

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

University of the  State of New York

Charter of Swan Library

Whereas a petition for incorporation as an institution of the University has been duly presented and
 Whereas official inspection shows that suitable provision has been made for buildings, furniture
 equipment and for proper maintenance, and that all other prescribed requirements have been fully met
 Therefore, being satisfied that public interests will be promoted by such incorporation, the Regents by
 virtue of the authority conferred on them by law hereby incorporate George W Ough, president
 of the village of Albion, John H White, president of Albion board of education
 Emma M Swan Ezra T Coann Irving M Thompson
 Isaac S Signor Willis G Carmer

associates and
 and they, successors in office under the corporate name of Swan Library
 with all powers, privileges and duties, and subject to all limitations and restrictions prescribed for such
 corporations by law or by the constitution of the University of the State of New York. The first trustees
 of said corporation shall be the seven incorporators above named. The number of trustees shall be
 seven. The presidents of the village and of the board of education of Albion shall be trustees ex-
 officio. Emma M Swan shall be trustee for life and during her time of service successors to the
 other four shall be elected by the members of the corporation, one each year to serve four years.
 After she shall cease to be trustee her first successor shall be elected in like manner for four
 years from the time of the next annual meeting and trustees shall thereafter be elected by
 the corporation, one each year to serve five years

This corporation shall be located at Albion, Orleans county, New York



In witness whereof the Regents gave this charter in 1326 number
 and of the University at the capital in Albany, December 21, 1899

Melvil Dewey Anson Judd Upson

4-14-98 4-14-98 Dec 21 1899

Vol. X 7-27-88 No. 30
Charter of Swan Library

The charter of Swan Library, a small document measuring 12x16 inches, is the key to service. Without this legal instrument the library would be ineligible for any kind of public funding, be it Federal, State or local. Public libraries because of their various charters, must comply to certain state education laws. To maintain such a charter and exist as a legitimate public library it must be open a minimum of 18 hours per week. Unless adequate funding is provided, the library cannot meet its required standard of hours. If this should occur, the state will, in essence, take away the Swan charter which was granted on Dec. 21, 1888. The charter is signed by Anson Judd Upson, Chancellor and Melvil Dewey, Secretary to the Chancellor. And yes, this is the Melvil Dewey who came up with the idea of the Dewey Decimal System for the organization of books in a library.

Swan Library was presented to the people in a ceremony at the First Baptist Church in Albion on Tuesday evening, Jan. 30, 1900. The doors of the library were opened first to the public on March 17 (St. Patrick's Day), 1900. This all occurred because of William G. Swan who was born in Saratoga County in 1882. In 1835 he came to Albion with his father, with whom he later engaged in business. In 1855 he became Superintendent of the Railway Suspension Bridge at Niagara Falls and occupied that important position for 38 years. At the time of his death, which occurred Nov. 10, 1896, he was a director in and the treasurer of the American Bridge Company and a prominent stockholder of the Pullman Palace Car Company. An extract from his will is as follows: "Feeling a

deep interest in the Village of Albion and in the County of Orleans, and especially in the young people of said village and county and believing that I can in no way better promote their welfare than by founding a permanent library and reading room.

"I do therefore devise and bequeath to my executors and trustees herein named the sum of Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars, in trust nevertheless, to be used by them and hereinafter specified.

"Out of said sum I direct my said executors to purchase a suitable lot in the Village of Albion to be selected by them and to erect thereon a building suitable for a library and reading room and such other purposes as they may think proper and tending in their opinion toward to improvement of these for whose benefit it is erected; any of said sum remaining after the completion of said building shall be invested in books for said library, necessary furniture and apparatus and balance of fund to be invested and used for the proper purposes in connection therewith."

Will further directs the organization of an Association to be known as "Swan Library" and that the building, library and trust fund be transferred to the Association and be held by it for the purposes mentioned for the residents of the Village of Albion and such other persons as the Association may see fit to allow.

Mrs. Emma M. Swan and Mr. Isaac S. Signor are appointed executors of the will and directed to carry out the above provisions.

Thirty-five thousand dollars was not even enough in the late 1890s to buy a lot, erect a building and then equip it. Therefore, the trustees opted to buy an existing structure which was the home of the late Roswell Burrows. The residence was then transformed into what we know as Swan Library.