

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## JOHN BOWLES 1849-1924



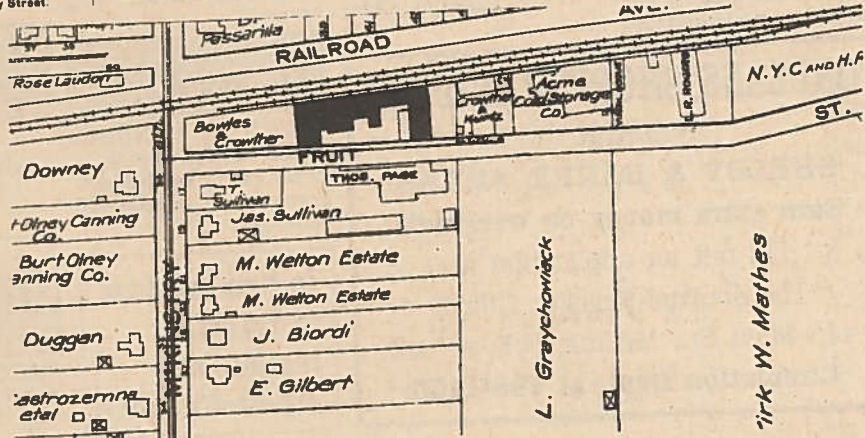
Cement Building Blocks  
Cement Sidewalks  
Cement Horse Blocks  
Cement Hitching Posts  
Cement Fence Posts  
Cement Chimneys  
Cement Steps

### BOWLES & CROWTHER

SUCCESSORS TO H. W. SKINNER DEALERS IN  
GRAIN AND PRODUCE, CEMENT PRODUCTS AND COAL  
Warehouse and Yard on McKinstry Street.  
"A SQUARE DEAL EVERY TIME"

Bell Phone 2713  
Home Phone 670

Produce: Beans, Grain  
Coal: Hard Coal, Soft Coal  
Cement: Portland, Akron  
Good Gravel and Sand



Observing people who have ever walked upon Albion's sidewalks, will recognize the name John Bowles. As a child I can remember seeing his name on little bronze name plates imbedded in concrete sidewalks. Naturally, many old sidewalks have been replaced so the little name plates aren't as plentiful. However, recently I noticed a couple of them in sidewalks leading to the Albion United Methodist Church.

John Bowles was a local mason and business man. Our larger photo from the 1905 Souvenir Book of Albion shows where his cement products were made. He was in partnership with Henry Crowther dealing also in grain, produce and coal. Their place of business was located at the north east corner of McKinstry and Fruit Streets and the railroad. This piece of property is now totally vacant and devoid of any buildings shown in the picture. The darkened area on the 1913 map shows the Bowles and Crowther complex of buildings. Fruit Street incidentally, has since been renamed Crimson Drive. In 1905 they were advertising cement building blocks, cement sidewalks, cement horse blocks, cement hitching posts, cement fence posts, cement chimneys and cement steps.

Around the turn of the century John Bowles built himself a residence expressive of his masonry trade. It is the brick house on King Street in Albion. It displays cast or molded concrete lintels, sills, quoins, porch pier caps and watertable which are all very decorative, somewhat emulating fancy carved stone. John Bowles' partner Henry Crowther, likewise built an impressive double concrete block house on East Avenue in Albion which again, showed off their products. Another outstanding example of their concrete block work is the pump house at Mt. Albion Cemetery. Our

photo shows a number of their concrete products on display along with employees. I believe Mr. Bowles is the man standing toward the middle of the photo with the vest and light-colored hat on.

We must remember that by the turn of the century, stone products were becoming more expensive to produce because of the labor involved in quarrying. Concrete blocks could be made to look like stone, be uniform in size and were much cheaper in price. Consequently, we find Bowles and Crowther concrete blocks in innumerable basement walls and commercial buildings where the material was most often used.

John Miller Bowles was born in England in 1849 and became a resident of the area in 1870. He and his wife Elizabeth, had two daughters, Nellie M. Bowles and Ethel B. Martindell. Mr. Bowles was a man who took great pride in his community. He was very active in the Albion Methodist Church, the Odd Fellows Lodge and was a member of the Board of Education for a number of years. It was during his tenure on the Board of Trustees at the Methodist Church when the physical structure of the church was greatly improved in 1914. We note the extensive use of molded concrete decorative work around the front entrance along with other decorative embellishments on the tower. Indeed, his influence, if not his works, pervaded in his house of worship.

His ability as a business man was well-recognized when he was made President of the Acme Cold Storage Co. which also shows on our map just east of Bowles and Crowther. His obituary in part, notes: "He was a mason by trade, a trained mechanic with high standards. Good, honest work was his price — "thorough" was the trade mark of all he did" as the advertisement states: "A Square Deal Every Time."