

Bethinking of Old Orleans

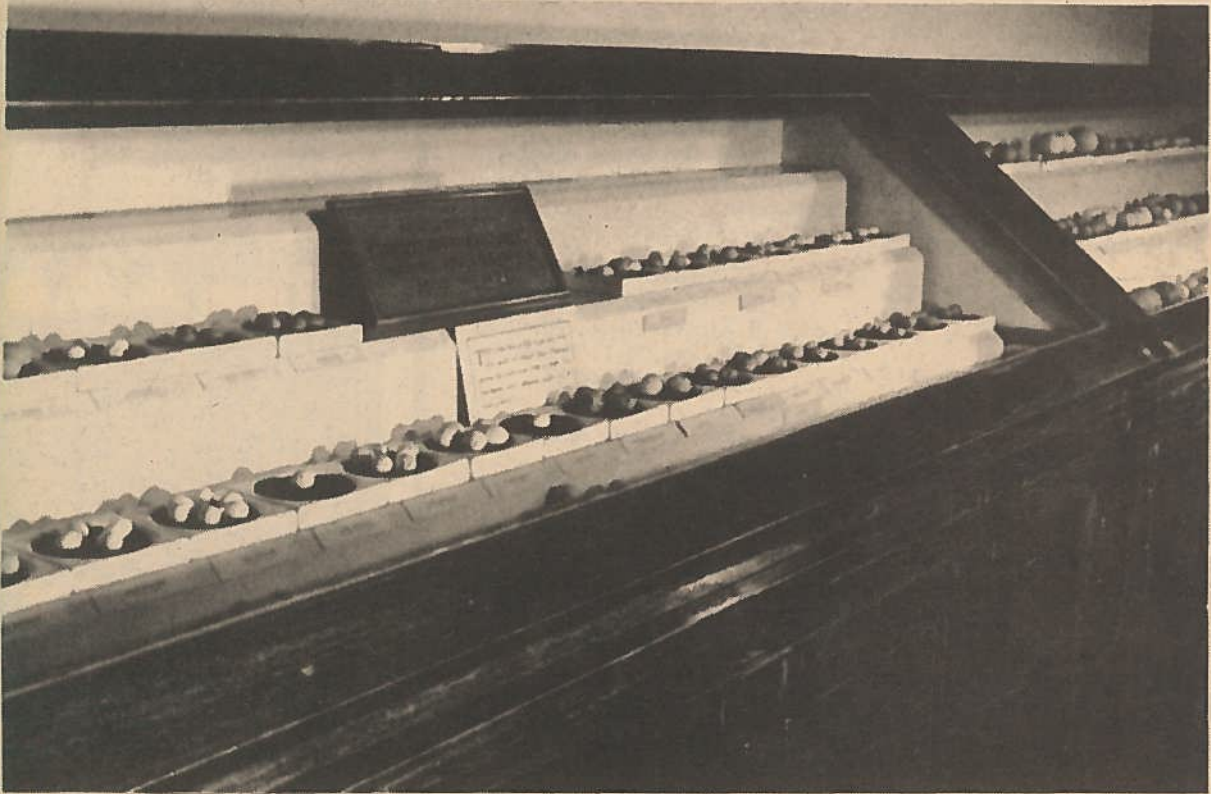
C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XII

8-17-90

No. 33

THE EGG COLLECTION



The Egg Collection on the second floor of the Swan Library in Albion has been a curiosity to children and adults alike for over sixty years. A bronze plaque in one of the cases states: "In Memory of Stuart John Flintham Forester and Bird Lover 1879-1925." Mr. Flintham as a youth became a student of bird lore and research. He spent much of his time tramping through fields and swamps around Orleans County in search of birds' eggs and nests. With binoculars he also studied birds and their habits in Mt. Albion Cemetery from on top of the tower. Most of the 300 eggs of 92 varieties and 50 varieties of birds' nests he collected in our area from 1896-1899. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Flintham who lived on South Main Street in Albion in a house which was recently demolished next to Dale's Super Duper Market. William S. Flintham was a partner in an Albion Furniture and Undertaking Business known as Reynolds and Flintham (predecessor to Merrill-Grinnell).

From 1912 until his death in June 1925 Stuart J. Flintham was the County Forester, fire warden and fish and game warden of Los Angeles County, California. At the time of his death he had 34 men and women working under his direction. Some of his most important work was done in fighting the fires which were responsible for the denuding of the California mountainsides. His death was due largely to exhaustion from long hours spent in battling flames during a forest fire on June 19, 1925. In 1919 fire swept Tan Bank Flats destroying the forest thereon. Mr. Flintham immediately set out

Coulter Pines to cover this tract. Following Flintham's death, the U.S. Congress dedicated this tract of forest as Flintham Memorial Park setting forth the appreciation of the people of southern California for his great work.

Locally his memorial is in the form of the bird egg collection which was presented to Swan Library in 1928 by Mr. and Mrs. W.S. Flintham. They hired Dr. Frank Lattin, an Oologist in his younger days, to design the cases and mount all of the eggs in them for permanent display. The birds nests occupy the cupboards underneath.

By the 1950's the collection of birds' eggs looked out of date and seemed irrelevant to patrons' needs at Swan Library. The trustees relegated it to the cellar where it stood for over twenty years and was seldom seen. In the mid-1970's after Evelyn Lyman became the Library Director, she and the trustees at that time, felt this unique collection should again be placed on permanent view. It was then hauled back from the basement and placed in its former location for all to enjoy in the second floor hall.

I do not advocate robbing birds' nests of eggs and as we well know, there are laws which prohibit such. Therefore, if you want to see birds' eggs take a look at the Flintham Collection. We must remember that when Stuart John Flintham procured these specimens, American attitudes were different about such things. Indeed, Flintham himself, viewed his pursuits as educational. Oology was a common venture for many in a day and age when our environment seemed not so threatened as it does now.