



Bethinking of Old Orleans 1-30-04

Vol. XXVI

No. 5

By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County Historian

Reminiscences

Like last week's article, I have again selected some one-liners from a column of Reminiscences published at Albion by the Orleans Republican in 1922.

I believe these were compiled by Lafayette H. Beach (1856-1925), who was working from personal memory going back in time to his childhood. Each column started out with "Doings of the Old Days Long Gone By — Do You Remember?"

"When the clothiers gave suspenders or a tie free with a suit of clothes?"

"When the Village Hall site was a vacant lot on which traveling humbugs and Fakirs sold gew-gaws and worthless cure-alls by the light of smoking torches?"

"When two towing companies (the Red and the Blue) hauled many of the boats on the canal for 25 cents a mile, each company having a barn in Albion for the exchange and stabling of towing teams?"

"When some people used brooms made of cedar or spruce boughs fastened on a stick fashioned for a handle?"

"When young men who dressed in the height of fashion wore skin-tight pantaloons with straps under the boots to keep them stretched out?"

"When a dozen oyster houses did business here and you sat on a high stool at the counter and soused peppersauce on the bivalves as the half-shells were passed to you?"

"When the man who put the finishing touches on the Presbyterian Church spire stood erect at the apex and hurrahed for Grant?"

"When 'switched' was the chief harvest drink on the farm — water, vinegar, sugar and a

pinch of ginger?"

"When funeral processions used to get stuck in the mud on East Avenue in the spring and fall, and teams had to be called to start the procession going again?"

"When Albion was an open town for gamblers and painted women and when John N. Proctor, as village president, and John Cunneen, as village attorney, put skids under these undesirables and moved them out of town?"

"When fish peddlers from the lake sold whitefish at your door for 25 cents each and when luscious watermelons with rich red meat and black seeds sold from the farmers' wagons for 10 to 35 cents?"

"When Jim Smith in the Swan block basement sold whiskey and ale for three cents per glass and when 25 cents would cover a treat of the full house, in the days when booze was free from all tax and sold wholesale at 15 cents per gallon?"

"When the New York Central kept its work train here and maintained a repair shop and turntable?"

"When marriage was regarded as a life contract and not an experiment subject to easy dissolution?"

"When choirs in Albion churches were all located in the rear of the room — the preacher at one end and the singers at the other?"

Today's photo represents the choir and organ loft at the historic Cobblestone Church in Childs, where unlike most Protestant churches of today, the choir remains in the rear with the preacher on the opposite wall — just like in days long gone by.