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# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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MEET

NEIL JOHNSON

HISTORIAN, VILLAGE OF ALBION

Neil Johnson, Historian for the Village of Albion says "I think history is worth money. A lot of people who move to Albion remark about what a historic and attractive community it is. This" he says, "is marketable". Like most historians, Neil not only finds himself a researcher, but a promoter of the community in which he lives. With impressive credentials, Neil was appointed Village Historian last September; the Village had been without an historian for several years. He is well versed in compilation of data and requirements for placing sites on the National Register. He hopes to begin a project of research and study of buildings in downtown Albion before long with the idea of nominating them for the National Register. This in turn will help businessmen and promote greater interest in the "marketable" aspects of the community. He hopes when this

work is done that it will give a coherent feeling of what happened to the downtown area at different stages of development.

As originator of the microfilming project of Albion newspapers undertaken by the Orleans County Historical Association, Neil has been able through his coordination to create a most useful tool. With the papers now accessible on microfilm, he can indeed, get a better idea of Albion's development during the 19th Century. This has been his big project during the past several months. But indexing yet remains to be done.

As village historian he has completed several weekly columns under the headline "Albion, Oh Albion" which told about the history of the County Seat papers. Eventually he hopes to have all this information on local newspapers in some sort of booklet form.

Neil Johnson is also a local businessman and works under the firm name of Clune and Johnson which was established in 1976. As a professional, trained archeologist, he travels about New York State frequently making environmental impact statements for municipalities. This includes digging in the ground and sampling all kinds of material from pre-historic to historic. In his research he has become familiar with innumerable library collections across the state. Recently he has purchased an Atari 800 computer which is helpful to him in business.

Neil was born in Rogers City, Michigan but grew up in a suburb of Detroit where his father is a commercial artist. He is a graduate of Wayne State University where he received his BA and MA degrees. His doctorate was received in Anthropology from Cornell University where he did field work. His Dissertation was on the Value System of a Rural Upstate New York Community.

It was at Wayne State that he met his wife Joanne who is Director of Patient Service for the Orleans County Health Department. The Johnsons and their two children Thomas and Sarah, moved to Orleans County in 1970 when Neil took a teaching position at SUNY in Brockport where he stayed until 1974. This followed a position he held at SUNY in Binghamton from 1967-1970. It was during the blizzard of 1977 that the Johnsons attempted moving from their first home in Orleans County at Waterport to their present home on West Avenue in Albion.

Neil holds memberships in a wide range of organizations including: President of OCHA, Treasurer Swan Library, member Orleans County 4-H Fair Board, Cobblestone Society, American Anthropology Association, American Association for State and Local History, National Trust, Society for Historic Archeology, N.Y.S. History Association and N.Y.S. Archeology Association. The Johnsons are leaders of the Orleans County 4-H rabbit raisers. They also enjoy singing in the choir of the First Presbyterian Church in Albion.