

[Billings, J. Drake]

J. Drake Billings was born in the Town of Gaines Feb. 20, 1822 and received his education in the common schools and the old Gaines Academy. In 1845 he married Melinda Shaw, by whom there were three children including: one son, George N. Billings who moved to Kansas and two daughters who were Dr. Cora Lattin and Lottie Stilson. It is interesting to note that George N. Billings married Grace Bedell of Albion, the little girl who in 1860 wrote the famous letter to Lincoln suggesting that he would look better if he were to grow a beard.

Landmarks of Orleans County published in 1894 states that Hon. J. Drake Billings "...is a well read man, and owns a valuable library. He has a farm of 155 acres, and has taken a prominent part in local affairs..." His farm was located in the Town of Carlton at the north east corner of Baker Road and the East Kent Road. He served four terms as Supervisor of the Town of Carlton which were 1857, 1858, 1859 and 1862. He also served as Orleans County Assemblyman in the State Legislature for 1875 and 1876.

Like his father [Joseph Billings] before him, J. Drake Billings also became a church founder serving on the first Board of Trustees of the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church when it was incorporated in 1891. Throughout the greater part of his life he was a Republican although he supported Horace Greeley rather than U.S. Grant for President in 1872. We can assume therefore, that J. D. Billings was an abolitionist, a supporter of the temperance movement and a sympathizer of women's suffrage, certainly nothing to be ashamed of. We know from sketchy accounts that he was highly revered and seen as one of Orleans County's prominent people when he died in 1904.

C. W. Lattin, "Rethinking of Old Orleans Vol. XVII #15 (excerpt)
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