

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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HOW THINGS MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT



Our portrait is of State Senator Irving L'Hommedieu from Medina who served this county in District 45 from 1903-1906. Mr. L'Hommedieu was a prominent attorney whose partner was Milton J. Whedon with offices in the S.A. Cook Building on Main Street. Irving L'Hommedieu owned a large home on West Center Street in Medina and also a farm on Maple Ridge Road in the Town of Shelby. In his politics, he was a staunch Republican and in his approach to things he definitely had vision and foresight.

In fact, it was Senator L'Hommedieu who introduced into legislation in New York State, the bill for putting license plates on automobiles.

How could things have been different? As I've already stated, the Senator had vision. He was definitely senatorial material. We elect people to use their good judgment and carry out the duties of such an office for the greater benefit of society. But we only kid ourselves if we don't consider opposition and resistance to change and new ideas. It's no different now than it was while L'Hommedieu was Senator.

The Orleans County Department of History has a letter on file from Martha M. Murray, dated May 17, 1978. Here is an excerpt which tells us exactly how things might have been different for Medina.

"When the late senator learned the state was looking for property to locate a prison in western New York, he became eager to have it located in this area, being concerned for the welfare of this community and realizing much of the work was in processing plants giving only seasonal employment such an institution would give year around employment to many natives. Applications for employment were being filed locally and eventually some applicants received an invitation for interview.

"His idea for the site was on the North Gravel Road...it is a brick structure located on a hill on the west side across from the Boxwood Cemetery. I do not know who owned the property at the time it was being considered by the state, but eventually a local contractor, William J. Gallagher, used it for breeding or training of race horses.

"The proposition met with strong local opposition including a petition sponsored by a local church stressing escapees making the streets and homes unsafe was circulated.

"The plan was abandoned and the site chosen was Attica, N.Y."

This goes to show how times, and people change and how communities are different and have different attitudes about the same thing.

I can distinctly remember when local political forces petitioned the state to get the Orleans Correctional Facility located in Albion for the same reason L'Hommedieu wanted one in Medina over 80 years ago.