

# HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

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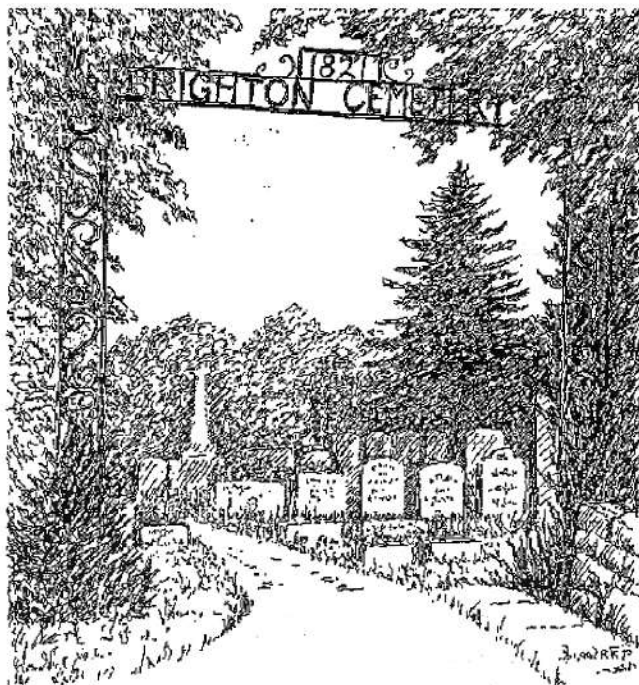
NUMBER 4

## HISTORIC BRIGHTON MEETS APRIL 23

### BRIGHTON'S HIDDEN TREASURE

On Monday, April 23, 2001, **Ruth Kingston Porter**, a 5th generation Brighton resident, will speak at the spring meeting of Historic Brighton about the Brighton Cemetery on Hoyt Road. This early 19th century cemetery sits on a hillside that once overlooked the Erie Canal. Today the only flow is automobile traffic along the intersection of Rtes. 490 and 590. Much of Brighton's early history rests here. Mrs. Porter is a member of the cemetery's Board of Directors and a historian of the cemetery.

Please join us for that meeting on **Monday, April 23, 2001, 7:30 p.m. at the Baptist Temple, 1101 Clover St.**



## BRIGHTON AERODROME BOMBED !



By Leo Dodd

This headline begs two questions in the year 2001:

1. Did Brighton actually contain an Airfield? Tis True!
2. Were bombs actually dropped on this field? Tis True!

The year was 1911 and the date was Sunday, July 9. An exhibition by professional international pilots was in progress sponsored by the Rochester Aeronautic Club. This Aero Club, formed in 1909 by sixty-five young aerial enthusiasts, secured permission to use an experimental flying field in the Town of Brighton.<sup>1</sup> The club had arranged for the Moisant Aviation Company to put on a five-day air show—July 8 to July 12.<sup>2</sup> The club promoters promised spectacular air feats during the five-day exhibition. One event was arranged to demonstrate the efficiency of the aeroplane to deliver bombs and dislodge militiamen from their protected positions. The Brighton Bombing occurred during those demonstrations. Get Your Tickets Early for "THE GREATEST SHOW

ABOVE EARTH!" Saturday, July 8 to Wednesday July 12—Admission 50¢.

The exhibition was well attended, thousands of people came to the Brighton Aerodrome to witness the exciting air show. Aviation was an exciting word in 1911. The Wright Brothers had proved the possibility of manned flight in December, 1903 at Kitty Hawk. Glenn Curtiss, a native New Yorker living in Hammondsport on Lake Keuka, had gained international fame after the Wright Brothers flight by improving the mechanics of flight. In association with noted inventor Alexander Graham Bell, Curtiss and others created the Aerial Experiment Association with the object of constructing a practical airplane. The history of manned-flight was advancing at a very rapid rate and local newspapers recorded the world wide and local happenings concerned with flight. Rochesterians were kept well informed of the excit

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## 'A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE' FROM BRICKYARD TO ROSELAWN

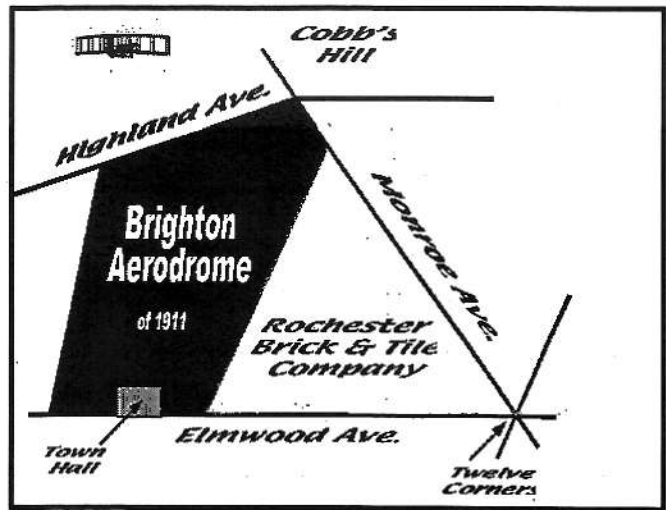
By Betsy Brayer

Brighton's premier 19th century industry—brickmaking—ended in 1919 when the Rochester Brick and Tile Manufacturing Co. near Cobbs Hill folded its tent and moved permanently to Fishers. That same year the Monroe Avenue Land and Improvement Co. purchased 135 acres of the former brickyards for one of the first post World War I "automobile suburbs" to be built anywhere. (Indeed Liberty Bonds were "accepted as cash" for the "10 % down" on lots priced at "\$500 up.") The many small brick houses originally built for brickmaking employees along both sides of Monroe Ave. were razed and grading began in 1920.

Legend has it that the new tract was named Rose Lawn (becoming Roselawn in the late 1940s) because the boundaries of the subdivision map resembled a rose. At a later date, however, the tip of the rose northeast of Monroe Ave. (including N. Saint Regis Dr., Tarrytown Rd., and N. Glen Ellyn Way) was removed and became part of the Bel-Aire subdivision. Today Roselawn resembles a triangle (with the Brighton Town Hall removed to the south) and is bounded by Elmwood Ave., Sylvan Rd. to the west, Monroe and Hollywood Avenues to the north and east.

To further solidify the rose connection, the developers set aside small triangular patches of land (which they called "rosebuds") throughout the subdivision, designating them as parks. The largest and central area bounded by S. St Regis Dr., S. Glen Ellyn, and Antlers Dr. became Rose Park in 1927.

Rose Lawn property was further touted for its "wide winding boulevards with 200 ft. openings off Monroe Ave." It had "large sightly home, park, school and church sites...far from factory and railroad smoke." It could be "reached in 15 minutes by street car, ten minutes by auto from downtown" yet was beyond the reach of "city taxes." The "pure air" playground, skating rink, and tennis courts at Cobbs Hill were adjacent. For golfers, the "2½ mile circle" of Roselawn was "midway between the Country Club of Rochester and Oak Hill" (the latter then located



*Roselawn was built on 135 acres of the former Rochester Brick and Tile Co. It is adjacent to the former Brighton Aerodrome that was "bombed" in 1911 (see story, page 1 and opposite).*

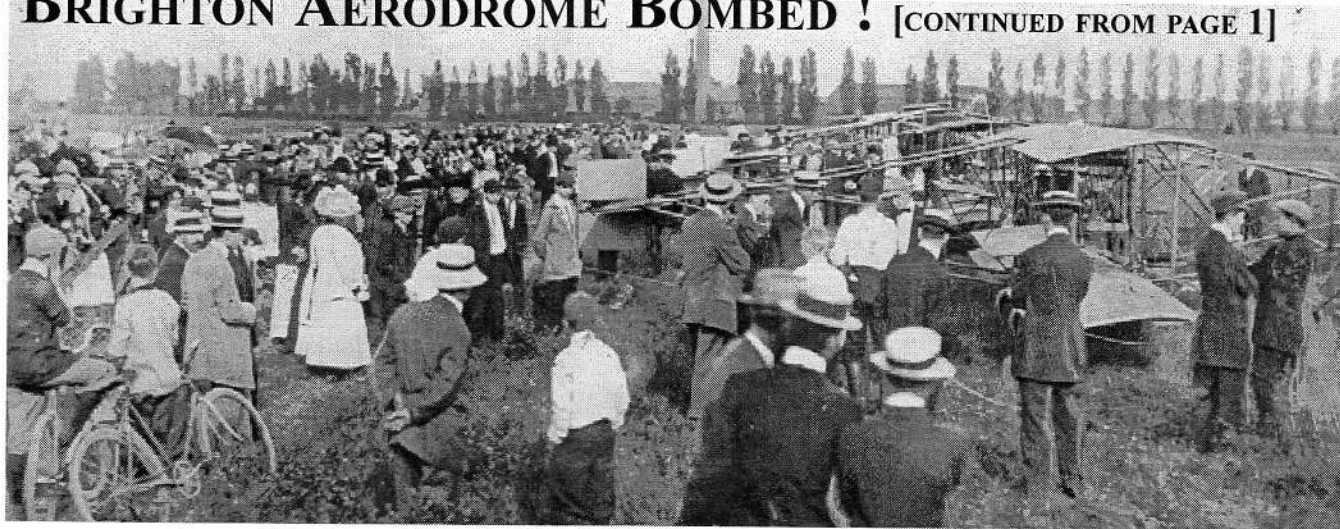
on the site of the present River Campus of the University of Rochester).

"The Baking, Mercantile and Theatrical Interests of Rochester move steadily Eastward and nearer Rose Lawn" the developers noted in 1924. Accompanying this assertion that Rose Lawn was "in the path of the city's eastward growth," was a panoramic photograph of the new Eastman Theatre and School of Music (completed in 1922), the RG&E building on East Ave. then under construction, and the site of the Franklin Street branch of the Rochester Savings Bank (1926). The city was indeed expanding toward Brighton.

More jarring to sensibilities of today are the restrictive covenants—imposed in 1920 for the next 15 years. These included stipulations that "no house could be erected that cost less than \$4500," "no spirituous or malt liquor could be made, kept, or sold on any lot," (Roselawn came in with Prohibition) and the onerous promise that "most Careful and Conservative Building and Race Restrictions Protect Your Investment." The last was spelled out to mean that "property could not be leased, rented or occupied by any person of an undesirable race or character whose residence might provide a detriment to the property."

Such covenants were unfortunately not unusual in the suburban developments of the 1920s and represent the downside of the flight to the suburbs.

# BRIGHTON AERODROME BOMBED ! [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]



*The Aerodrome at Cobbs Hill. Looking north, Cobbs Hill is off the radar screen to the left.*

ing progress and great dangers of aviation, and were eager to witness a professional team of aviators demonstrate their equipment and techniques of flight.

The 127-acre meadow, which gave way in 1920 to the neighborhood development now known as Home-Acres, was the location of the famous Brighton Aerodrome.<sup>3</sup> This Aerodrome<sup>3</sup> was hailed as an extraordinary field and was considered the second best airfield in the State on New York—second only to the famous Hempstead Plains on Long Island.<sup>4</sup> Another account stated “Experienced aviators who have looked over the Monroe Avenue field recently pronounced it one of the best flying grounds in the world and members of the Aero Club said it was not unlikely that Rochester would become the aviation center of America, with Monroe Avenue field as the arena for national and international events.<sup>5</sup> Comments continued on the Brighton location: “acres and acres of almost perfect leveled ground is available and there are few aviation fields in the country which can compare with the one to be used by the club. Certainly there is no place in or around the city that could offer such a suitable place for exhibition flights.”<sup>6</sup> The clay field supplied a firm surface for take off and the sheltered position south of the highlands of Pinnacle and Cobb’s Hills gave an elevated surface for easy ascension for flight. The location at the end of the Monroe Avenue Car Line at the city line allowed for transportation of city people to watch the events held at the field. The Aerodrome was very accessible to residents of Rochester and Brighton.

The following is the newspaper account of the military use of air power as demonstrated on July 8th at the Aerodrome. (Rene Simon, a French aviator and John J. Frisbie, a Rochester resident, were the two pilots who flew in this event.) “By far the most interesting event of the day was the demonstration of war aeroplaning in which Simon, Frisbie and some twenty militiamen participated. The marksmen were lined up in skirmish formation at the western end of the field, and, from a reclining position, volleyed rounds of blank cartridges at the aviators, who passed over them. Simon used all the speed of which his machine is capable in maneuvering about the guardsmen and in one swoop from behind came within two feet of the men, who were forced to fairly burrow into the ground to escape contact with the running gear on the monoplane. Frisbie dropped a couple of bombs during one of his flights, both of them striking within a few feet of the line of militiamen. While he did not come within fifteen feet of the men with his machine, he demonstrated the ease with which they could be destroyed in time of war, and drew applause from the crowd.”<sup>7</sup> Troops from the Rochester National Guard defended the Aerodrome as planes came swooping down out of the sky and around Cobb’s Hill to attack the guardsmen. Ah! Yes the bombs...no they did not do great damage, for they were filled with white-chalk and sawdust.

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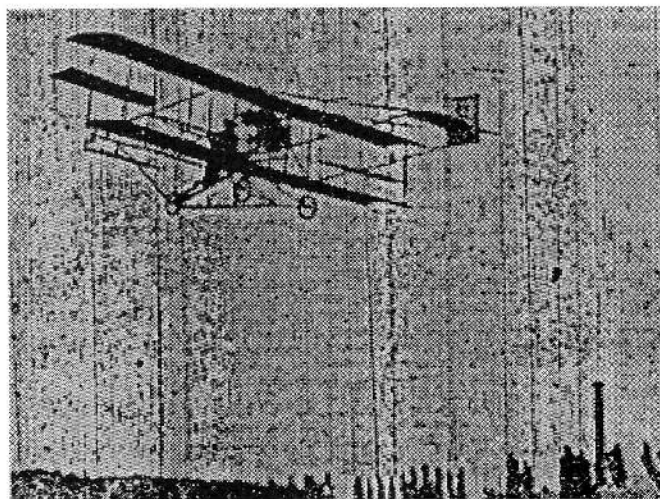


# BRIGHTON AERODROME BOMBED ! [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3]

The property adjoining the Aerodrome, to the East, was owned by the Rochester Brick & Tile Company. The two technologies were adjoined in the town of Brighton—a contrast of the very old and the very new. Brick making with a history of 5,000 plus years contrasted to manned flight, which was proven to be feasible only eight years previous. The Wright Brothers flight gave birth to this newest of technologies. This contrast could only be seen in the Town of Brighton at the Brighton Aerodrome.

The “Brickies”—those gentlemen who dug the Brighton clay—mixed the clay with sand from Cobb’s Hill and, maintained the kiln fires that produced the millions of bricks per year, were a group of about 200 men. They were working on land next to the meadow now rented by the Rochester Aero Club. The brick kiln fires were always kept burning and smoke from this process must have filled the sky above Brighton, and gave a visible location to the pilots as they navigated about Rochester. These men were all aware that the neighboring meadow was the home for flight in the Rochester area. Brickies could view the “machines” of flight as they were called, as they traveled in the brickyard train too and from the clay fields along Monroe and Elmwood Avenue. They could view events as they worked in the brickyards adjoining the Aerodrome. The Brickies were excited to think that the site for the 1911 summer fight activity was to be located next to their work area. The sense of excitement spread to all Brighton, Rochester and yes-even Pittsford residents.

One notable exception to joyous acceptance of the meet was recorded in the local newspapers. “The Past Week in Rochester” was the subject of an interesting sermon by Dr. William R. Taylor at the Brick Presbyterian Church yesterday. “But this notable event [Flying Exhibition] was marred by two exhibitions of moral thoughtlessness on the part of our people. I refer to the disposition of the great majority of the spectators to see something, without paying their share of the cost... But to see the surrounding hillsides crowded with hundreds of people....The people wronged the management and the aviators in this matter...but the management wronged the people



Old newspaper photo of bombing—note chimney of the brick factory in background.

in giving an exhibition on Sunday. This is prejudicial to morals, religion and public order. If this paid Sunday show, why not others? Why not professional baseball? Why not a Circus? Why not Saloons? Why not everything? The sheriff was plainly remiss in his duty in not preventing the exhibition for pay on Sunday. It was contrary to the law of the state.”<sup>8</sup>

The managers of the air-show suffered a great monetary loss. They had expected about 20,000 people per day to attend. The people did come—by the thousands, but most sat on Cobb’s Hill to view the activities, thus avoiding the 50¢ admission fee. The meet may have been the most sensational attraction Rochester had ever seen but financially it was a failure.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Blake McKelvey, *The Quest for Quality 1890-1925*, p.171.

<sup>2</sup> Newspaper ad, *Union & Advertiser*, 3 July 1911.

<sup>3</sup> “Aerodrome” as defined by Alexander Graham Bell, 1913:

“The French introduced the word aeroplane as derived from the Greek aeroplanos, ‘wandering in air,’ and it applied to mean a heavier-than-air-machine and introduced the word aerodrome and applied it to the building or shed. Within the last two or three years the term has been applied to a field for practicing aviation.”

<sup>4</sup> *Union & Advertiser* 28 June 1911.

<sup>5</sup> *Union & Advertiser* 5 July 1911.

<sup>6</sup> *Union & Advertiser* 24 June 1911.

<sup>7</sup> *The Rochester Herald* 10 July 1911.



# THE AMATEUR ARCHIVIST: GLUES

By Monica Gilligan

It's a stickup...glues, adhesives, whatever we call them, are robbing us of our photos and archival materials. Unlike a sudden mugging, this kind takes time.

At some of our meetings, members have shown precious photos, documents and artifacts pasted into albums. The damage was starting to show. Recently, your columnist attended a baby shower at which the proud mother-to-be showed sonogram pictures in an album. She was puzzled about why they had bubbled. "Could it be the rubber cement?"

It could be. It was. Rubber cement is one of the quicker adhesive destroyers of photographs. It should never be used on any archival materials. Her precious photos will not last until her little one enters nursery school.

Research in the local crafts and art supply stores has turned up dozens of categories and over a hundred individual adhesive products used in crafts. How can we one go about choosing the right ones for archival materials? How do we avoid the pitfalls? The key is: anything we do to archival materials should be reversible. Future generations should be able to remove the object from its place and examine it without stressing the object or the container.

There are specialized products on the market that help with this. The most remarkably inexpensive and plentiful are acid-free, archival-quality photo corners. Some are even self-sticking, if any of our readers suffered any trauma in childhood from glue-encrusted tongues while making photo albums with the old corners. Technology to the rescue! Photos can be removed easily from the corners, which stay on the page.

Another interesting development is "memorabilia pockets" from a company called 3L, not to be confused with 3M, whose tape products are NOT reversible. These acid-free clear pockets come in various sizes and will hold locks of hair, coins, botanicals, or sand from a coral beach-whatever artifact might otherwise destroy other items in the collection. The pockets can be attached to acid-free pages in albums, or displayed in more creative ways.

A truly elegant, and expensive, way to preserve flat objects such as photos or newspaper clippings is

to encase them in mica. This non-reactive mineral, which we all remember from Earth Science class, can be split into sheets so thin they are transparent. An object can be sandwiched between the sheets. Mica sheets in various sizes are available in catalogs. Some museums favor this material. Email your columnist if you would like a catalog reference.

Lamination is not reversible. The object can still deteriorate, and it will not be possible to get it out to treat it.

If there is any adhesive on paper, such as the low-tack glue on Post-It notes, small amounts remain on the historical object and start to eat away at it. Don't mark objects with Post-Its.

Remove all photos as soon as you can from "magnetic" albums. Use Un-Du to take off as much of the adhesive as possible from the back of the photograph. Mat these photos on acid-free, lignin-free, buffered paper before putting them with other photos.

Don't paste anything in an album; find a way to encapsulate it. Keep it reversible, and your personal archive will last and give valuable information to future generations. **5**

Your letters with queries are always welcome.

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## Historic Brighton

Founded 1999

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Betsy Brayer, Editor, *Historic Brighton News*

Mary Jo Lanphear, Brighton Town Historian

# HISTORIC MARKER CELEBRATES CHURCHILL CONNECTION

By Mary Jo Lanphear

Watch for a Town of Brighton historic marker on Elmwood Avenue—commemorating the Brighton sojourn of Ambrose Hall (1774-1827), great grandfather of Winston Churchill.

Brighton's connection to the renowned British statesman began in November, 1816 when Mr. Hall, a lawyer from Williamstown, MA purchased part of lot 54 in the central part of town. Three months later he owned all 210 acres of lot 54. In 1821 Ambrose Hall bought property in Palmyra, and, when he sold his Brighton holdings in 1823, his residence was listed as Palmyra. He entered Wayne County politics and was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1826.

The marriage of Ambrose Hall and Clarissa Wilcox produced six daughters—the eldest born in Brighton. A younger daughter, Clara, married Leonard Jerome, called a young law student by some and a New York City stockbroker by others. Their wealth and social position brought them into international circles. Randolph Churchill describes his great grandmother Clara as a noted beauty with good but expensive tastes who spent most of her time in Europe. Leonard and Clara's second daughter, Jennie, was born in New York City in 1854. At 18, she met Lord Randolph Churchill at a reception in Cowes, England, and married him a year later. Their first son, Winston Spencer Churchill, was born in 1874, the same year that his father became a Member of Parliament.

Deeds, assessment rolls, and census records document Ambrose Hall's ownership of land in Brighton, but none describe his actual place of residence. A lawyer, he may have made his home in one of Brighton's villages. Secondary sources include the 1876 centennial *History of Wayne County* and the 1851 *Pioneer History of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase* by Orsamus Turner.

Later owners of lot #54 include George Stillson, first Superintendent of Mount Hope Cemetery, and William and Janet Maxion who operated a horse farm from 1940 to 1982. It was the Maxions who added wings to George Stillson's simple brick farmhouse. Local people will recall the east wing wrapped in big red ribbon at Christmas. The house was razed to make room for the buildings at St. John's Meadows.



*In the 1930s, between political careers, Winston Churchill spent many hours at his easel.*

## CHURCHILL CAME HERE IN 1930s

By Betsy Brayer

Winston Churchill made one visit to our area—in 1933, at the depth of his obscurity. Behind him was celebrity, primarily in Britain, as soldier, war correspondent, politician and First Lord of the Admiralty. Before him was greater distinction—as wartime Prime Minister and Man of the Century. Churchill himself described the 1930s as a time when, having been saddled with the blame for the failure of the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, he had lost his job, his political party and his appendix. It would be 25 years before he reached the peaks again, with the last 10 of those years as a voice of unheeded warning against the rise of Nazi Germany.

Churchill came here in 1933 as guest lecturer for the Junior League of Rochester, which hoped to raise funds for its projects from his talk. So few attended, that the lecture was a financial failure.

Intrepid reporter Henry Clune interviewed Churchill at his Rochester hotel the night before the talk. Answering the door in dressing gown and slippers with glass of Scotch in hand, Churchill growled at Clune: "No, my mother was not born in Rochester. She was born in Brooklyn." Apparently the subject had been raised before.

President Dwight Eisenhower called Churchill "half American by ancestry and citizen of all the free world by the leadership he gave it." And through his matrilineal line, as American Indians reckon it, he is a New York State Iroquois—if only by a few drops.





Leonard Jerome, born in simple circumstances near Ithaca, lived in Palmyra briefly before moving here where he practiced as a lawyer and printer—with his brother, Lawrence R. Jerome. The Jeromes published a new paper—the *Democrat and American* in the 1840s. Their pamphlet, *The Fancy Party of 1847*, described in subtle snobbery the sensation of the season, that was answered by a satirical pamphlet, *The Great Upper crust Party*, published at Irondequoit, by Rag and Tag, one door below the sandbar.” Leonard Jerome gained a reputation of “sponsoring” young actresses and was a noted horse racing enthusiast. Eventually he lost much of his money, but not before he succeeded in marrying his daughter, Jennie, to a son of the Duke of Marlborough.



Clara Hall, daughter of Ambrose Hall, became Winston Churchill’s grandmother. Eventually tiring of her husband’s amours, she lived out her years in near-poverty in a British seaside resort town.



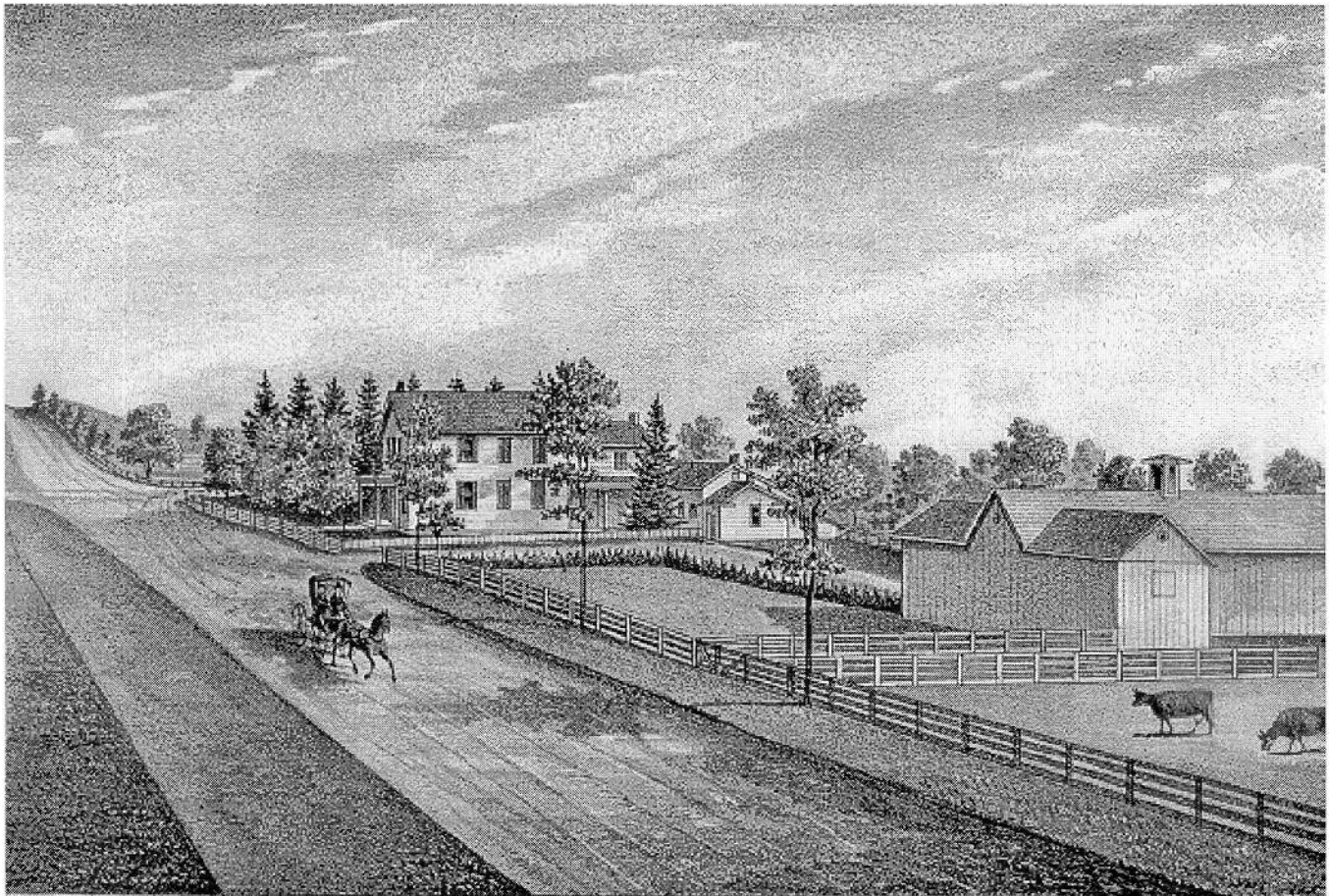
Winston Churchill, age 2, with his mother, the former Jennie Jerome—said to be 1/16th Iroquois. “My picture of her is in a riding habit, fitting like a skin. My mother seemed to me a fairy princess. She shone for me like the Evening Star. I loved her dearly—but at a distance.”



Winston Churchill, age 28, and his mother, the then formidable Lady Randolph Churchill.

## WHEN WINTON ROAD WAS FARM LAND

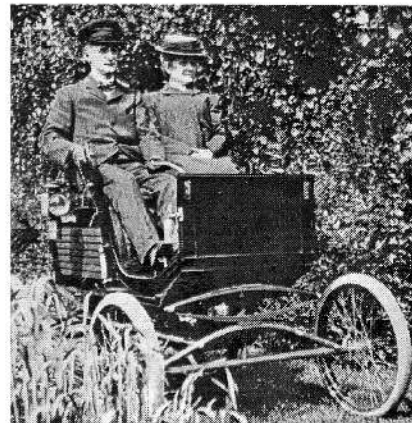
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RESIDENCE OF AMASA DRAKE,  
EAST BRIGHTON, MONROE CO., NEW YORK.

Back in the 19th century, Winton Road looked like this. It wasn't even Winton Road then—it was North Road north of East Avenue, and South Road where Amasa Drake built his house along the Erie Canal. Drake's house (but not the barn or the cows) still stands—on Winton Road South, corner of Palmerston. The Winton designation is thanks to the Winton car (one of George Eastman's early favorites) which debuted in 1897.

**HISTORIC BRIGHTON** needs people to help in creating a web page. We want to determine the content of the site—what people want to see there. We are looking for people who are willing to review existing historic sites and contribute to the design of our proposed web page. If you are interested in helping, contact Leo Dodd at [LeSketcher@aol.com](mailto:LeSketcher@aol.com). To see the Perinton Historical Society's new web page, go to [www.fairportny.com](http://www.fairportny.com) and click on Historical Museum.



George Eastman and unidentified friend in his 4 1/2 h. p. Locomobile Steamer (another early favorite) ca. 1900-1901.