



Bethinking of Old Orleans

12-6-02

Vol. XXIV

By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County historian

No. 49

Downtown circa 1930

These two pictures were taken by Fred Holt around 1930 when the Albion business district was a hub of activity.

The one view taken from the canal bridge in a raised position looks south up Main Street with the Presbyterian spire in the distance. At this point everything in this Victorian village was still intact. To the left we see the Citizens National Bank with its pedestal clock on the sidewalk. The Waterman building dominates the now vacant space used as a park. To the right there was the Ross Hardware store, one of three at the time in downtown Albion. This is just one instance. For example, there were located here several grocery stores, clothing stores (both men's and women's), three drugstores, novelty shops, several shoe stores, banks, furniture stores, restaurants, and even a theater. These were the businesses on the main floors. The second floors of these blocks housed law offices, dentists, barber shops, a bowling alley and fraternal organizations



including Elks, Odd Fellows and Masons.

I could go on but my point is that Albion downtown was truly a destination point when these pictures were taken over 70 years ago.

The other photo shows East Bank Street looking east from Main Street. To the right, a large painted sign on the corner block states "Franks Pharmacy — Old Fashioned Mary Lincoln Candies 70 cents per pound." A large Sayers sign was for a fine men's clothing store which had doors both on Main and East Bank streets. In the distance we see the two-story covered porch on

the Orleans Hotel, now gone. Across the street to the left we note the beautiful cupola which once adorned the Village Hall. Notice the number of awnings on the building fronts at this time. Landscaping certainly was not a consideration as the building facades were the featured element.

Indeed, over the years there have been many architectural losses and many drastic business changes. I applaud the heightened awareness and recent efforts to recognize, regain, and maintain the important heritage of Albion's downtown through historic preservation.