

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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**ROBERT C. MARSH**

1874 - 1937

In His Own Words - 1933

"I came to Albion in February, 1898, and took employment with E.W. Wilcox following my trade of sheet metal and plumbing. Mr. Wilcox at that time had one of the foremost hardware and plumbing shops in Western New York. There seemed to be an upturn in the hardware and plumbing business at that time brought on by a desire on the part of the people to obtain more in the way of comforts. They had just gotten over the hard times of the Cleveland Administration; orchards were being built up and the community was gaining a reputation as a large commercial fruitgrowing section, with people in general making more money than they had in the past. The Wilcox business, especially along plumbing and heating lines, was extremely active at that time and we found plenty of work to do.



Robert C. Marsh

"From 1905 to 1910 I was employed in Buffalo and then having an opportunity to go into business for myself, I chose Abion and opened up a plumbing and heating shop. While competition was keen we were able to get a toehold right from the start. I recall in those days, particularly, the long hours we put in. Sufficient to say, we worked a lot longer than ten hours.

"In 1914 we saw further opportunity to expand and started to add a line of hardware. Since that time we have had more and more calls for articles of this nature until we have developed into a full-fledged hardware business.

"We have seen many changes in the major items of this line - for instance, prior to 1916 homes were almost entirely heated by stoves. The idea of central heating or furnaces seemed to originate at that time, giving further impetus to our business. This is likewise true of the urge for more modern bathroom facilities. Business was pretty good in all lines during this period.

"The first year I voted in Albion, George Ough was elected Mayor. I recall that under the administration of Mr. Ough the paving of streets in Albion was started. Prior to that time the Four Corners in wet weather was mud over one's shoe tops. They started paving the streets from the village limits in toward the center to town, the theory being that they didn't know how much money it was going to cost and they were more sure of obtaining additional funds to complete the roads in the center of the village than they were if they started the other way round.

"The main center of amusement in those days was the Pratt Opera House. We used to have one good show come to town about once a month and in the interim there were various entertainments usually in the form of traveling stock companies. This, of course, was largely confined to the winter months.

"Naturally having lived here so long I am a great believer in Albion. Business in the last year or so has not been, of course, what we would like, but I have seen it much worse and am satisfied that we will forward in our own way again just as we have many times recovered from these dull periods in the past."