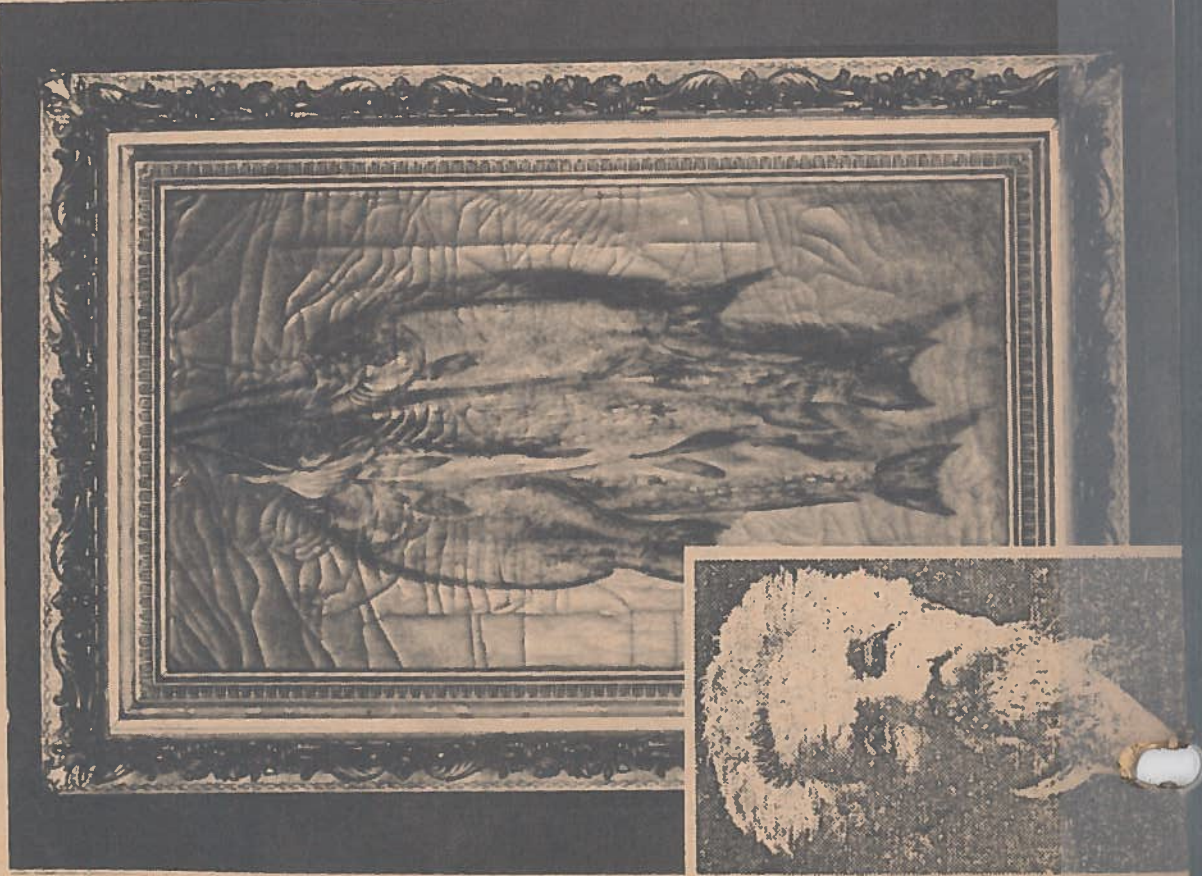


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# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



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### PETER B. WEST 1837 - 1913

There has probably never been a time in history without status symbols of one form or another. During the last three decades of his life, Artist Peter B. West created many paintings for the locally well-to-do, all of which in essence were status symbols. Along with the painting of the Hallock Farmstead mentioned last week, Mr. Stephen Chapman likewise gave the Swan Library a painting of a "catch of Bass and Pickerel" also done in 1887 by P.B. West. Both oil paintings were once owned by millionaire Stephen Hallock and are handsomely mounted in elegant gilt and gold frames. It is noted on the back of another locally owned West painting that the price of it when purchased in 1894 was \$75. This price alone indicates beyond question the esteem held for West's work at a time when a dollar was worth a dollar.

Except for the following information we know very little about the artist himself. We know he was born in England and studied painting there. We know he emigrated to the United States in 1873 and for a while at least, worked for Phineas T. Barnum decorating his parade circus wagons with animal pictures. We know he lived on Clarendon Road in a house no longer there and that he raised Southdown Sheep. A painting interpreting his love of these beasts was given by Mrs. Jesse Davis Stevenson to the Cobblestone Museum last season and may be seen there. We also know that West and a water colorist by the name of Alvin Briggs shared a second floor studio in Albion near the canal.

We know more than anything that Peter B. West left in his work a legacy of beauty. His animal subjects in dark tones are clear and succinct. He was noted in his own day first and foremost as an animal painter. Many of these works still remain locally, giving testimony to his talent for painting: sheep, horses, goats, dogs, deer, cattle, fish and game, rabbits, chickens and yes...even a painting of a dead canary on a book entitled "Song of the Past by Dick".