



Bethinking of Old Orleans

Vol. XXVI

4-23-04

No. 17

By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County Historian

Sam Watt's building

Today's photo — Sam Watt standing in front of his business — takes us back just 100 years. This three-story business block stood on the east side of North Main Street in Albion, where the present Albion Visitor's Center is located.

In 1923, Citizen National Bank purchased this building and tore it down in order to expand the banking facility. The bank was established in 1884 in the old Burrows block in what had been known as the "Burrow Bank."

Around the turn of the 20th century, this section of the Burrows block was torn out and replaced with a bank building. In 1923, the bank was more than double in size with its expansion to the south, thus removing the very southern end of the original Burrows block, which this picture shows.

The northern two-thirds of the old Burrows block remains, today extending to the canal and housing Krantz Furniture.

The present front entrance to the Visitor's Center would be exactly where the open door is with a carriage in it, to the left. Notice the pilaster to the extreme left of the bank. This same design was duplicated during the expansion in 1923 to give a mirror image of what had been done two decades or so before.

The tell-tale signs are all

there if you look closely at the Albion Visitor's Center today.

Watt was a local harness maker in a day and age when the horse ruled the road.

The upper story windows are cluttered with advertising along with his name. Some of the items mentioned are: "Gall Cures, Metal Polish, Curry Combs, Hoof Nourisher, Harness Oil, Wagon Grease, Lubricants, Robes, Blankets, Gloves, Mittens, Suit Cases, Satchels, Hand Bags, Runabouts, Phaetons, Surrey, Delivery Wagons, Harness Manufacturer, Heavy Team Harness and Single Harness."

All the windows indicate "Carriage Repository." Items shown in the display windows include horse collars, a broom, a steamer trunk and a wagon jack.

Anything dealing with horses or buggies was on hand at this store.

By 1923, two decades after this photo was taken, the automobile was fast replacing the horse. The need for such a primary location was no longer quite so necessary.

Watt carried on, however, for the rest of his life at his trade.

He ended up working out of his own barn behind his residence on East Park Street in Albion.

Farmers who continued to use horses relied on his expertise for harness repair until his death in 1950.