

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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EMMA REED NELSON WEBSTER 1861-1931

Mrs. Emma Reed Nelson Webster was a philanthropist who endowed the Orleans County Community with both physical and financial gifts. She passed away just sixty-five years ago but her name and generosity live on with us today. Here is her story.

Emma R. Reed was the only daughter of Reuben R. Reed and Emily Hale Reed, born to them in 1861 on East Avenue in Albion. Her grandfather Levi Hale, a patriot of the war of 1812 was an early settler of Gaines where he was both a mason and a farmer.

Little is known of Emma's childhood except that her favorite color was red and that she graduated from highschool in 1881. However, she did not attend college and lived in Albion until 1914.

Her first husband was Dr. Edwin J. Nelson of Utica, N.Y. Their home however, was located in nearby Barnweld, N.Y. He was a dentist and had an interest in a knitting mill. After the death of Dr. Nelson, Emma married Frank D. Webster, a former resident of Barre who later ran a truck farm on Long Island.

Emma however, never forgot her native home and relations and often visited her home town for family reunions. Many years ago someone remembered her as having diamonds on her shoes (probably rhinestones). At any rate, she was well-to-do financially. Emma Reed Webster and her husband eventually purchased a former Quaker cobblestone meeting house on Rt. 104 in Niagara County and remodeled it into a residence called "Cobblehurst". They also maintained a large city block in DeLand, Florida.

By the early 1920's Mrs. Webster began to look for a responsible organization which might care for her family treasures and her collection of antiques. Consequently, she offered to "buy and endow" any stone, stucco or brick house in Albion which would be suitable for a DAR Chapter House and Museum. In due time she bought the home of George B. Church on North Main Street in Albion. This residence which was built in the mid-1840's by Orson Tousley, became the Orleans DAR Chapter House. After being remodeled, it was dedicated in September 1929 and remains today an outstanding architectural landmark in the Greek Revival Style. Here is located a museum of early relics and antique treasures once belonging to Mrs. Webster.

Mrs. Webster not only endowed the DAR with a chapter house, but she also set up a foundation through a bequest in her will, known as the Emma Reed Webster Aid Association. This active foundation with representatives from all over Orleans



County, meets once each season to determine allocations. Originally intended to be set up as an old folk's home in 1924, it was modified in 1930 and again in 1959 to become the foundation it is today.

In August 1931 when Mrs. Webster died, her body lay in state at the DAR Chapter House, where Rev. E.E. Jones, Pastor of the Albion Methodist Church conducted her funeral. Her remains were laid to rest at Mt. Albion Cemetery where she had erected a mausoleum for herself and Frank Webster. However, Mrs. Webster is the only one in the mausoleum, as Frank Webster remarried and is buried with his second wife at Mt. Hope in Rochester.

"A noble income, nobly expended,
is no common sight.....What
we distribute to the deserving
we shall enjoy and retain."

Rev. C.S. Colton. 1836

Notice-The next tour of Mt. Albion Cemetery will take place on Sunday October 13 at 2:00 p.m. co-hosted by C.W. Lattin and Neil Johnson.