

House rumored to be built by Jefferson

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Rumor has it that Thomas Jefferson designed this house on West Bank Street in Albion.

The first time I ever heard this was from the late Mayor Donna Rodden more than 35 years ago. Her source was simply rumor: Irene Gibson in her book, "Historic Sites in Orleans County New York," states: "It is said to have been built from a plan drawn by Thomas Jefferson, intended for a Canandaigua friend, but not used by him."

Every once in awhile, someone will say something to me about this house at 125 West Bank St., believing for a fact that it was truly designed by our third president. I won't confirm it and I can't deny it. But if you want my opinion, I think it is unlikely.

Remember, rumors get started sometimes with a

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speck which becomes greatly enlarged and embellished over time. This especially becomes true when people really want to believe in the rumored story.

Gibson, also in her book states: "One of Albion's earliest substantial homes built probably in the late 1830s or early 1840s.

Thomas Jefferson died in

1826 so, therefore this so-called plan was not current at the time the house was built. The buildings Jefferson is known to have designed are in the Georgian or Federal style, not in the bold, massive Greek Revival manner.

I don't mean to debunk a claim to fame here, but we must remember to state what is rumored as "it is said ... , or legend has it ..." because at this point there is no actual proof.

This two-story white clapboard house was the home of Jonathan Blott, a native of England, a local butcher. Born June 4, 1813, in London, England, Blott came to Albion in 1834. In November 1839 on a trip back to England, he married Sarah Harris and brought her to Albion. The census of 1855 lists him, aged 42, as a

butcher and a naturalized citizen. His wife, Sarah, was 38; his son, Jonathan, Jr. 14; born in Orleans County. A daughter Emma was 8; and there were two younger sons James, 6, and Alfred, 2.

Mr. Blott evidently prospered, for in 1866 he was involved in construction of the Blott Building on Main Street.

He died Feb. 28, 1873. Mr. and Mrs. Blott were Episcopalians and attended services at Christ Episcopal Church. When Jonathan Blott died, his family and friends subscribed to a fund to buy an organ for the church sanctuary, in his memory, which was placed there in 1877. A large memorial tablet also is inscribed to Jonathan Blott in Christ Church.