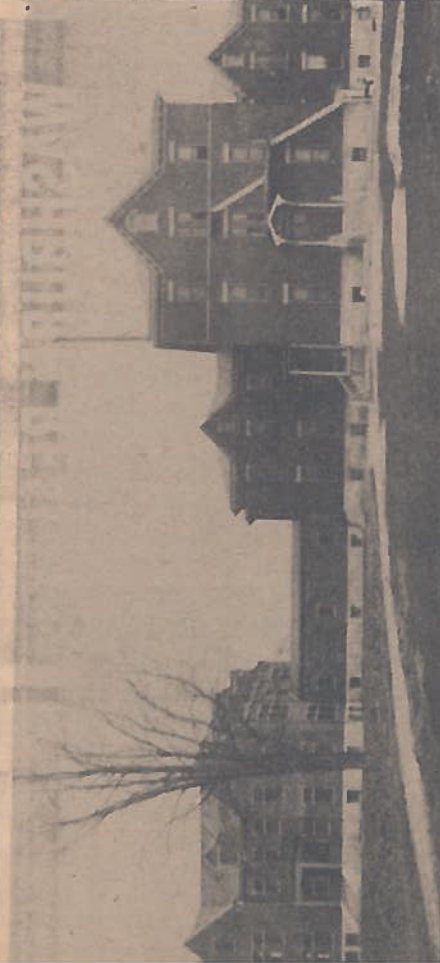


Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

4-10-81



HOSPITAL

COUNTY HOUSE

VOL. III

THE ORLEANS COUNTY HOUSE AND HOSPITAL

The need for a County House was first addressed at the Fall meeting of the Board of Supervisors in 1829. During a special meeting to consider the subject in February 1830, Nehemiah Ingersoll, Elisha Wright and Avery M. Starkweather were appointed superintendents of "the poorhouse" and \$2,000 was appropriated for such a county establishment. They were directed to contract for a lot and erect a building on it. A farm was then purchased about three miles south of Albion west of Route 98 on what became known as County House Road. A building was then erected there for a county home.

In March 1877 a committee of supervisors made up of H. D. Waldo, H. P. Blood and Edwin Bliss reported that they had engaged the architectural services of A. J. Warner from Rochester for making an estimate and drawing for a new County House, the cost of which would be around \$15,000. The committee stated "We are of the opinion that the present condition of the Poor House demands some action of the present Board of Supervisors. We think it would be poor policy to expend any money in repairing the old house." A resolution was carried authorizing the county treasurer to borrow \$15,000 at 6% for the purpose of a new building. In May 1878 another committee reported the following on the still old deteriorating building. "In one room seven feet high, we found sixteen cots, all of which, we were assured, were occupied every night, and the windows being very small, with no means of ventilation except the report also mentions: '...the walls appear to be infested with vermin, and there is no way to exterminate them except by building the walls anew.'"

On June 11, 1878 a resolution was adopted authorizing F. T. Downing to construct a 140-bed Alms House for the sum of \$13,680 in accordance with plans and specifications made by Wm. V.N. Barlow. In November 1878 authorization was made to purchase furniture for the new county house and landscape the grounds. Frederick Law Olmstead, the noted landscape architect of the 19th Century who designed Central Park in New York City was asked to provide a plan free of charge, by William Prior Letchworth, who was deeply involved in prison, asylum and poor house reform. Olmstead simply referred the county to a handbook on institutional grounds which he had published in 1877.

The building to the right above, was the one completed in 1878. The building to the left in the photograph was built in 1903, fifty feet east of the older County House for a hospital. F. H. Loverin of Buffalo was the architect and contractors Cole and Putnam of Holley were low bidders at \$14,407. A heating and plumbing contract was let to Frank H. Falls for \$2,775.

These two buildings served paupers, orphans, infirmed and aged until 1960 when the new County Home and Infirmary was built on Route 31 west of Albion. The new location was selected because of inadequate water supply on County House Road. The old buildings were razed in 1962 in order to convert the property into a Civil Defense Control Center upon the recommendation of Director Robert Balcerzak. The salvaged cornerstone of the 1878 building remains today imbedded in the foundation wall of the Cobblestone Society Print Shop at Childs, N.Y.