

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian  
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"Why should it be thought incredible that the same soul should inhabit in succession an indefinite number of mortal bodies...? Even during this one life our bodies are perpetually changing, though by a process of decay and restoration which is so gradual that it escapes our notice. Every human being thus dwells successively in many bodies, even during one short life."

--Francis Bowen, 1811 - 1890

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## MEET YOURS TRULY

### Historian, Orleans County

As County Historian it may seem a bit presumptuous to write about myself. Yet, I feel it is necessary in order to complete the whole series of articles in this column on official local historians. You at least, deserve to know who is behind this weekly column and some of my background.

This picture of me was taken around 1949 at our Gaines Basin Road farm where I grew up and now live. My daughters, Adrienne and Allison, are the seventh generation to live on land in the Town of Gaines purchased from the Holland Land Company by my great, great, great grandfather, Robert Anderson. My parents, Cary H. and Avis Wilson Lattin operated this family farm until around 1958 when my father became the Orleans County Historian. Upon graduating from Albion High School in 1963 I attended the State University College at Buffalo for Art Education where I received a degree in 1968. From then until 1978 I was a teacher, first for one year at the Wise Junior High School in Medina and then at Albion High School where I taught Art and Mechanical Drawing.

My association with local history however, came early and in a variety of ways. As a child I seemed to have a special perception of old buildings and a talent for drawing them. At the age of eight I began to develop an interest in collecting antiques. I attribute this kind of intuitiveness to family interest as well as experiences from previous incarnations. At any rate, without much formal training in architectural or social history it is relatively easy for me to set the stage, so to speak, of bygone eras. The first big opportunity for doing this came in January 1971 when I was hired to design exhibits at the Cobblestone Museum. I've been there ever since as Curator and from October 1980 as full time director. Because of this, I have a hand in planning all our annual programs and future goals. Of our accomplishments at the museum, I'm proudest of Farmers Hall, which was in 1978, my idea and challenge to supervise its move from Kendall and reconstruction at Childs for our collection of farming tools.

In June 1978 I was appointed Executive Secretary for the Orleans County Council on the Arts which is a part time position. Program planning for the local arts including the Swan Gallery and making arrangements for guest performing artists are part of the job.

Upon the retirement of Arden McAllister as County Historian, I was appointed to the position which took effect January 1, 1979. Writing "Bethinking of Old Orleans", assisting researchers, presenting lectures on local history and giving numerous tours of the historic Court House district, often times coupled with tours of the Cobblestone Museum keeps me especially busy during the fair weather season. The Orleans County Department of History acts as a repository of all local history. A filing system with various topical headings has information added to it daily from local papers. I am always happy to accept old photos, scrap books and any other archival material relating to the county's history.

Along with these vocational duties, I was elected a Councilman to the Gaines Town Board and am President of three organizations including: The N.Y.S. County Historians Association, Historical Monument Corporation and Swan Library Association. I'm also co-chairman of the 1984 Historic Gaines Jubilee Committee and a board member of the Eastern Orleans Chapter American Red Cross. Membership in other organizations include: Cobblestone Society, Albion Chamber of Commerce, Orleans County Historical Association, Orleans County Council on The Arts, Western Monroe Historical Society, Town Club of Albion, Loyal Order of Moose No. 789, Pullman Memorial Universalist Church and Associate memberships in Sheret Post #35 American Legion and the Bogue Home Fund for Dependent Children.