



Bethinking of Old Orleans

Vol. XXV

By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County Historian

No. 46

George M. Pullman

11/14/03

At 10 E. Park St., Albion, in front of the Universalist Church, a historic marker states:

George M. Pullman 1831-1897
Once a resident of Albion
And later manufacturer of
Pullman R.R. Cars, built this church
In 1894 to the Memory of His Parents

The James Lewis Pullman family moved to Albion in the fall of 1845 from Brocton. Young George, however, stayed behind to work in his uncle's store and did not rejoin his immediate family until January 1848.

The Pullmans owned the house at 228 E. State St. Upon arriving in Albion, George commenced work in his father's and brother's cabinet shop. He also took great pride in his father's building moving business. When James Lewis Pullman died in November 1853, George soon realized he had better business opportunities outside of the cabinet shop.

From the biography "Palace Car Prince" (1992) by Leston Leyendecker, we find not only the accompanying photo from 1857, but also this excerpt:

"... In 1854, George Pullman contracted with the State of New York to move 20 or more buildings, mainly warehouses, back from the right-of-way along the Erie Canal in the vicinity of Albion. He obtained some financial backing from Noah Davis, a fellow

Albion resident, and entered into partnership with yet another Albionite, Charles Henry Moore.

"Young Pullman's dedication to his work impressed his fellow citizens, one of whom, writing many years later, recalled that when the rollers under a warehouse jammed, George, unmindful of his clothes, promptly dived into the ankle deep mud under the structure. Next, he would squirm into the cramped underspace armed with a bar and attack the recalcitrant roller or the projecting beam, all the while directing those who wound the hauling capstans to 'check'er,' 'stop'er,' or 'go ahead' until the building was moved freely.

"He employed anywhere from six to a dozen men for a six-day week and, by 1858, paid them \$1 to \$1.25 per day. His contract lasted 3 or 4 years, and he made several thousand dollars (one account placed the exact amount at \$5,700).

"He supported the family but realized his work for New York would eventually run out; therefore by 1857, as another depression settled in, he journeyed as far away as Chicago in search of new projects."

We might say the rest is history, for in Chicago he first gained a reputation as an excellent building mover and of course fame and fortune through his sleeping cars.

Pullman's actual years in Albion were not much more than a decade but his name and evidence of his fortune remain with us today.