

# Rethinking of Old Orleans

5-3-02

No. 18

Vol. XXIV

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## Children's Day

My thanks to Fern Blackburn of Medina for sharing this photo which was taken on June 30, 1907, at the Universalist Church in Ridgeway. The event is clearly noted in a floral motto on the wall which states: "Blooming for Jesus — Children's Day."

From the mid-19th century into the 20th century, Children's Day was a very special event usually set aside for the last Sunday in June. This occasion was a major part of many Protestant church Sunday school programs. Children gave recitations, sometimes in costume, provided special music and were given awards. At the Cobblestone Church in Childs, known as the Church of the Good Shepherd, Children were also brought forth for baptism or, as Universalists called it, dedication.

To highlight this event, church interiors were profusely decorated with all kinds of flowers, as our vintage photo reflects. From legend we know

the interior of the Cobblestone Church at Childs was decorated with garlands of flowers made by the ladies of the church, which were then draped on the sides of the galleries. Regularly placed nail holes in the paneling bear this out. Legend also indicates that birds in their cages were hung up to further decorate the sanctuary, making it very festive.

From a record book of 1877 it is noted that the church was decorated with mottoes for Children's Day. There is, however, no indication what the mottoes stated and unfortunately there are no old photos of the interior.

From a 19th century hymnal used at the Cobblestone Church we find the following Children's Day hymn:

The Children's Sabbath  
comes again,  
with birds and flowers bright,  
With early fruits and gentle rain  
And floods of sunshine light.  
All nature's voices loud proclaim



God's  
Goodness great and free,  
Let all the children praise his name  
With glad sweet melody

Children's Day truly must have been a highlight in the church year. Otherwise, the Universalists in Ridgeway wouldn't have bothered to have W. C. Eaton of Jeddo, a professional photographer, come in to take the picture we see here.

As part of the Cobblestone Museum's spring programming, the interior of the Cobblestone Church at Childs will be decorated during the months of May and June to emulate how it might have looked in the late 1870s and 1880s for Children's Day. Garlands, mottoes, bird cages and many flowers will decorate the sanctuary.

One opportunity to see this will occur on Mother's Day, May 12, when the Cobblestone Museum Complex will be open free of charge to all

visitors between the hours of 1 and 5 p.m. All seven historic buildings will be open for tours and the society's book sale will also be available. During this open house,

Albion photographer Veronica Morgan will display her series of photos on the still bridges along the Erie Canal throughout Orleans County. This exhibit will be located in the

Proctor Room in the basement level of the Cobblestone Church. Her series of photos was sponsored in part by a grant from the Genesee Orleans Council on the Arts.