

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

4-30-82



Vol IV

No. 17

ALBERT S. WARNER 1845-1907

"I have said a dozen times that Warner would commit suicide, be sent to state prison or leave the country".

---William R. Caulkins 1884

One hundred years ago Albert S. Warner was one of Albion's most prominent and flamboyant citizens. He was charming, good looking (he's 37 years old in this Napoleonic pose) and a rakish dresser who greatly resembled Edwin Booth the actor. He was president of the First National Bank and a member of the Board of Education for five years, also serving as president of that body in 1881. Influential in Democratic Party politics he was elected County Treasurer in 1869. He was a thirty-second degree Mason and an active member of the Fire Department serving several years as chief engineer. But somehow everything went wrong. Here is the story of the failure of the First National Bank,

Swan Library. These two brothers were left heirs of large real estate holdings from which they gained their basic fortunes. In 1839 the Bank of Albion commenced business with these two men as chief stockholders. In 1863 it was reorganized becoming the First National Bank of Albion with Roswell S. Burrows as president. Over the years he became very wealthy through large holdings of real estate in the mid-west, a coal mine in Virginia, railroad bonds, Suspension Bridge stock and many other securities.

In the early 1860's young Albert S. Warner known as "Allie" applied for a job at the First National Bank. Mr. Burrows liked him immediately and hired him without hesitation. As time passed, he became as shrewd and careful as his employer could wish him to be. When age crept upon Mr. Burrows he found Albert an indispensable assistant. When Mr. Burrows died in 1879, Albert Warner was named an executor of the vast \$6,000,000 estate and appointed president of the First National Bank. He was after all, the only one familiar with all the details for administrating the bank and estate; and the other co-executors were willing that he do it in his own way. But time went on and no accounting of the estate was forthcoming. There were many who felt that Warner was speculating heavily in the stock market. In the Spring of 1884 he constructed a fine roller skating rink on East Bank Street in Albion at considerable expense.

William R. Burrows, the only son of Roswell, became a habitual drinker and thus was unfitted for the business. Together, he and Warner invested in the Craig Kidney Cure Company of Rochester. W.R. Caulkins of that company was sent to Boston to open a branch there and W.R. Burrows went with him. It was however, no secret that W.R. Burrows did not like Warner as the latter continually refused to give an inventory of the estate. But in May 1884 a court order was obtained directing Warner to show cause why he should not file an inventory. His excuse was that the heirs had signed a contract that he should not file such a document. But August 18, 1884 was set for the inventory to be filed. It was also in May of 1884 that W.R. Burrows became deathly sick and it was found upon examination that he was suffering from

Warner's subsequent disappearance and his alleged personal and financial involvement incriminating him as an embezzler.

Roswell S. and Lorenzo Burrows were two early settlers and merchants in Albion. The house Lorenzo built is now Albion Federal Savings and Loan Association. Likewise, the prominent home of Roswell S. Burrows is now

arsenic poisoning. Warner had been visiting him in Boston and Burrows felt that he had once offered him a drink with something in it. However, a Grand Jury found no evidence of Warner's involvement as Burrows survived.

When August 18 arrived, the day for filing, Warner did not appear before Orleans Surrogate Isaac Signor. His non-appearance caused immediate suspicion as he was nowhere to be found. Within a day or two the bank directors disposed of Warner as president and sent for a bank examiner. In the bank vault was a safe and Warner was the only one who had the combination. The safe therefore, had to be forced open by an expert. This did not occur until August 25. Nothing of any value was found! "Warner was up to his neck in Wall Street". He had an uncontrollable mania for speculating, squandering everybody else's money. Depositors bonds, securities and about \$40,000 were missing. The bank closed, never to reopen. A warrant was put out by District Attorney Knapp for Warner's arrest but that's as far as it ever went. It was felt that Warner had no real intention of committing a crime, that if his losses had not been so great he would probably have replaced it all.

Upon disappearing from Albion, he left his wife Jennie, son Roswell and Father Lewis with his disgrace. The Orleans Republican reported on August 27, 1884 the following: "It will be a hard matter for Warner to disguise himself. It is a singular fact that he was unable to grow a moustache or beard." In Canada and lived at Inwood, Ontario and that his wife and son later joined him there. However, it is said that in 1887 Warner returned to Albion for his father's funeral and making use of his fair complexion, he did it disguised as a woman.

"O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

---Scott