

Bethinking of Old Orleans

Vol. XX

C.W. Lattin County Historian

No. 30

7-29-98

AN ADMIRER MODEL

With attention in recent days on the historic Womens Rights celebration in Seneca Falls, it helps us to focus on the contributions of local women. One such individual from the past, who will be recognized for her success, is Dr. Phebe Sprague a one-time resident of Holley. On Saturday, August 1 at 11:00 A.M. the Orleans County Historical Association will unveil a marker dedicated to her. The marker is to be placed at 39 Geddes Street in Holley where her home was once located. This is now the site of the Merrill-Grinnell Funeral Home parking lot.

This event has been scheduled as a part of Holley's Fountain Festival which includes many community-wide events from 9-5 on Sat., August 1. Civil War demonstrations, live music, flea market, chicken barbecue and a spaghetti dinner are just a few of the highlights.

Dr. Phoebe R. Sprague was the daughter of Danly Sprague of an old and influential family from Holley. She was born on a farm two miles northwest of Holley on December 11, 1845. After acquiring her early education in a district school, she attended the Albion Academy, Holley Academy and Brockport Collegiate Institute. In 1870 she went to Chicago and entered the Women's Hospital Medical College where she graduated in 1873.

In 1871, while still in college, she was connected with the Hospital for Women and Children and during the great fire in Chicago she was sent to Lincoln Park, where she won especial honors in caring for and nursing the sufferers from the fire. In 1874 she went to Springfield, Mass., where she began the general practice of medicine, and for 25 years was a most successful doctor, not only medically, but financially, she having amassed quite a fortune through her practices.

She went to New York in 1895 for a post-graduate course, attending the New York School of Clinical Medicine, receiving a diploma in gynecology, surgery and electro physics.

In 1899 she returned to her family home near Holley. In 1902 she purchased a lot on Geddes St. in Holley and built a home for herself, her sister and two nieces.

During the summer of 1904, prior to her death in November, she was instrumental in having a Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star organized. She was immediately elected their first Worthy Matron and the Chapter of OES was named the Sprague Chapter in our honor.

Dr. Sprague was also a member of the Charity Rebecca Lodge and the Albion Historical Society. In 1902 Governor Odell appointed her one of the managers of the Women's House of Refuge at Albion where she was subsequently elected secretary of the board. Indeed, Dr. Sprague was an outstanding and



progressive woman for the times, one who was a credit to her profession and an inspiration to other women.

"She was a woman full of good works and her charities extended far beyond her own family... She was possessed of an indomitable will, which combined with her great energy and perseverance, made her life a success"

Also From Holley - In Vol. XX No. 19 of this column entitled McCarthy's Bridge, I inquired about a cobblestone house once located on Rt. 237 on the canal bank. Two different women have responded to me with the answer. Winifred Bentley and Florence Miller both agree that the cobblestone house suffered a fire around 1949 or 1950 and was subsequently razed. Miss Bentley remembers her family living in the house when she was a little girl. Mrs. Miller remembers her grandparents Francis and Florence Haight also living there after the Bentleys. Both women recall it stood directly on the towpath and that a fence was located only inches from the stoop.