



Bethinking of Old Orleans

Vol. XXVI

No. 15

4-9-04

By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County Historian **Fraternal Organizations**

One hundred years ago, there was certainly a plethora of fraternal societies in Albion.

The Orleans County Directory of 1903 lists 14 organized lodges within the village. These included: Renovation Lodge No. 97 F&AM, which met at the Masonic Hall; Orleans Chapter No. 175 RAM, which also met at the Masonic Hall; Abeel 100F which had its hall in the Swan Block; Albion Tent No. 450 K.O.T.M., which met in Briggs Hall; Albion Legion No. 282 N.P.L., which met at Forester's Hall; Albion Lodge No. 67, which had a hall on West Bank Street; Albion Camp No. 9725 MW of A, which met at Martin Kiska's shop; Curtis Bates Post No. 114 GAR, which met at the GAR Hall; Col. W.W. Bates WRC No. 121, which met in Forester's Hall; Branch No. 42 CMBA, which had its own hall; St. Julia's Branch No. 692 LCBA, which met in the CMBA Hall; and Albion Council No. 28 RT of T, which met by appointment.

For the same period of time, the Medina Directory lists almost twice as many fraternal groups. Along with many of the same kind of lodges in Albion, we also find in Medina Modern Woodmen of America, Young Men's Christian Association, WCTU, Tuesday Evening Reading Club, Medina Shakespeare Club, The City Club of Medina and Council No. 652 Knights of Columbus.

Also in 1903, there are nine lodges listed in Holley.

When you get to the outlying communities, we find more of these same organizations bringing our total to around 70 chapters. These were mostly groups for men, but there were some for women and a few for both

men and women. Plus there were firemen's groups, church-related organizations, one-of-a-kind or independent social clubs and so on.

Such a social club, pictured today, was known as "Town Club of the Gay Nineties." This was simply a social group of professional men in Albion. They are listed on the back of the photo as follows: (Back Row) Spaulding, Spencer, Sawyer, Wilcox; (Front Row) Foote, Hart, Fluhrer, F. Thompson, W. Thompson.

I trust you noticed the Medina Shakespeare Club above. Believe it or not, people used to just get together and read aloud Shakespeare's plays with different participants taking various roles.

Life was much different back then without TV and the Internet. Socialization was obviously a major part of people's lives. Many of the lodges required memorization of ritualistic material, giving people a sense of accomplishment and prominence they might not have otherwise obtained.

Today, many of the above groups are unheard of, having fallen into oblivion years ago. The social structure has so drastically changed whereby the desire for these fraternal groups no longer is a priority to most people. In many ways, we have become more introverted. The way we build our houses expresses it very well. Years ago, every house had a front porch where you sat in full view of the neighborhood. Now we'll build the house way back from the road with a deck in the rear for privacy, thus tuning out the neighborhood and any socialization that might otherwise take place.