

Bethinking of Old Orleans

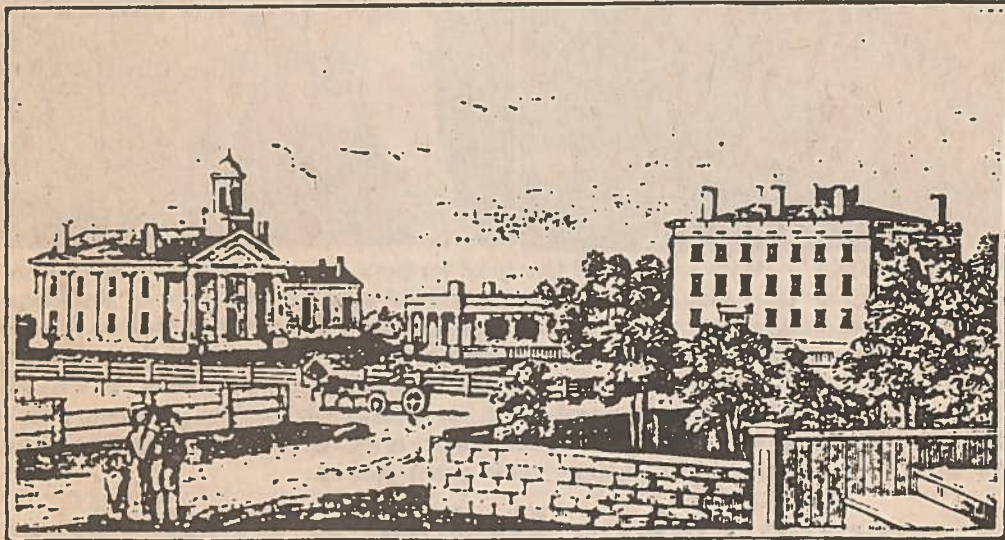
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ORLEANS A PREEMIE! And HOW ALBION GOT THE COUNTY SEAT



Orleans County Court House Square - 1840

At the Orleans County Legislature meeting on June 9, the following action was taken:

RESOLUTION NO. 318-693

By Legislator Berger, who moved the adoption. Seconded by Legislator McCarthy
RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING DATE OF CREATION OF ORLEANS COUNTY

RESOLVED, that the Orleans County Legislature hereby recognizes that on April 15, 1825 the New York State Legislature amended its legislation of November 12, 1824, which created Orleans County as of January 1, 1826, to an effective date of April 15, 1825; as listed in the Laws of New York - Chapter CLXXXI, 1825, Page 273.

Adopted. 6 ayes; 1 nay, Legislator Swiercznski; 0 absent

In effect this now firmly establishes April 15 as our official birthday for Orleans County. On November 12, 1824 the expectant date of birth was set for Jan. 1, 1826. But on April 15, 1825 the earlier legislation was amended to become effective with the passage of that resolution. So we were in effect, premature.

These facts have been known to local history buffs for close to twenty years. Legislator Berger is to be commended for finally seeing to it that a misconception has been corrected. As he states "It's wrong to perpetuate an error."

From Laws of New York - Chapter CLXXXI 1825 we find: An Act to erect a county from part of the County of Genesee by the name of Orleans. Under this Section IX we note the following:

"And be it further enacted, that it shall be the duty of the commissioners appointed by the third section of the Act hereby amended, to fix and determine the site of the Court House and Jail in the said County, to meet together, (or a majority of them,) in the said County, on or before the second Monday of June, in the year eighteen hundred and twenty-five, and then and there do and perform the duties prescribed."

Hereby, lies one of the most interesting tales of local history. We find this written up in "Pioneer History of Orleans County" by Arad Thomas published in 1871.

"When the Commissioners appointed to select the site for the Court House came on to fix the spot,

their choice lay between Gaines and Albion. Gaines had the advantage of being the largest village, being on the Ridge Road, and being well supplied with mechanics and merchants, and of having many of the institutions of old and well organized communities established there. Albion was nearest the geographical center of the county, and was intersected by the Erie Canal and Oak Orchard Road. The west branch of Sandy Creek runs through the east part of the village. Rising in some swamps in the south part of the town, it afforded sufficient water after the melting of the snow in spring, and after rains to turn machinery a part of the year, but in summer was nearly dry. On this stream two saw mills had been built, one in the village, and other south of it.

"The Commissioners came to consider the claims of the rival villages about the middle of the dry season. Mr. Nehemiah Ingersoll, Philetus Bumpus, Henry Henderson, and a few other Albion men, determined to use a little strategy to help Albion. Knowing when the Commissioners would be here the creek would be too low to move the sawmills, and foreseeing the advantage a good mill stream would give them, they patched the two dams and flumes and closed the gates to hold all the water some days before the Commissioners would arrive; sent some teams to haul logs and lumber about the saw mill and mill yard, in the village to mark the ground and give the appearance of business there.

"When the Commissioners came to see Albion, having been generously dined and wined by its hospitable people, they were taken in a carriage to see the place, and in the course of the ride driven along the creek and by the sawmill, then in full operation, with men and teams at work among the lumber, with a good supply of water from the ponds thus made for the occasion. The Commissioners were impressed with the importance of this fine water power and give the county buildings to Albion before the ponds ran out."

Mr. Nehemiah Ingersoll donated the land for the Court House, Jail and public lawn. It was Ingersoll who also insisted upon the name Orleans which may have been because of the battle of New Orleans under Gen. Andrew Jackson. The accompanying engraving shows the first Court House, Jail, Clerk's Office and the Phipps Union Seminary.