

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XIX

8-7-97

No. 32

JOHN HULL WHITE 1820-1902

*"Fruitful is the life of him
who sinks his roots deep
in the soil of culture laid
down by the generations."*

-Kenneth Patton

John Hull White, once a prominent Orleans County Attorney and Odd Fellow, was born in Dutchess County, N.Y. February 29, 1820. He was the third of seven children of Walter and Mary Avery White. Walter White was a respected farmer who gave his son opportunity to secure a good education. After spending his youth on the family farm, he went to New York City where he served as a clerk three years. Meanwhile, the rest of his family had moved to Mendon, Monroe County. Upon returning to his family, John White attended academies in Macedon and Waterloo. Having decided to take up the legal profession, he studied law in the offices of Denton G. Stuart of Honeoye Falls, A.P. Kimball at Penfield and Houghton and Sprague in Buffalo.

Once passing his bar exam he was admitted to practice July 2, 1848. Soon afterward he settled in Albion where he remained throughout the rest of his life. For a short period, he was associated with Ruben Bryant and with Hiram S. Goff but for the most part, worked alone. Mr. White gained particular prominence as a trail lawyer and achieved high esteem in railroad litigation cases.

In politics he was a Democrat and received his party's endorsement for office of District Attorney, County Judge and a member of Congress. However, he was always defeated by the Republican majority. Although he was elected president (Mayor) of the Village of Albion, Mr. White had a keen interest in educational affairs and served as a member of the Board of Education for 20 years, 18 of which he was president.

His record as an Odd Fellow was most outstanding. He became a member of that fraternal organization in 1848 and later was the author of a digest pertaining to Odd Fellowship. He was advanced to the position of Grand Master of the State having become a member of the Sovereign Grand Lodge in 1865. In 1887 he was elevated to the high station of Grand Sire of the Order which is the greatest honor which can be conferred.



Mr. White's monument in Mt. Albion Cemetery is a large obelisk and states: "John Hull White, Past Grand Sire IOOF". No doubt this was a high honor of which he was very proud.

In 1879 John White hired local architect, William V.W. Barlow to design a residence for him at 134 East State Street in Albion. Now owned by Joe Martillotta, this is no doubt one of Barlow's masterpieces of residential architecture. Constructed of red brick in the Second Empire style, it features a hexagonal tower and mansard roof.

Mr. White was married three times. His first wife was Temperance Miller of Dutchess County. After her death he married Mary B. Miller a widow. She died in 1891 and in 1892 he married Frances Noble. Upon Mr. White's death in 1902 he was survived by his wife Frances and two step-daughters from his second marriage.

Although John White was raised a Quaker, he occasionally attended services at Christ Church. However, his funeral was held at the First Presbyterian Church because of its large size so as to accommodate the huge contingent of mourners.