

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## Water Towers

Currently on display in the Go Art Gallery of the Kafana Gourmet Coffee House at 10 East Bank Street in Albion, is a collection of photographs showing water towers. This superb exhibit, all the work of Tom Rivers, shows water towers from around Western New York. Most of them are still in use but a few of them pictured, are now simply relics of the past. One such relic is the tank in a photo of the old Albion Water Works north of the canal west of Albion.

A picture you won't see in the exhibit is the one with this article. Our photo here was taken in the late 1950s by Fred Holt showing the standpipes or water towers at the top of the Main Street hill in Albion. The right hand standpipe stood alone from 1888 to 1937 when a second water tower was added adjacent to it at the left. Both were removed five or six years ago after the huge water tank was built at the intersection of Rts. 98 and 31A. Since that time Dr. A.J. Monacelli has built a dental office on the site shown in our picture.

Water towers may seem like a strange subject and exhibit but this photographic display is a must to see. Incidentally, it will only be up now through July 5.

I especially like what Tom Rivers has to say about his work which gives one a new respect for these extraordinary yet utilitarian structures that attest to the skill of engineers. Tom told me that he became interested in such structures as a reporter when he worked for the Albion Advertiser. His photos are not only interesting but his labels are

also provocative. He writes: "This exhibit is a salute to the construction crews who risk their lives building the towers."

This project also honors the water treatment plant workers who cleanse our water while they work in dark damp buildings with little fanfare.

I also aim to recognize the underdogs of our landscape. Why is it that water towers are shunned from post cards, conversations and the front page of newspapers.

Let's show some respect if not for their grandeur then for their function. Where would we be without the tower carrying water to our homes and businesses? America would probably resemble a third-world country without them."

When the Albion municipal water system began operation in 1888 the water source consisted of fourteen artesian wells at the pumping station west of the village. Further supply became increasingly necessary so that by 1916 a reservoir with a storage capacity of 58 million gallons was constructed on Otter Creek just off Rt. 31 near the intersection of the Eagle Harbor West Barre Road.

The first standpipe in our picture and the one added in 1937 were storage tanks for access water. A small pumphouse was also located in the gully at Otter Creek west of Eagle Harbor. From here water was pumped to the water works or pumping station by the canal. When the original water system was designed it was never planned to take water from the canal.

