

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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Before our present high school system came into being, academies served for secondary education. Once a student completed eighth grade in a district school, he/she could then attend an academy by paying the required tuition. I might add here that the villages were divided into school districts like the rural districts in townships.

The only academy still standing in Orleans County is the Cobblestone School at Millville. It was incorporated on April 25, 1840 and was later used as a district schoolhouse until June 1955. Hon. John G. Sawyer attended school here and later became a member of Congress in the late 1800's. The photo shown here depicts the Millville Academy around 1962.

The Gaines Academy was originally built with the idea of being the Orleans County Court House. However, these plans were thwarted when Albion became the county seat, so the people of Gaines established an academy there under the State Regents Law in 1827. It operated for several years. Among its distinguished students was Hon. Hoah Davis appointed U.S. District Attorney by Pres. Grant, and later elected to Supreme Court. The building was eventually torn down in the 1930's after being neglected for many years.

The Albion Academy came into being in 1837 and stood between East and West Academy Streets in Albion. This building was replaced in the 1870's and in 1906 a new high school replaced the former structure.

Yates Academy was established in 1842 and was an institution of considerable note in its day. Ely Parker, the Tonawanda Indian, who wrote the Appomattox surrender for Gen. Grant was a student at Yates Academy. Yates was the last academy in the county to surrender its charter in 1889. Following the abandonment of this building it was razed in 1914.

In 1850, Medina Academy was incorporated by special act of the legislature. A three story stone building was built on a lot donated by Silas Burroughs at Pearl and Catherine Streets. It was enlarged in 1884 and was a popular and prosperous school of learning. The present Medina High School built in the early 1920's, now occupies the site.

The Holley Academy was incorporated in March 28, 1850 by the N.Y. State Regents. It was a two story brick building and cost a total of \$3,021.09. The money having been raised by public subscription, the academy was free of debt on the start. It was located at Main and Albion Streets in Holley and later was the site for the Holley High School.

The Phipps Union Seminary was established in Albion in 1833, and stood where the County Clerk's office now stands. It operated until 1875, when a disastrous fire caused it to close its doors. The Phipps Union Seminary was a girls' school.

All of these important and historic institutions have been supplanted by the march of progress with the exception of the Millville Academy, a landmark to a style of building and architecture, the cobblestone era with a unique past.