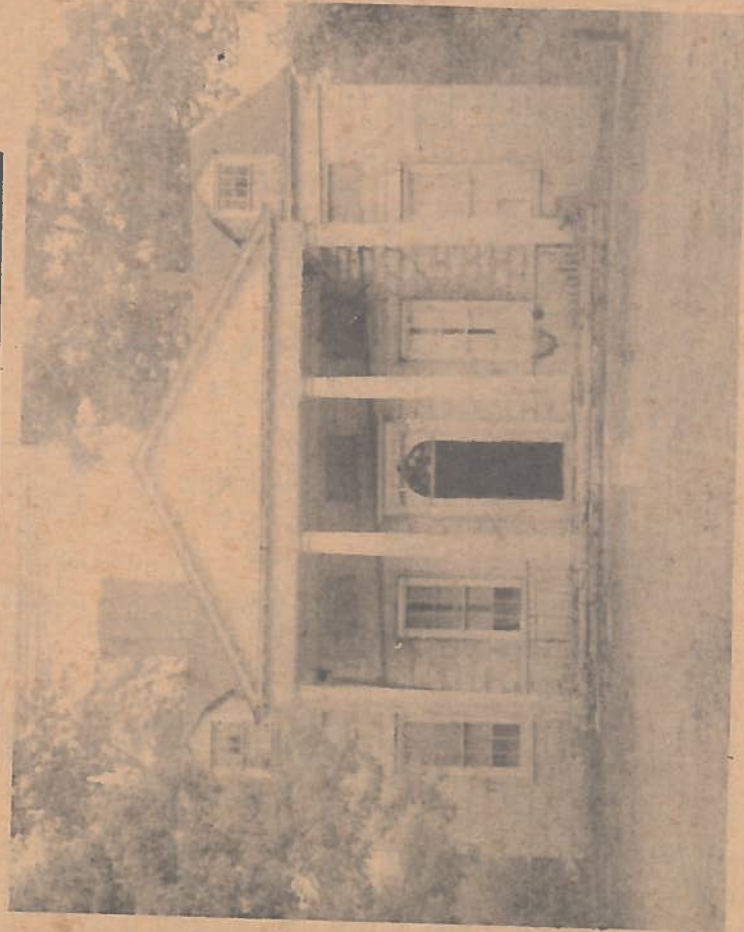


# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



VOL III

NO. 3

## EARLY COUNTY HISTORY - PART II

Continued from last week

"In 1788 the commonwealth of Massachusetts sold to Oliver Phelps and National Gorham, two of its citizens, its pre-emption right to western New York. The purchasers promptly acquired the Indian rights to approximately the eastern half of this land, and as they were unable to keep up their payments the western part reverted to the commonwealth of Massachusetts. This in turn was sold to Robert Morris, an illustrious financier of the American Revolution. He sold to Watson, Cragie and Greenleaf 100,000 acres in a block six miles wide and nearly twenty-nine miles long, bounded on the east by approximately the present east line of Orleans county, and the same line continued southward. On the west the tract was founded by a line later surveyed with a transit and known since that time as the transit line. This property was afterwards purchased by the state of Connecticut and Sir William Pulney, and is usually spoken of as the Connecticut tract. Together with much other land that part of Orleans county lying west of the transit line was sold to interests who eventually turned their holdings over to the Holland Land Company. The price at first charged for the company's land was \$2.75 per acre; one-tenth to be paid down. This so retarded the settlement that the Holland Company often waived advance payment by the actual settlers. Even so their sales at first went off slowly. In 1801 there were 40 sales; in 1802, 56; in 1803, 230; in 1804, 300; in 1805, 415; in 1806, 524; in 1807, 607; in 1808, 612; and in 1809, 1,160.

In 1803 James Walsworth settled at the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek, where a village had been laid out. He was the pioneer settler of Orleans county, and was the first settler on the lake shore between Braddock's Bay and Fort Niagara.

Although the Indian trail on the ridge had existed from time immemorial, and although Augustus Porter had the line of a road traced along it in 1798, the first road to be laid out in the county was Oak Orchard Road, which the Holland Company, about 1803, had surveyed from Batavia to the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek. The present Main Street in the village of Albion is on this line.

In 1791 Ontario county, embracing all of the present state of New York west of the pre-emption line, was set off from Montgomery county. In 1802 Genesee County was formed from the portion of Ontario county which was west of the Genesee River. November 12, 1824 Orleans county was formed from Genesee county. The new county received its name at the insistence of Nehemiah Ignersoll, a prominent resident and property owner of Albion.

At the conclusion of the War of 1812, all menace of invasion from the north was removed, and pioneers learning of the wonderful fertility of the Orleans county soil, began to settle rapidly. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 afforded convenient transportation for the products of the county, and the population increased rapidly until the period of depression just previous to the outbreak of the War of the Rebellion."

Pictured herein is the old Holland Purchase Land Office in Batavia, N.Y. the way it appeared over one hundred years ago.