

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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GURDON W. FITCH 1858-1948



residence at 135 South Main St. in Albion. Incidentally, this very large square house was located at the north east corner of Chamberlain St. and was later the home of Mr. and Mrs. Newell Maxon. It was razed in the early 1960's for the A&P Store parking lot, now the American Legion.

After John G. Sawyer returned from Congress in 1891, he and his son-in-law formed a partnership with Mr. Fitch staying on in the office after Sawyer died in 1898. This office was located in the Swan Block or what is known as the Marine Bank Building in the Albion business district. Mr. Fitch closed the office in 1941 but continued to carry on business from his home.

The Fitch's had one son J. Sawyer Fitch, a World War I Veteran and later a very prominent Rochester Attorney. Mrs. Julia Fitch died in 1935 four years short of their 50th wedding anniversary. The Fitch's traveled extensively and he was an ardent sportsman.

During his career he served as Clerk of the Surrogate Court and was for a number of years, a correspondent for the Associated Press. Mr. Fitch was a member of Renovation Lodge No. 97 F & AM for 62 years and served as Master from 1890-92. He was also High Priest of the Orleans Chapter Royal Arch Masons for two years. He was a member of the Albion Historical Conservation Club for 65 years.

In 1946 Mr. Fitch retired from the Board of Trustees of the First Baptist Church of Albion after having served in that capacity for fifty years. At the time he was recognized for his undaunting years of service. He first joined the Baptist Church in Knowlesville in 1874 and then transferred his membership to the Albion Church in 1885. He also served many years as the Sunday School Superintendent.

A couple of people have reminisced about him. One person remembered that whenever anyone said "How are you today, Mr. Fitch", he would always reply by simply saying "Tolerable". Another lady remembers him using an ear horn when he was getting on in years. Our portrait of him with this article was taken in 1905.

When he died, his survivors were his son, J. Sawyer Fitch, his two granddaughters, two great grandchildren and a sister, Mrs. Willis G. Prudden of Medina. Mr. and Mrs. Fitch are both buried near the Tower in Mt. Albion Cemetery.

"I think that to have known one good, old man - one man, who through the chances and mischances of a long life, has carried his heart in his hand, like a palm-branch, waving all discords into peace - helps our faith in God, in ourselves, and in each other more than many sermons." ---G.W. Curtis

A couple of weeks ago in this column Vol. XVIII No. 5 which was about J. G. Sawyer, the last Congressman from this county, I mentioned that his son-in-law was Gurdon W. Fitch. It has occurred to me that some older readers might remember him and that others might like to know who he was.

Gurdon W. Fitch was born on July 3, 1858 in Oneida, N.Y. (Madison County), the son of Dr. and Mrs. Willard R. Fitch. His father served as a surgeon during the Civil War and his mother Maria Ransom Fitch was the daughter of Oneida's First Baptist minister. When Gurdon was ten years old, the family moved to Knowlesville, N.Y. where he attended the common school. Later he graduated from the Albion Academy and went to schools in Washington, Lockport and Oneida and studied under tutors for his college work including John G. Sawyer. He was admitted to the bar in June 1885 in the Supreme Court in Buffalo.

On October 15 of that same year he married Julia A. Sawyer of Albion and they moved into the Sawyer