

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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County
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Then to life I turn again,
Learning all the worth of pain,
Learning all the might that lies
In a full self-sacrifice.

—John Reynell Wreford

Dr. John E. Sutton 1856-1941

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Dr. John E. Sutton was born on a farm in the Town of Carlton on February 27, 1856. He was the son of Thomas and Kitty (Brown) Sutton who were natives of Kent, England. He received his early education in the common schools and graduated from the Albion Academy. He then taught school in Carlton for several terms before entering the Medical Department of the University of Buffalo in 1880. Prior to this he had spent four years in preparatory study under Dr. S. R. Cochrane, who gave him the necessary knowledge for entering medical school. Dr. Sutton received his degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Buffalo in 1883 after three years of study. He was then twenty-seven years of age. Upon graduation from medical school he first practiced in East Pembroke for a limited time and then Shortsville for an equally limited time.

Dr. Sutton then moved to Albion where he formed a partnership with Dr. S. R. Cochrane, the physician under whom he had served his preceptorship. The partnership continued for seven years when Dr. Sutton opened his own office in the Sickels Block on Main Street. Later he moved his office to East Bank Street. Although Dr. Sutton planned upon his return to Albion, to remain only a few years and then seek a wider field in a larger city, the growth of his practice and deepening interests in the community kept him in Albion the rest of his life.

In 1891 he married Miss Lizzie Post Bruner, daughter of the one time owner and editor of the Orleans American. They had three children: Dr. John E. Sutton, Jr., Dr. Henry Bruner Sutton and Miss Janet Sutton Flagg. In 1902 after the death of his first wife, Dr. Sutton married Alice Rogers to whom was born William Rogers Sutton.

Dr. Sutton throughout his lifetime interested himself consistently in the advancement of the Albion community,

primarily as a physician but also as a citizen in many other capacities. He served several terms as coroner and on the Board of Health. He belonged to the Orleans County Medical Society, the New York State Medical Society and the American Medical Association. He served for fifteen years as a member of the Albion Board of Education and several years as president. Dr. Sutton was a member of the Albion Masonic and Odd Fellows lodges and the Albion Historical Club. He was also identified with the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church.

In 1933 he was interviewed by a reporter upon completion of fifty years in the medical profession. He noted in those fifty years dating back to 1883 that "then, practically nothing was known about bacteria as being in any way related to disease as a cause. It was not dreamed that a soiled hand or a towel might carry a deadly disease from the sick to the well or that a mosquito might under certain circumstances have a more deadly and far reaching malignancy than a rattler, that the air might carry to the child or adult the germs of Diphtheria and other deadly infections, for which no remedy was known at the time. Typhoid fever since then has been largely brought under control by vaccinations and yellow fever by destruction or exclusion of a special type of mosquito. Pasteur conquered rabies, one of the most deadly disease, Bacquerel in 1896 taught something of radio-active substances, Marie Slodovska Currie discovered radium, a year or two before X-ray had been discovered and all these have had a profound effect upon the practice of medicine and surgery."

"During the past fifty years we have seen the development of rank fads, some of which have passed into oblivion, while others are still with us building monuments to their foolishness. If the science of medicine has progressed more rapidly within the past 50 years than in the preceding 50 centuries, the practice of an early "country doctor" has changed almost as radically. There were many winter nights when it seemed almost impossible to break through the snow-blocked country roads, when a cutter would almost be overturned by the force with which it struck a pitchhole and precious hours spent in making the journey to the bedside of the stricken person. Then there were times when the swift drive into the country on a frosty moonlight night was keen delight. Warmly wrapped in blankets and driving a good horse, the dash to the aid of a distressed one was exhilarating in the extreme."

Back in those early years Dr. Sutton was known for having splendid horses in his stables. On one winter occasion he made a trip to the lake in forty minutes, a distance of about ten miles. Although it wasn't the best thing for the horse, it was joy to those breathlessly awaiting his arrival. Sometimes he would travel with his horse and cutter crosslots because of the impassability of country roads.

During his fifty-eight years of actual service in Orleans County, he earned a reputation of progressiveness intertwined with his chosen profession and his varied interests in the community.