

# Overlooked Orleans: Albion's Polish band

By Matt Ballard

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*(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a weekly column called "Overlooked Orleans" by Orleans County Historian Matt Ballard. It replaces the "Vanished Orleans" column by retired Orleans County Historian C.W. Lattin.)*

While addressing the first meeting of the Orleans County Pioneer Association over 150 years ago, Arad Thomas remarked, "...we shall teach our children the story of their labors and success, as examples to be imitated..."

Of course Thomas was referring to the men and women who journeyed hundreds of miles into the wilderness that was Orleans County, risking their lives to start a new life.

When Theta Hakes Brown assumed the role of Orleans County Historian in 1938, she worked diligently to preserve the accomplishments of our forefathers and set in stone the importance of local history. Some 45 years later, C. W. Lattin continued that legacy of education and historic preservation for 35 years.

It is a remarkable feeling to receive the honor of serving as the next Orleans County Historian, a responsibility that is often overshadowed or taken for granted within our communities. Our county has a long, rich, and expansive history that has been overlooked outside our boundaries and it is my goal to continue to share that history within our community and with others across the State of New York.

Local history has been a deep-rooted passion of mine since I was all but 12 years old; I suppose you can say that I've dedicated more than half my life to the history of this area. That interest is what inspired me to study history at the College at Brockport and my passion for research and education is



Courtesy of Matt Ballard

**ALBION POLISH BAND:** The Polish band in front of St. Mary's Assumption Parish in Albion, about 1904 or 1905. Front row, from left, Alexander Rytlewski, Frank Kwiatkowski, John Jasniewski, Frank Jaworski, John Nayman, James Kaniecki, D. Jaworski, Frank Smith, Frank Furmanski, Stanley Rice, Ignatius Rice. Middle row, from left, Joseph Zwiefka, Joseph Rytlewski, Reynolds (Bandmaster), August Mager, Stanley Rutkowski. Back row, from left, Max Wacławski, C. Kaminski, ? Kaminski, John Gurzinski, Stephen Cichocki.



Courtesy of Matt Ballard

**STREET VIEW:** The Polish band standing at the intersection of Brown and Moore Streets in Albion.

what drove me to pursue a degree in Library Science from the University at Buffalo.

I can think of no better way to start a weekly column than to share two of my favorite photographs. This is a two-for-one special to start! The first image shows the Polish Band from St. Mary's Assumption Parish in Albion standing on the front steps of the church at Brown and Moore Streets, taken sometime around

1904 or 1905. Led by Bandmaster Reynolds (believed to be Cassius M.C. Reynolds) of Albion, the young men wore dark green uniforms lined with gold braiding and performed at ceremonies and parades throughout the area.

The second image shows the band standing at the intersection of Brown and Moore Streets. Looking north, you can see several people standing along the bridge crossing the west

branch of Sandy Creek. Also visible on the southwest corner at the intersection of Caroline and Brown Streets was a saloon owned and operated by Frank Majewski. The house, second from the right, was razed several years ago. The center of the Polish community and Albion existed at this intersection and many of these houses were home to multiple immigrant families during the late 1800s and early 1900s.