

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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HISTORY OF THE COURT HOUSE SQUARE



One Friday evening, June 12 at 7:30 P.M. a free public program on the history of the Court House Square will be given at the Pullman Memorial Church in Albion. The presentors will be Neil Johnson, Village of Albion Historian and Bill Lattin, County Historian. The program will be illustrated with color slides. Historical background, art and architecture will be discussed. In essence, the audience will be given a tour of the Historic Court House District without having to walk around.

Our photo shown here was taken around 1903 of the County Square. In the foreground is East State St. before it was paved. Note the hitching posts in the berm between the curb and sidewalk. The photo takes in the Free Methodist Church to the left, the old county jail, the Court House, the County Clerk's Building and just a partial view of the Fulmen Memorial Church to the extreme right. This neighborhood is of architectural significance and has often been a destination point for tourists and architectural buffs. It is a most unique area and was deemed worthy of being on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior in 1979. In June 1981 a ceremony was held to dedicate this district and denote it with a bronze plaque which is mounted on the Court House.

It was just one hundred forty years ago that the Court House was constructed in the Greek Revival Style for a mere \$20,000. But many other styles pervaded the historic district which make for a fascinating tour. The Free Methodist Church is the oldest one in that denomination.

It is also most unusual in its Norman Revival Style built in 1860. Built in the Gothic Revival Style, three sandstone churches give testimony to the once vibrant Medina Sandstone industry. These include: First Presbyterian 1874, Pullman Memorial 1894 and St. Joseph's R.C. Church 1896. Christ Episcopal Church is the oldest church edifice in the county still being used for services. The First Baptist Church is unusual for its hexagonal tower with a holding vault in the basement level which was once used before the crypt was built at the Mt. Albion Cemetery Chapel. The First Methodist Church exhibits an extraordinary front entrance and a beautiful Good Shepherd window.

Our program on June 12 will include pictures of some outstanding stained glass windows at the Historic Court House District. In all, there are thirty-four buildings making up this district including other public structures and a few residences.

Driving or walking around this area one may see several historical markers which point out highlights in our heritage. I dare say there are more of these markers in this district than any other place in our entire region.

By the time of the Strawberry Festival we can expect still another marker. This one recognizes the plight of Terry Anderson and the fact that he grew up in Albion.

We invite you to attend the program on June 12 which will highlight the Strawberry Festival so keenly positioned in the Historic Court House District.