

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## PEARL COANN 1855-1910

To Mr. Pearl Coann  
Thanks are due for the  
Gift of many Books  
and for his Interest  
in establishing  
The Town Library.

So notes the wording on a framed illumination which hangs in the main reading room of the Swan Library. The decorative piece is signed by the artist M.A. Watson 1900. Indeed, Pearl Clement Coann left his mark on this community as this little testimony remains for all to see.

He was born in Albion on July 31, 1855, the son of Ezra T. Coann and Marcia Clement Coann. In fact, Ezra Coann was the founder of the Citizens National Bank of Albion. Because Pearl Coann was deaf, he therefore, received much of his early education through private tutors, although he did attend the Albion Academy. He received most of his higher education in Boston and even spent a year or more in European Clinics to improve his hearing to no avail. By profession, he was an attorney, having studied law with John Cunneen, one time N.Y.S. Attorney General and Benjamin E. Williams. He was admitted to the bar in 1882.

Through his life he was identified with numerous affairs of the village and was always willing to do his part in making the town more progressive. Because of his handicap, he was probably more inclined to take interest in reading and writing.

In 1890- Mr. Coann started a campaign for a public supported free library. He believed this was necessary to develop a person's full potential. In April 1891, the voters approved an appropriation and the Albion Free Town Library opened on August 12, 1891 in a room on the second floor of Central School. This was an elementary school located at the corner of East Park and Platt Streets which later became the Sheret Post #35. The building is now used for county offices and is known as Central Hall. The Library was as you see, a forerunner to Swan Library which was also chartered on December 1899.

Mr. Coann also owned or established, two different local newspapers which he edited. The first, which was short-lived, was the Albion Weekly News. In 1890 he started the Albion Free Lance. By having this kind of voice in the community, he was able to influence people to his way of thinking and build support for his causes such as a Free Library.

When the Swan Library opened in March 1900, the Albion Town Library was consolidated with it. Mr. Coann had purchased most of the books himself at book auctions or acquired publishers' remainders. By 1899 the collection totaled 2806 volumes when it was turned over to Swan.

As a publisher, Pearl Coann was known for his



PEARL COANN

integrity in praising what was right and condemning that which was wrong. When he retired from journalism, Mr. Coann then engaged in the apple trade, buying and shipping apples and exporting them to Glasgow, Scotland. He was the organizer of the New York-Glasgow Exporting Company. He traveled extensively in this country purchasing apples for shipment in addition to buying thousands of barrels in this locality. He was among the first, if not the first, to box and ship apples to foreign markets. He was considered an excellent judge of fruit and fruit conditions. During his career in this business, he had crossed the Atlantic Ocean forty-two times.

In 1900 Pearl Coann married Ethel Janes (1877-1917). They lived in the family home on South Main Street in Albion which later became the first Arnold Gregory Memorial Hospital Facility. This was razed in the early 1950's. In politics, Mr. Coann was a Republican. He was a member of the Orleans County Bar Association and a communicant of Christ Episcopal Church.

He was remembered as a charitable and generous man as well as a literary critic who was a reader and well-versed in the works of leading authors.

Ad astra per aspera (to the stars through hardships). — Proverb.