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HON. BEN FIELD 1816-1876

"He who freely magnifies
what hath been nobly done,
and fears not to declare as
freely what might be done
better, gives ye the best
covenant of his fidelity."

-- John Milton

Hon. Ben Field was born at Dorset, Vt. in 1816 to Spafford and Sarah Collins Field. Spafford was trained as a tanner and shoe maker. In 1822 the family moved to Weedsport and in 1828 came to Albion. Mr. Field had also been engaged in marble cutting as a side line type of work. His son Ben had learned the marble cutters trade. As a result, the Fields set up in business making head stones and other marble items when coming to Albion. A brother Norman, was for many years associated with this business and in partnership with a Charles Diem. However, Ben quit the marble works in 1838 to study law. He was educated at the Albion Academy and the Burr Seminary in Vermont. He studied law under Albion's Alexis Ward and was admitted to the bar but never set up a practice of law. He did however, become a prominent and influential politician in New York State.

In 1854 and 1855 he represented the 28th district in the State Senate and served as a delegate in the Constitutional Convention in 1867. Mr. Field was at first a Whig allying himself with the Republican Party upon its formation. For many years he was secretary of the Republican State Committee. His obituary noted he changed party politics, and we quote: "In 18772, however, Mr. Field became a convert to Liberalism, and was at the time of his death a conscientious supporter"

For several years Mr. Field engaged in constructing railroads working for Tousley Lee & Company. In an agreement with a Mr. Ferry of Syracuse, they put sleeping cars on the Michigan Central Railroad and the Northwestern Railroad. Around 1857 Ben Field received the franchise to put sleeping cars on



two Illinois railroads. It is probably fair to assume this was accomplished through his political astuteness. He needed someone to work with who had the ability to build things. It was at this juncture that he and George M. Pullman formed a partnership known as Pullman & Field. Pullman was a cabinet maker and in the building moving business in Albion. Pullman then moved to Chicago in 1859 and remodeled two day coaches into the first Pullman and Field sleepers. By 1867 Pullman and Field had built only forty-eight sleeping cars. At this point, Mr. Field wanted to pursue his political interests and sold his share of the business entirely to George M. Pullman.

Mr. Field was known as a generous, fair-minded and honorable man. He was the first treasurer of Albion Lodge No. 58 IOOF when it was formed in 1846. He was never married and resided with a sister in Albion.