

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

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ORLEANS COUNTY ARTISTS 1875 - 1925 AN EXHIBITION



From Sunday, February 2 through Saturday, February 29, the Orleans County Council on the Arts Gallery located on East Bank Street in Albion, will feature a unique exhibit of paintings by local artists in the past. The gallery's regular hours are Friday, Saturday and Sunday 12 noon - 4 p.m. The exhibit will open on Sunday, February 2 from 2 - 5 with a reception. As a collector of fine art, I have been asked by the OCCA Gallery Committee, headed by Richard Price, to curate this special show consisting mostly of oils and watercolors. Professional artists who will be featured include: Peter B. West, animal painter; Alvin L. Briggs, watercolorist; Keziah D. Boyce, still life and Clara Ragbon, landscapes. Other artists who might be considered "Sunday Painters" will include: Harriett Lyman Kilner, Lovina Lattin Kirby, Fannie McCracken, Amelia Martyn and Mary Hardie Lake.

The work of one local illustrator will also be shown. It is the self portrait of Henry L. Porter pictured above. This original fine tempera painting designed by Porter, and dated 1921, was done when he was just twenty-years of age. Stylistically, this painting bespeaks the character of design frequently associated with 1920's illustrations. Henry Porter was born in Albion in 1901 to Nellie Lyon Porter and Wells Porter (1872-1956) who is remembered as a piano tuner. In 1908 Nellie died of cancer and Henry and his brother Alan were brought up by their father and Ella Jackson a housekeeper were they lived on Ingersoll Street in Albion.

Henry attended Albion High School and at an early age demonstrated great artistic proficiency. After graduating, he studied at the Chicago

Academy of Fine Arts and became a commercial artist. Upon completing his education he directed his own commercial art business in Buffalo for eight years. Having faith in the animated cartoon industry, he joined the staff of Disney Studio in 1936 and moved to Los Angeles. He was one of the animators who created "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," the first cartoon film that revolutionized and raised the cartoon medium from a short subject to a full-feature-length production. However, he suffered from eye strain and transferred to the Promotion Department in the huge studio. This change proved to be a great benefit to him and Disney, for here he was able to combine his art ability and musical ability which worked together in synchronizing the action of cartoons with sound.

He created many of the characters in Disney's 1941 triumph "Fantasia." In addition to all this he designed billboard posters for national organizations who used Disney characters in their advertising. He made illustrations used in Good Housekeeping magazine and drew special comic strips such as "Snow White" and "Pinocchio" which were Sunday feature cartoons.

Everything was for Disney. Any idea the commercial artists came up with in the studio automatically got the stamp of Walt Disney Productions on it. The individual artists lost their identity because they all worked together for Disney. But the truth of the matter is, it was cartoonist "Hank" Porter, formerly of Albion, who actually worked on and formulated the many Disney characters including Donald Duck as we know him today. Henry died over forty years ago but his work continues to delight both children and adults alike.