

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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"THE SQUARE"

The Murray-Holley Historical Society has recently published a booklet entitled "A Pictorial History of THE SQUARE". The work of compiling old photos and their captions is to be credited to Murray-Holley Historian Marsha DeFilipps and film maker Raymond Santoro. The 26-page publication is filled with late 19th and early 20th century photographs which include some interior shots as well. This keepsake booklet is available currently at the Holley Village Office for \$7.00 per copy. The Murray-Holley Historical Society's major project is the restoration of the former New York Central Depot. However, as a historical society, they are interested in all phases of local history which of course in Holley, includes "The Square". Profits from sales of the booklet will be used toward the Depot Project which is now well under way. As to the Square, here is an excerpt from the booklet which gives us a brief history along with a picture of the former Frisbie Mansion.

"During the early 1800's, the site which is today the Village of Holley was a densely covered hemlock forest. When the plans were made for the building of the Erie Canal, much speculation was made by various people and groups as to the growth and prosperity such a grand waterway could create. The Village of Holley was born when Aerovester Hamlin purchased a large section of the lots that now consist of the village. In 1822 Mr. Hamlin hired Elisha Johnson of Rochester to survey his land for the site of a village. However, Mr. Hamlin overextended himself, and soon faced bankruptcy. His land was sold off in lots over a short period of time, and one of the largest purchasers of this land was Hiram Frisbie.

"The survey and laying-out of the village that Mr.

Hamlin had done was kept, and to this day the Square has not changed as to layout. Mr. Frisbie, being a man of keen insight and very active in the community, made many improvements, and by the time the canal opened in 1825, the Village of Holley was well on its way. The old Jones home, which Mr. Frisbie remodded and expanded on for his home, was known as the Frisbie Mansion for many years. It was razed in 1933. This stately home rested in the approximate area of the present Super Duper store. Mr. Frisbie never intended that the east side of the square would be storefronts, and his home for many years gave him a view of the canal loop and the beautiful square."

"Originally, the square was a high mound of soil. This was removed during the buiding of the canal by men with shovels and pick axes, and the dirt used for the embankment of the canal. Once the square was levelled, a small, circular, grassy park was placed in the center of the northern section. The square has always been the center of village activities, and in the 1800's found plowing matches being held there, as bicycle races, parades, and many accounts of runaway horses. Political signs and decorations used to be strewn across the area. Parades, protests, concerts, and street shows were once prominent."

"Our village square is unique. It has been written of numerous times by local residents, by newspapers, and in diaries and letters. It has been photographed and filmed over and over again, and though the look may change with the times, those men of our early settlement would today be able to look at the site and clearly see the same basic layout that they envisioned more than 150 years ago."

