

Salesmen & undertakers

OVERLOOKED ORLEANS: Albion businessmen sold furniture and were undertakers

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ALBION — One of Orleans County's oldest funeral homes is likely that of Merrill-Grinnell, which dates to well before the 1870s.

An image shows two predecessors to the current business, Cassius M. C. Reynolds and William S. Flintham, standing in front of their store on North Main Street in Albion. Reynolds purchased the business from his father-in-law George W. Ough, who was a prominent businessman and president of the Albion Board of Trustees.

It is thought that the lineage of the business dates back as far as George M. Pullman, who ran a furniture making business in Albion during his tenure in Orleans County. The business later transitioned to Ough, and then to Reynolds and Flintham who operated the outfit into the 1920s.

Reynolds & Flintham were known locally for dealing crockery, glassware, and furniture in addition to their work as undertakers.

The image clearly showcases the stock of crockery and glassware carried by the business. They're visible both through the store windows and on the table standing outside.

Several chairs are situated



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Cassius M. C. Reynolds and William S. Flintham stand before their store in Albion. They were among Orleans County's earliest undertakers.

in front of the building and a number of prams are on display — from simple models to the more ornate, such as the piece parked next to William Goff, which features a suspension system, ensuring a comfortable ride for the passenger.

Mr. Goff's tenure with the business dated back to Ough's ownership, when he first applied for a job at 16 years old. He became somewhat of a local celebrity regarding his work as a funeral director and embalmer — his claim to fame

was being the first to cover a casket in cloth for use in Orleans County.

In his earliest years working with Ough, caskets were made to order, but he watched the industry develop as he worked over 40 years through the ownership of Ough, Reynolds & Flintham, and Merrill.

In 1926 the business was sold to John B. Merrill of Holley, who partnered with his son Roy to start J. B. Merrill & Son. Goff remained with Merrill for nearly 13 years before

his own retirement, and upon his death he was regarded as one of the oldest funeral directors and embalmers in Western New York at the age of 83. Today, J. B. Merrill & Son exists as Merrill-Grinnell Funeral Homes.

One other notable feature of the image is the reflection in the windows of the storefront. The beautiful white fence and trees were situated in front of the mansion of Lorenzo Burrows, which still stands today as the home of Key Bank.