

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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LIFE ON THE RIDGE

"Life On The Ridge" is the title of the most recent book written by J. Howard Pratt. It was released just before Christmas and is his third book. His previous books have been "Memories of Life On The Ridge" 1978 and "Saga of the Ridge" 1983. It has been published by Heart of the Lakes Publishing and is the culmination of several years' work by the author. It includes old photos and many of Mr. Pratt's early memories of life as it used to be as well as information on topics before his time.

Here are just a few of the chapter headings to give you an idea of the contents: The First Fruit Trees, Building a Cobblestone House, Preparation of Mortar Used in Cobblestone Buildings, Corn Harvest, Yesterdays Memories of Knowlesville, Harvesting and Packing Apples, Moving the House, The Tobacco Industry of 1900, Driving Sheep to Oakfield and Some of the Things I see No More. The photo from the book



included with this article shows the author and his sister Florence, in the mid 1890's.

Interesting parts of the book include Mr. Pratt's personal reminiscences of when he was a boy. Following is one such account from "Life On The Ridge":

"Now, this was the year when the old brick school on West Academy Street was torn down. They were building a new school there. For a half year the High School was held in the Town Clerk's building on East Bank Street. Our study

hall was on the second floor in the building next south of the Pratt Opera House. A girl and three boys who passed arithmetic were told to report to the algebra class at the Town Hall.

"Now this was the third week in school. The High School class had been studying algebra for two weeks. The four who just passed arithmetic had not studied it at all. I think it was the second or third day when I heard, "Pratt, what is the definition of a fraction in algebra?" I did not know and replied, "I don't know." Then he asked the boy next to me. The answer was, "I don't know." He asked the third boy. He replied, "I don't know." Then the teacher replied, "You three boys should not be in an algebra class, you should be in a cabbage patch hoeing cabbage." I felt like sinking through the floor. Going back to our homeroom, the largest boy said to me, "if I ever catch that teacher on the streets, I will give him a damned good beating." I did not know what to say, but my thoughts were, "I hope I am there to lead the cheering."

"I made up my mind that I would stick it out and show Professor Pultz what a good cabbage hoer I was. I asked a friend who had studied algebra to teach me how to add and subtract in algebra. Also, how to multiply and divide. The other two boys gave up algebra and shortly the girl also gave it up. I was the only one left. I took my algebra text book and carefully studied the first ten pages. I carefully prepared the lesson

he gave us to do each day. I obtained a better seat in the class. I was now prepared and did not have to say, "I don't know." Professor Pultz did not bear down on me. I was one of the class. I tried hard to get my lesson each day. Algebra is a year's study. I tried the State Examination the following June.

"I waited a couple of days and then went to Professor Pultz. "Did I pass algebra and what is my standing?" He looked at his classbook. "Your standing is 96". I stood there and waited. Did he have any work for me? After a long minute I asked, "What was the highest standing in the class?" He looked over the standings of the class and said, "97." I waited a minute and left the room with a smile. A country boy had passed arithmetic and algebra the same school year with a standing of 96 in each."

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of "Life On The Ridge", they are available locally in Albion at Swan Library and Fisher's News Room, in Holley at the Country Store, in Medina at the Lee-Whedon Library, Curvins and Personal Touch, in Lyndonville at the Library, in Eagle Harbor at Harbor Crafts and of course, directly from the author.

Scattered throughout the book are numerous quotations of bits of Yankee philosophy. I'll leave you with this one:

"Everything comes to him who waits if he works while he waits."