



E.K. Hart Mansion, circa 1925

Overlooked Orleans: E.K. Hart Mansion

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This once beautiful mansion was erected on South Main Street by local entrepreneur Elizur Kirke Hart. President of the Orleans County National Bank and director of the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company, Hart was well respected throughout Orleans County as a precise and decisive businessman who exuded confidence and common sense.

On July 31, 1871, Hart purchased Hemlock Island from Charles and John Walton for \$100 and commenced the construction of a large and beautiful "cottage" near Alexandria Bay. The expansive structure was completed at a cost of \$12,000 (over \$300,000 today), measuring 84 feet long by 76 feet wide, and containing 80 rooms; hardly a "cottage" by today's standards.

The large summer home constructed on "Hart Island" was one of the most highly desired properties in the Thousand Islands region, even more desirable than George Pullman's nearby cottage, "Castle Rest." Hart received numerous purchase offers on the astounding estate but consistently refused to sell.

Although he rarely considered himself a politician, Hart was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1872 as a Republican. It was dur-

ing Horace Greeley's presidential campaign for the 1872 election that Hart became a supporter of liberal ideas and a Democrat. Despite his changing of parties, he was elected in 1876 as a U.S. Representative as a Democrat in a district with an overwhelmingly large Republican majority.

Locally, Hart was respected for his efforts to bring electric lights to Albion. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Western House of Refuge for Women in Albion and served as the first president of the board of managers with that institution. A man dedicated to the continuation of education and learning, he owned one of the finest personal libraries in Western New York and was the first signer of a petition to establish a public library in Albion.

This image was taken in 1925, shortly after the death of Hart's son Charles. At the time of Elizur's death in 1893, he left an estate valued at \$800,000 for his family equivalent to over \$20 million today. In 1942 a notice appeared in the local papers stating, "...everything for sale, including doors, lumber, windows, sinks, and fixtures of all kinds..." Sadly, the building was razed shortly after and Albion lost stunning local landmark.

The Hoag Library currently occupies the site of the old Hart mansion.