

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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F. W. BUTLER, JEWELER

Our photo depicted here was taken around 1890. It shows the jewelry business of Frederick W. Butler which was located in the Royce Block on the east side of Main Street in Albion. Mr. Butler's business was situated in the fourth store front up from Bank Street. This would be directly next to, and north of what is now the Lyman Law office. Frederick Butler (1844 - 1909) is leaning against the pillar to the right. Arthur D. Bliss (1868 - 1944) as a young man, is to the left. When the photo was taken Mr. Bliss evidently was working for Frederick Butler. Later A. D. Bliss had a business of his own concentrating on eye glasses.

The clarity of this old picture is remarkable. The signage is, and its symbolism is certainly of particular interest. The large watch mounted on a wooden post is an unmistakable advertising gimmick to draw your attention to the business. The time on this wooden attention getter was set about 8:20 to commemorate the time when Abraham Lincoln was shot.

Note all the watches which are suspended on a rack in the front window. Above is a sign stating "Waltham Watches". Below at the sidewalk level is another sign stating "Watch Repairing". Over Mr. Butler's head hangs another advertisement symbol with the spectacles directly under his name. This indicates that he also doubled as an optometrist. The sign near Arthur Bliss in the doorway states: "Diamonds - Watches - Clocks - Silver Ware - Plated Ware - Eye Glasses - Spectacles - Violin Strings - Repairing - Engraving - time by telegraph daily". Silver tea sets and a couple of caster sets are displayed in the window along with clocks and some art glass ware.

The second floor of the building advertises "The Orleans County Real Estate Agency and the L. R. Sanford Law Offices."

Store owners in business blocks like this years ago relied on awnings to shield their merchandise from the sun. Rolled up awnings are quite evident here. Another thing of note in this circa 1890 photo is the gigantic piece of plate glass. One huge pane for the entire window! Nowadays many people have the notion that little panes of glass are appropriate when it comes to restoring buildings of this vintage. Here is visible proof of just the opposite. By the fourth quarter of the 19th century, glass manufacturers showed off their perfected skills and quality control by producing over - sized sheets of this nature held in place by delicate wooden frames. I would estimate this piece to be approximately seven feet wide and 10 feet high.

