

Bethinking of Old Orleans

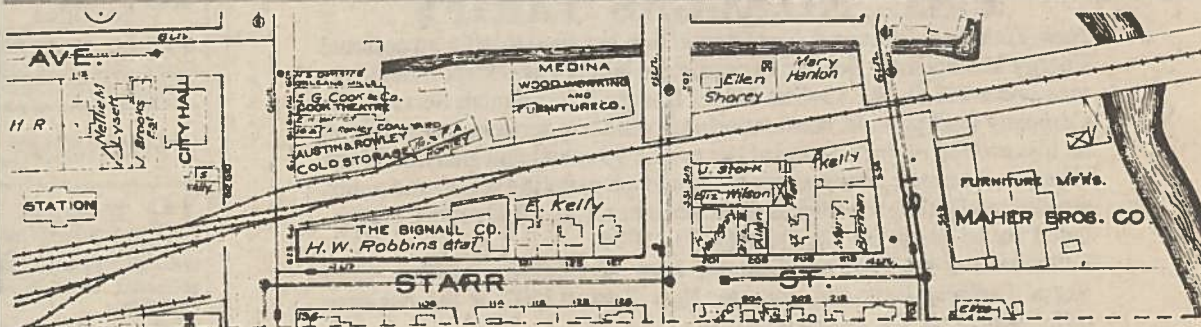
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MAHAR BROS.



Our photo this week shows the Mahar Bros. original factory in Medina as it was in 1890. The picture, taken when there was snow on the ground, shows the company employees posed for a group photo taken by a photographer named Osborn. The man at the far left, driving the team of horses, is identified as George Butts. The only other man identified is Flory Ross to the right with a line drawn to him. Two things stand out to me about this picture: (1) Considering the fact that there are over eighty people pictured, there is not one woman. (2) Note the age of some of these people. This picture was certainly taken before child labor laws, as so many of the boys in the front row appear to be small in physique.

This is what we find in *A History of Medina, New York* by Cecilia A. White published in 1972: "In 1882 four Mahar brothers, John, Francis, Joseph and Robert, moved from Middleport to Medina and opened a furniture store on Main Street and four years later started manufacturing lounges in that same location. Business increased so that they had to move to Orient Street to larger space in 1887; the old Bignall factory was used as a manu-

factory of woodwork. In 1888 a building was erected just north of the railroad on Orient Street on the east side and machinery set up there for manufacture. They continued to expand these facilities until in 1894 they had established the reputation of being the second largest manufacturer of furniture in New York State, and their products were sold in about 20 states. In the spring of 1894 a considerable part of this factory burned but the Mahar Brothers decided to build a larger and better brick factory which they did. Descendants of the Mahars, the Brennans, continued to operate this factory for many years. Members of the family eventually sold their interest to a Buffalo firm who manufactured recliner chairs. This business eventually closed. The building was gutted by fire and then torn down.

The 1887-88 Orleans County Directory has the Mahar Bros. listed for furniture and undertaking. Likewise, they are listed in the 1903 directory as manufacturers of parlor suites and couches at 545 Orient St. Our 1913 map also included here, shows the later brick building they were in at the northeast corner of Orient and Starr Sts.