



Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian
1-17-85

Vol. VII

No. 3

JUDGE ARAD THOMAS 1807 - 1889

*"He that giveth his mind to the law
of the Most High, and is occupied in
the meditation thereof, will seek out
the wisdom of all the ancients..."*

Ecclesiasticus

Judge Arad Thomas was born at Woodstock, VT. in the year 1807. He resided at home and worked with his father until he was seventeen years of age. In 1830 he graduated from Union College. During the year 1831 he served as deputy secretary of the State of Vermont. In 1832 he moved to Gaines, N.Y. where he studied law under the Hon. W.W. Ruggles. He was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court and in 1836 moved to Albion. During the years 1840, 41, 42 and 58 Arad Thomas served as president of the Village of Albion. In the year 1843 he was elected a justice of the peace, a position he held for eight consecutive years. He was also elected County Judge and held that office from 1859 - 1862.

In the year 1842 Judge Thomas and Lorenzo Burrows formed the committee to formulate amendments to the village charter to form a corporation to buy land outside of the village for the establishment of Mt. Albion Cemetery. In 1859 through his



inception and energetic efforts the Orleans County Pioneer and Historical Association was formed. Its purpose was to collect and preserve the spirit and foster research into the early pioneer history of Orleans County. In 1873 it was Judge Thomas who was a prime mover in establishing the African A.M.E. Church on Ingersoll Street for the benefit of the black population at that time. He was himself a Universalist and was affiliated with the Church of the Good Shepard, now the Cobblestone Church at Childs. In 1882 he was instrumental in establishing the first museum in the county which was a log building erected on the old fair grounds in Albion.

Arad Thomas was indeed a visionary and one who made good things come about for the betterment of his community.

Aside from all this, Judge Thomas also left to the people of Orleans County a tremendous legacy in the form of several publications. In 1853 he wrote and compiled a little booklet entitled "Sketches of the Village of Albion". This contained incidents of its history and progress from the first settlement up to a statistical account of schools, societies and manufacturers at that time.

In 1871 Arad Thomas completed his authoritative account "Pioneer History of Orleans County, New York". In this work are brief biographical accounts of early settlers and their situations and hardships. Arad Thomas might well be considered the first local historian in Orleans County for he saw the importance of preserving early remembrances of a former age. He recognized at an early point in time, the immediacy of jotting down these firsthand remembrances of the older people before they died. "Pioneer History of Orleans County, New York" was the first book of its type just about Orleans County history and remains today as one of our most valuable resources of information for the early development of this area. We are indeed, indebted to Judge Arad Thomas for his vision, foresight and initiative as one of Orleans County's greatest doers.

*"Still from the hurrying train of life, fly
backward far and fast,
The mile stones of the fathers - the landmarks of the past."*

— Whittier —