

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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PANORAMIC VIEW



I dare say most people born after 1937 won't recognize this intersection. And for good reason too! The two houses shown in this picture as the center of interest were demolished in September 1937. You may well ask, "What place is this?"

The photo was taken by the late Dr. John Jackson DDS, probably in 1937. He stood on the northeast corner of Main and State Streets at the Presbyterian Church in the Village of Albion and aimed his lens in a southwesterly direction. Now just what kind of lens he had is debatable. It may have been a wide angle one or perhaps even the camera he was using may have swung on a swivel to capture such a panoramic view. For in this photo we are looking directly south up Main Street and directly west up West State Street. From left to right we can see the beginning of East State Street, the Court House lawn and the Pullman Memorial Church in the distance. Next, a man appears to be walking down the sidewalk toward the camera approaching the public drinking fountain located at the curb. In the distance we can see part of the former St. Joseph's School, the Catholic Rectory, Christ Church, the present Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Burrows House (white clapboard which was razed), the Jackson House (painted brick which was razed), West State and finally a small portion of Swan Library which the right side of the photo crops off.

This is indeed an unusual and rare photo considering the time frame in which it was taken. Although it is difficult to detect, we can see that Main Street is paved with brick.

Today, a photographer taking a similar picture would capture for his center of interest the U.S. Post Office. Recently I've had a couple of inquiries about the post office site and thought perhaps

others would be interested.

In September 1936 the federal government completed negotiations for the purchase of residences at the southwest corner of Main and West State Streets. The Dr. Charles M. Burrows estate sold their property for \$3,030.30 while Dr. A. W. Jackson, M.D. sold his property for \$9,469.70. Both houses stood within about eight feet of one another and the Jackson House was immediately adjacent to the sidewalk on West State Street.

The Burrows house was one of Albion's earliest residences, having been erected in 1825 in the Federal style. The Greek Revival Jackson house was built in 1841 by Alexis Ward who was the first president (mayor) of Albion in 1828.

The present Post Office was opened in 1938 and cost \$52,150 to build. It is Colonial Revival in style and is typical of the stock plans which were being used by the government at that time.

It was indeed unfortunate that these two architecturally significant dwellings were removed for it set an accepted precedent which was repeated again and again on up Main Street. During the 35 years that followed, over a dozen beautiful mansions were demolished under the guise of "progress". Perhaps there is some wise and insightful advice to the old motto, "Make haste slowly". The pendulum swings and the wheel of time revolves full circle all too often. Architectural preservation is always upon us which demands our adaptability. And in some areas architectural restoration and preservation have even become stylish. Our landscape and the heritage it holds is one of our greatest resources. We have lost a lot, but we also have a significant amount that remains which justifies our care.