

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



(Copy by Louis Monacelli)

JUDGE HENRY A. CHILDS 1836-1906

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“What a piece of work is a man!
How noble in reason!
How infinite in faculty! in form
and moving how express and
admirable! in action how
like an angel! in apprehension
how like a god!”

Shakespeare - Hamlet

Henry Augustine Childs eldest son of Levi and Ann (Wright) Childs was born in Gaines, N.Y. July 17, 1836. He received his education at district school and the Albion and Macedon Academies. Beginning at an early age, he was determined to become an attorney. After securing his basic education he embarked upon the study of law under Benjamin L. Bessac in Albion. Four years later in 1859 he was admitted to the bar and immediately became associated with the law firm of Sickels and Graves in Medina. In 1868 Mr. Childs was elected Orleans County District Attorney, an office which he held until 1877. In 1873 he formed a partnership with Edmund L. Pitts of Medina which lasted until 1883. He was very active in the legal profession and took a prominent position in the Republican Party within the county. His ability and sterling qualifications were widely recognized by his fellow citizens.

It came as no surprise when his name was placed in nomination for one of the Supreme Court Justices for the Western District of New York at a judicial convention held in Buffalo in 1883. He was elected by a large majority and served in that office beginning in January 1884 until his death in May 1906. His jurisdiction covered the counties of Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Genesee, Wyoming, Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua. Justice Childs always maintained the dignity and lofty traditions of his office to which he brought a well-disciplined legal mind. He was quick to grasp the facts in the case before him and fearless in expounding the law. He was considered to have the greatest integrity concerning his office. The high esteem in which he was held was well-expressed when the community of Fairhaven in the Town of Gaines changed its name to Childs in honor of him. In 1897 when Fairhaven wanted a Post Office the name had to be changed because of confusion with another Fairhaven in N.Y. State. Hence, the name Childs was placed on the hamlet in honor of a home town boy who made good.

In 1859 Henry Childs married Julia B. Freeman and in due time they had three children. They were: Mrs. William L. Marcy, Miss Julia Childs and Milford W. Childs. Their family home, now the Maple Crest, is located on the corner of W. Center Street and Prospect Avenue in the village of Medina. Judge Henry Child's grandchildren include Mrs. Adelaide Holt and Mr. Milford "Bud" Childs, both of Medina.

“Weep for the godlike life we lost afar -
Weep! - thou and I its scattered fragments are;
And still the unconquered yearning we retain -
Sigh to restore the rapture and the reign,
And grow divine again.”

Friedrich Schiller