

BETHINKING OF OLDE ORLEANS

Vol. XXX No. 1

1-3-08

Reflection — Seeing the need

BILL LATTIN
Orleans County historian

Noting the volume number above of this column you will see this is the beginning of the 30 year for "Bethinking of Old Orleans." From the Gaines Centennial booklet published in 1909 we find:

"Time speeds away, away, away

Another hour, another day.
Another month, another year
A century gone like the leaflet here."

As I begin this column for another year it crosses my mind to reflect upon the one just completed. We, as individuals, have a tendency to do this annually at this season. So, do you see your cup half empty or do you see your cup half full as you reflect?

From my perspective I see our Orleans cup half full rather than half empty. In reflecting upon this I'd like to point out three highly positive accomplishments achieved during 2007. You no doubt will have your own thoughts on the year's best things done locally. Here, however, are my three.

The Villages of Orleans is truly a reflection of how our community sees health care directed especially to its senior citizens. Formerly the Orleans County Nursing Home, this facility in its commodious new styling is a visual statement we can all be proud of. The excellent care which is dispersed here is given in a modern setting which shows we have

some of our priorities aligned correctly. With the ribbon cutting this past season, county legislators can take a bow.

Secondly, on my list is the spectacular restoration of the sanctuary in the First Presbyterian Church, Albion. Now taken back to the 1910 period, the interior is profusely stenciled especially the ceiling, which is simply glorious. The congregation saw the need and raised the money through dedicated support of members. Their building is an architectural treasure in our region that our entire community can be proud of. It is gratifying to see a congregation recognize the importance of its historic sacred property and treat this landmark with the deserved reverence it undoubtedly requires.

Thirdly, I point out the establishment and opening in June of the Upper Gallery at the Cobblestone Society Museum in Childs. The second floor of the 1836 Brick House was transformed into a gallery for the expressed purpose of displaying an extensive collection of Victorian religious prints on a rotating basis. The gallery is open at no admission charge during the museum season. It is my hope that this one of a kind gallery will be seen as a community treasure in the years to come.

Susan Daiss, the McPherson Director of Education at Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, wrote of this endeavor as follows:

"Among the many lessons preserved in museums is how ephemeral the dailiness of our lives really is, and often, what we most readily take for granted is particularly vulnerable to forces of change.

A century ago, religious prints and documents were the most commonplace of household decorations — at once, ornamental and instructive. What we might see today as simplistic and sentimental, were treasured for their imagery and meaning.

They reminded the family of the grounding stories and principles of their lives, the teachings of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures — as they identified the family to any who came calling — from the neighbors to visiting clergy — that here lived a family of faith, solid members of the community."

Seemingly three unrelated accomplishments above, yet there is a common thread which can be identified as preservation.

The county saw the need of preserving and enhancing the quality of life for those unable to do it for themselves. A church saw the need to preserve its heritage for the spiritual requirements of today. And a museum saw the need to preserve a segment of our heritage so frequently overlooked.

These are just three things accomplished in 2007, but to me they plainly reflect that our Orleans cup is not half empty but half full and rising.