastman. Initially Folsom worked for Frank Lovejoy, future Kodak president whom Folsom described as "a great humanitarian who was years ahead of his time."

Folsom fought in WW1 and returned to create a new statistical department for Kodak as Eastman's personal assistant. According to Alsop, "the enforced association with this brilliant, complex, and contradictory man became a big turning point." Other executives were terrified of Eastman but Folsom, who had to work with him daily, was not.

The Depression of 1920-21 gave Folsom a chance to draw-up a practice Social Security for GE and Kodak and showed that Eastman was both generous hearted and determined that Kodak stay non-union. Next came Kodak men who had joined the company in the 1880s and by the mid 1920s, Eastman was flaring up against "these young jackanapes who want to put Old Bill on the street after 40 years with the company." Folsom's plan mushroomed and was so good that the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine asked him to write it up in 1929.

After Black Friday and Bloody Monday (1929) all Rochester tanked and in 1931 Folsom organized an Unemployment Benefit Fund — a self imposed payroll tax supported by 14 Rochester industries. As its author, Folsom was called to testify before the US Senate investigation of unemployment. He helped devise a state unemployment benefit scheme. This was the last attempt to tackle the unemployment problem on a free-enterprise basis. As Alsop noted in the 1950s: Folsom was the only person who contributed substantially

to every phase of Social Security's growth.

In 1934 Marion Folsom was appointed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the Advisory Council on Economic Security, which laid the foundation for the present Social Security program. Frances Perkins, FDR's Secretary of Labor and the first woman cabinet member, who chaired the committee on Social Security in 1934, said this about Marion Folsom:

"We worked all summer. . . . We had an Advisory Council on Economic Security which was [made up of] the employers, organized labor, and the general public. . . . They were all perfectly good people. Even the employers had been well picked. There was Marion Folsom of Eastman Kodak Co. Some of us happened to know him to be a good man with a kind of social mind; and you know what became of him. He worked for that committee and later he turned up as head of the whole Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. A very good person—a man of great ability who really dedicated himself to the promotion of these ideas. . . .

"It was a report that recommended unemployment insurance and old-age insurance but omitted health insurance just because the experts couldn't get through with health insurance in time to make a report on it."

For the next 21 years Folsom commuted between his job as Treasurer for Eastman Kodak in Rochester, and various Washington posts.

Folsom resigned from Kodak in 1953 to become Under Secretary of the Treasury. Subsequently, President Eisenhower appointed him Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, a position he held from 1955 until 1958.

Folsom house designated Brighton town landmark



Folsom house on Oak Lane, seen at left in 1927 on a bull-dozed lot was designated a Brighton town landmark in 2014. At right in this contemporary photo by Marjorie Barkin Searl, it is a major landmark in the "leafy suburb of Brighton" as Joseph Alsop wrote and all but invisible when the leaves are out.

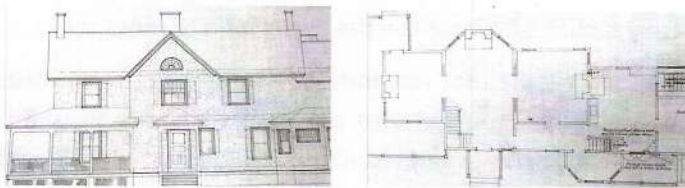
Storrs Barrows designed Folsom house

By Mary Jo Lanphear

In 1927, architect Storrs Barrows was commissioned by a young man named Marion B. Folsom to build a home for his family on Oak Lane in Brighton. Like Storrs Barrows, Folsom was a veteran of World War I. Extant are some remarkable photographs that document the construction of the Folsom house beginning on March 31, 1927, and continuing through the completion of the house later in the year. The Tudor Revival house was designated a Brighton town landmark in 2014, fulfilling all four criteria in the Historic Preservation ordinance: It possesses historic value as part of the cultural, political, economic, architectural, or social history of the town; it is identified with an important personage, namely Marion B. Folsom; it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the Tudor Revival style; and it was designed by a significant architect, C. Storrs Barrows.

Storrs Barrows' Oak Lane project is all the more remarkable because the construction of the Folsom house began just a month after the death of Storrs' wife, Florence Valerie, at the age of 33, leaving him with the care of four young children under the age of six.

Bragdon Remodeled Perkins House, 1905



Bragdon elevation and plan, 1905, courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, University of Rochester

In 1905 architect Claude Bragdon made changes to the Perkins house at 2755 East Avenue and his elevation and first floor plan reflect this. The house that Charles Mulford Robinson visited was clapboard with shutters. A later house on this site was occupied by, among others, the brash and blustery media mogul Al Neuharth when he was chairman and CEO of the Gannett Co., including the year 1982 when he invented and marketed USA Today.



Charles Mulford Robinson

By Elizabeth Brayer

Charles Mulford Robinson (1868-1917), was the great popularizer of "The City Beautiful" movement and the first professor of civic design in this country. While most City Beautiful schemes were products of architects, of the non-designers, Robinson became the most prominent. According to Richard Guy Wilson, historian of the American Renaissance, 1876-1917, Robinson "emerged from obscurity in western New York, where he had graduated from the University of Rochester with a liberal arts degree and then worked for a local newspaper." In 1899, Robinson wrote three articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "Improvements in City Life" that popularized and staked out his territory in civic art. This was followed by several books, including *The Improvement of Towns and Cities, or, The Practical Basis of Civic Aesthetics* (1901); *Modern Civic Art, or, the City made Beautiful* (1903); and over 100 articles.

According to historian Wilson, Robinson's death at age 49 in 1917 symbolically marks the end of the City Beautiful movement.

The lovely Robinson Drive that wends its way through Highland Park has a plaque dedicated to

"Charles Mulford Robinson—in his honor, pioneer city planner, loyal citizen, Christian gentleman. He inspired the city to acquire this park and planned the drive."



Present house at 2755 East Ave. Photo by Marjorie Barkin Searl

James Breck Perkins of Brighton: "Nature's Nobleman"

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during this period including Roycrofters Elbert Hubbard's *Little Journeys* series. Robinson begins his trek to Brighton in the heart of Rochester:

The most fashionable street of Rochester, which is East Avenue, stretches out to the city limits. A variety of houses, continuously large and costly, gives dignity to the thoroughfare, while the well-kept trees, the fenceless lawns, the ample grounds that make each house stand alone, lend a rural charm very pleasant in a city. Beyond the city line East Avenue continues as the main street of the contiguous village of Brighton.

Robinson's advocacy of the City Beautiful movement comes to mind in this admiring description. He goes on:

The residences continue some distance further, until the crowding cottages, the hotel, and the pot-pourri stores suddenly stamp the street as a village thoroughfare. Then it dips down a little decline to cross a railroad track, and rises a country road on the other side. This is the direct route to the Rochester Country Club, and a well-traveled cinder path makes the way of the bicyclist easy from the limits of Rochester far beyond the club."

It was on this stretch of East Avenue that Perkins and his wife, Mary Martindale Perkins (c. 1853-1941), resided.

Rochester and Brighton were James Breck Perkins's adopted homes. He was born to Hamlet Houghton Perkins and Margaret Breck Perkins in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin. His mother was "finely educated, [had] a well balanced mind, and a decided taste for literature." His father drowned in the falls at St. Croix in 1850, leaving Mrs. Perkins with three children, including three year old James, whose childhood in Wisconsin would currently be termed 'free range,' "spent in roaming the woods and fields and acquiring a devotion to nature that he never forsook. Without formal schooling, he was taught to read by his family; he reveled in Scott, Dickens, and stories from Roman and English history." When he was six, his mother moved the family to Rochester, where her parents lived, and there his formal education began in the public schools. He graduated at sixteen from the Rochester Free Academy with a scholarship to the University of Rochester, where President Martin Brewer Anderson recognized his potential and encouraged him to visit Europe during his junior year, a trip made

possible by a loan from a still-unknown source. Wanderings through England, France, and Italy whetted an appetite to pursue and deepen his studies of European history at the University, where he graduated at the top of his class in 1867. Law seemed like a natural profession to choose, in the fashion in which he did most things, he worked hard and was highly regarded by his peers. In addition to his private practice, he was city attorney between 1874 and 1878. Having securely established himself, in 1878 he married Mary, the youngest daughter of Civil War General John H. Martindale. French history continued to beckon, however, and the couple travelled back and forth to Paris, permanently residing there from 1890-95, where he haunted French libraries and archives doing research for his scholarly publications of 17th and 18th century French histories.

Sometime between 1886 and 1887, James Breck and Mary Perkins took possession of a home and acreage on East Avenue in Brighton, even as they continued their transatlantic crossings to France. In 1898, the year of Robinson's *New York Times* interview, two honors came to Perkins: he was elected to the office of New York State Assemblyman as well as to the prestigious and exclusive National Institute of Arts and Letters, now known as the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and his place in American cultural history was assured. Continuing his "Little Journey" to the Brighton countryside, Robinson pauses outside the Perkins home, setting in the reader's mind's eye a harmonious view of a prosperous gentleman's domain:

On this road, four and a half miles from his office, which is in the centre of the City of Rochester, stands the home of James Breck Perkins. Its windows and piazza overlook the links of the Country Club. The house is on a slight eminence, which, however, is as good as a hill in flat country, and one may look over the links, gay with

¹ Partridge, Dennis N. Croydon New Hampshire Genealogy. *AccessGenealogy.com Web*. 8 December 2015. The most detailed biographical information related to James Breck Perkins and his family can be found in Wisconsin Biographical Dictionary 2007-2008 edition, edited by Caryn Hannan (Hamburg, Michigan: State History Publications LLC, 2008). 311-12.

² From Sibley family correspondence held by the George Eastman Museum, we know that he enjoyed friendships with Emily Sibley [Watson], and her friends and felt at home in the East Avenue residence of Hiram Sibley: "Mr. Burns came in Tuesday evening very soon after the inimitable Breck [James Breck Perkins], who took the Parlor, and remained until after ten o'clock..." Elizabeth Tinker Sibley, letter to Emily Sibley [Watson], 25 April 1873, Sibley Family Papers, Box 524, Moving Image Stills Archive, George Eastman Museum.

Renaissance man: James Breck Perkins of Brighton

their little flags, or down the long sloping lawn and beyond the road to a clump of trees that has almost the dignity of a grove, or back and westward over the owner's broad acres. The house, barn and clustering outbuildings are painted red, giving a warm dash of color to the cool green expanse. Looking toward or from the house the scene is very peaceful, rural. Man and nature are close together in their joint sincerity, and nothing could appear further from the scene's suggestion than the artificiality of a Bourbon court and the intrigues of a Richelieu and Mazarin.

The long twilight of blossoming May is drawing its gossamer veil over distant meadow and wood as the caller comes up the drive which circles before the door. The historian lives not so much in the past that he fails to be on the step to cry a welcome. The front door opens upon a wide hall that must be nearly square, and which has the proportions of a drawing room. That, indeed, is its function in the quaint country home. It contains a piano, a half dozen comfortable lounging chairs, a table, a rich old secretary, and one or two tall lamps. On the right is the wide entrance to the dining room, on the left that of the library, and opposite the door is an open fireplace with an elk's magnificent pair of antlers suspended on the chimney...

...The host leads the way into the library. The room is a wing, so that the light comes in on three sides. The piazza runs beneath the windows, and the Country Club golf links are in full view. Tall bookcases rise from floor to ceiling, and are filled with books. A square table, with its tell-tale manuscript papers, is almost in the centre. Mr. Perkins hardly agrees with his guest that the books are numerous. Doubtless one comes to measure even books comparatively. "I have a great many pamphlets," he says, "which are not bound, but we have roamed about so much that it has not done to let books accumulate. They make heavy baggage." Mrs. Perkins enters, and the talk drifts to the Country Club. Mr. and Mrs. Perkins do not play golf. "This is our Country Club," they say with a smiling glance around the house.

Dinner is presently announced, but on the way to the dining room we must step to the porch to note how the blossoms have come out on an apple tree. "I care a good deal more for the blossoms than I do for the fruit," says the historian of France.

The portieres that had shut off the dining room are now drawn aside and reveal a room closely corresponding to the library. The furniture is old mahogany, and the soft glow of the tall candles, which are the only light, well preserve the apartment's antique character. There is a



Aboard the Sesostris, 1893. From left to right: James Sibley Watson Sr., James G. Averell, Zotti (the trip's major domo), James Breck Perkins. Courtesy George Eastman Museum, digital positive from the original gelatin silver negative in the George Eastman Museum collection. Gift of Dr. James Sibley Watson Jr.

candelabrum on the mantel, and four tall white candlesticks are on the table. The curtains are not yet drawn at the windows, and we look out on field and evening sky. Table talk roams far. There is discussion of Wagner and the operas at Baireuth. Mrs. Perkins is an accomplished musician, and Mr. Perkins is fond of music, and has sound musical judgment. There is talk of farming, of books, and travel. "It used to be one of my dreams," says Mr. Perkins, "to penetrate 'Darkest Africa,' but I never got nearer the goal than a trip up the Nile."

"A trip up the Nile" indeed took place six years previously, in 1892-3, when Mr. and Mrs. Perkins had taken up year-round residence in France. They met wealthy socialites and philanthropists James and Emily Sibley Watson and Emily's son J. G. Averell (after whom the Memorial Art Gallery was named) in Marseilles, where the party traveled by steamer to Alexandria, Egypt. There, they boarded the houseboat *Sesostris* for a three-month Nile adventure. According to Emily Sibley Watson's letters in the collection of the University of Rochester's Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, the trip was stimulating and the companionship convivial – "The Perkins are delightful companions and we have the nicest times together."⁴ Nicknames were given to all, and Perkins was called the Tiger, after a recently published short story, "The Lady or the Tiger" by Frank Stockton. Even a stint

⁴Emily Sibley Watson, letter to Elizabeth Tinker Sibley, 28 January 1893, D.226 Sibley Papers Addition Box 12, Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester.

James Breck Perkins: Lost Brightonian



On the upper deck of the Sesostri, Nile River, Egypt, 1893. From left to right: James Breck Perkins, Mary Martindale Perkins, James Sibley Watson Sr., unidentified Arab sailor, Emily Sibley Watson. Courtesy George Eastman Museum [gelatin silver print].

on a sand bank, which delayed their progress, did not dissipate the group's enthusiasm for everything they saw.

Dinner over, the evening winds down:

After dinner adjournment was taken to the broad, inviting hall. Coffee was brought in on a little stand and served by Mrs. Perkins, and from the depths of comfortable chairs the talk flowed easily. At last I asked Mr. Perkins to tell me something about his work. His smile was a genial acquiescence, but he said that I must ask the questions. So, in response to a string of these, he related that he took up literature as a man takes up anything else, for the love of it; and that he had chosen a French subject, because he had always been fond of French; and French history, because that period had not adequate treatment by English-writing hands. He saw an opportunity in strict conformity with his own tastes, and he embraced it.

With one elegiac final paragraph, Robinson pulls the curtains closed on the Perkinses and Brighton:

A long evening had passed in a short time. It was not fair to make Mr. Perkins talk any more. The host had made no sign of weariness, and was all cordiality to the end. But historians are patient above most men. Presently to the departing guest the house was melting into the utter darkness of a cloudy night in the country; but somehow there lingered still in the mind an impression of bright Paris and of the gay Courts of Kings.

Tranquil days in their Brighton country home were short-lived, as Perkins was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1901, where he served until his death in 1910. His congressional duties were periodically interrupted by legal cases, most notably the heresy

trial of Dr. Algernon Crapsey, minister at St. Andrew's Church, in 1906. While she accompanied her husband in Washington, Mary Martindale Perkins made history by proposing, in 1908, a club for congressional wives. The club was ratified by the House and the Senate in 1908 and the resolution signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, making it the first club in the world incorporated by an Act of Congress. Mrs. Perkins, clearly a force, was described in one newspaper article as one "whose rule [among congressional wives] is as absolute as that of 'Uncle Joe' is in the National House of Representatives."⁵ Mrs. Perkins' strong leadership and concern for the place of women alongside their politician husbands did not translate into endorsement of women's suffrage, however; she chaired the Rochester anti-suffragists committee, a group that also included Mrs. James Sibley Watson Sr. among other prominent women.

After nine years in Congress, where he became the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, he died of cancer. He was eulogized in the House and Senate by his colleagues, each bringing more accolades to the floor than the previous speaker. Perhaps the briefest comment was the most descriptive: Representative James H. Davidson of Wisconsin named James Breck Perkins "one of nature's noblemen. To know him was to admire, respect, and love him." Perkins and his wife are buried in Mount Hope Cemetery.

And what became of the home that we left "melting into the utter darkness of a cloudy night in the country"? Brighton Town Historian Mary Jo Lanphear has identified the site as 2755 East Avenue which retains the semicircular driveway observed by Robinson in 1898. The acreage was reduced from 15 acres on the 1902 map to 4 acres on the 1924 map. Where Robinson and Mr. and Mrs. Perkins spent a genteel evening of conversation, a much enlarged home now stands. Perkins' original home is part of "Lost Brighton," and he is a "Lost Brightonian" whose noteworthy accomplishments prove him to be a remarkable man.

⁵ Hopkins, Grace Porter. (1910, March 6). "The Mid-Lenten Society Doings in Washington." *The Buffalo Courier*, p. 37. "Uncle Joe" Cannon was Joseph Gurney Cannon, speaker of the US House of Representatives, 1903-1911.

⁶What the Anti-Suffragists Are Doing for Their Cause." (1915, Nov. Jamestown Evening Journal, p. 7.)

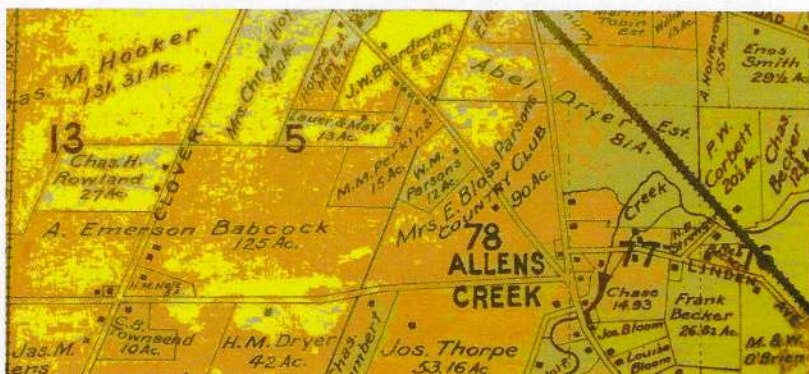
⁷James Breck Perkins (Late a Representative from New York) Memorial Addresses delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Committee on Printing, 1911).34.

James Breck Perkins of Brighton: "One of Nature's Noblemen"



Salon of the Sesostri, Nile River, 1893. From left to right: James G. Averell, Mary Martindale Perkins, James Sibley Watson [Sr.], unidentified servant (standing), Emily Sibley Watson (reclining), James Breck Perkins. Emily Sibley Watson was resting, as she was recuperating following a miscarriage that occurred early in the voyage. Courtesy George Eastman Museum, digital positive from the original gelatin silver negative in the George Eastman Museum collection. Gift of Dr. James Sibley Watson Jr.

The complete article by Charles Mulford Robinson about "James Breck Perkins, Authors at Home XXIX," can be found in the New York Times, June 11 1898, Saturday Review of Books and Art, Page BR388.



The lot belonging to Mary Martindale Perkins (Mrs. James Breck Perkins) is near the center of this 1902 map detail; published in 1905 by Lathrop & Pidgeon: Atlas of Monroe County. Current location of map: Brighton Town Hall wall, lower level.

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