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# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



**ALVIN L. BRIGGS,**

**LANDSCAPE PAINTER!**

Residence at Fair Haven,

STUDIO, (3d Story,) ROYCE'S BLOCK,

**ALBION, N. Y.**

Vol IV

## A FORGOTTEN ARTIST

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The 11th Annual Art Show and Sale comprised of work by local artists is being held this Mother's Day weekend at the Cobblestone Museum in Childs, N.Y. This brings to mind a local artist of the past who once actually lived in Childs back in the days when it was known as Fairhaven. His name was Alvin L. Briggs (1834-1920) and his advertisement from the 1869 Orleans County Directory appears herein. Mr. Briggs was widely known locally in his later days as a fine watercolourist. His paintings were usually small, shaped rectangular and in a horizontal format. The subject of his work was local scenery including beautiful skies, trees, sometimes sheep and small streams or lakeshore scenes. He once said "I paint atmosphere". His landscapes are characterized by being wispy and in very soft pastel colors with greens and blues predominating. The picture included here is typical of his outstanding brush work. The later paintings he created were often mounted in narrow gold frames behind wide off-white or gold mats. Seventy-five years ago his work was proudly displayed in many well-decorated local homes. It was a status symbol. If you think you have such a water color look to see if you can find his signature in a lower corner of the painting. It's apt to be faint but still be signed A.L. Briggs or just A.L.B.

Other than this, very little is known about Alvin Briggs the man, except that he was married, his wife's name was Adeline and they had three sons. He also unfortunately had a speech impediment which perhaps inhibited his self-esteem. It is said that he once submitted his art work for approval in a New York gallery which was readily appreciated until he was asked to appear in person. Due to his deformity the water colors were then rejected. At one time he supposedly shared a studio with artist Peter B. West which was located near the canal in downtown Albion. We also know that he lived most of his life in Albion rather than Childs.

The Orleans County Department of History is anxious to learn more of Mr. Briggs and the whereabouts of his many water colors. Does anyone have a photograph of him? It is hoped that an exhibition of his work may be held in conjunction with the historic Gaines Jubilee now being planned for 1984.

A sample of Mr. Briggs' work will be on display at the Cobblestone Church during the Art Show this weekend, May 8 and 9.