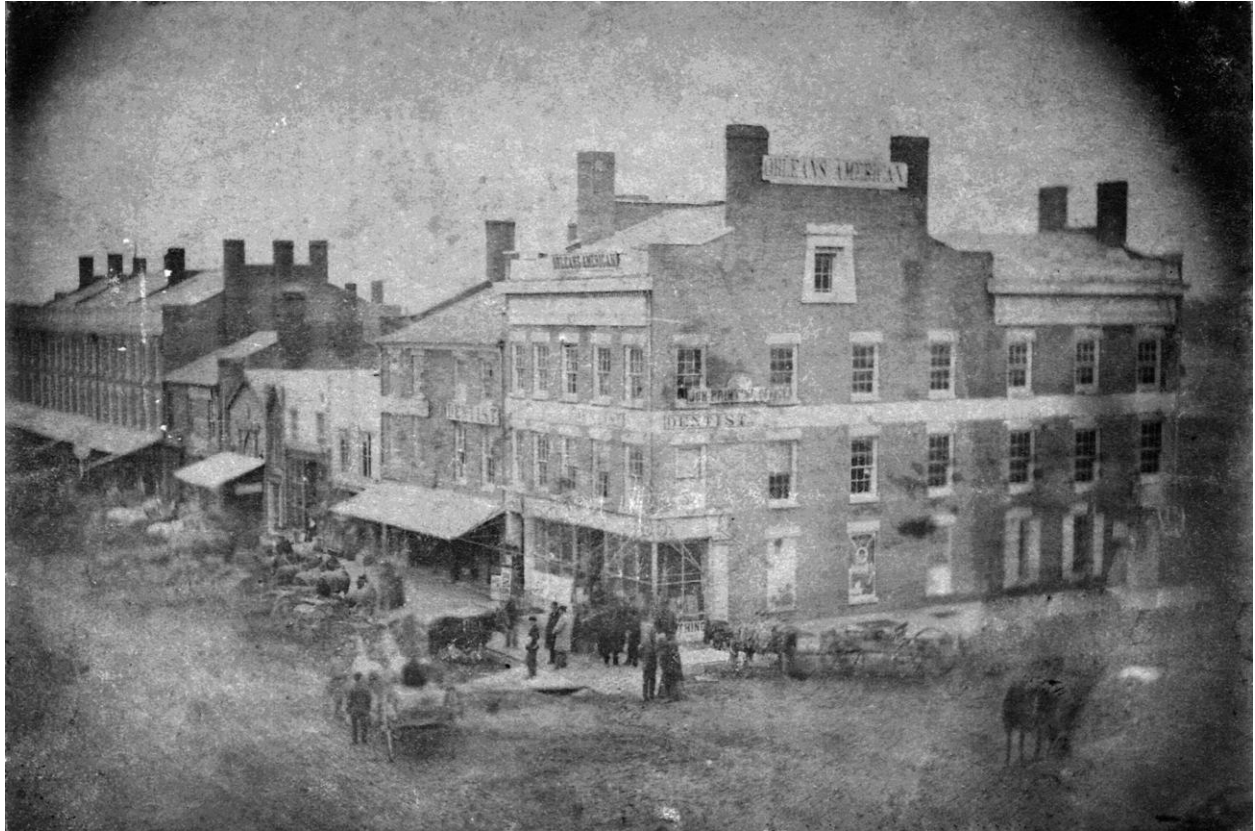


Oldest Photograph of Albion Shows Empire Block before 1868 Fire



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One of the oldest images of downtown Albion, this photograph shows a busy street scene at the intersection of Batavia Street and Canal Street (now North Main and East Bank). Per an 1857 map of the Village of Albion, the block at the intersection was owned by Willis P. Collins, a grain dealer from Connecticut.

As a self-sustaining community, businesses filled the first, second, and third stories of these buildings, providing residents with convenient options for obtaining essential goods and services. On the first floor of the “Old Empire Block” was the store of W. Cole and Robert Sheldon, who operated a clothing business along with Martin Rawson and Fitch Collins. The appearance of signage hanging above the second floor windows shows the dentist office of Dr. J.S. Northrup. On the third floor, as indicated by the high-hanging signs, was the headquarters for the Orleans American, which was operated by David S. Bruner.

Moving further north along Main Street was the drug store of Drs. Orson Nichoson and Lemuel C. Paine, two local pioneer physicians; Snell Realty currently occupies this building. Also visible are stores belonging to William Close, a local shoemaker, and Jacob Hallenbake, a hardware merchant. Slightly visible is the iconic “Gothic Hall,” owned by grocer and baker Andrew Wall, as well as the large block owned by Roswell Smith Burrows.

The Empire Block burned on December 18, 1868, the cause of the fire being an ember from a stove within the store of Cole & Sheldon. The conflagration left a total loss as follows:

Mr. Densmore, on building, \$11,000 with \$6,000 insurance

Cole & Sheldon, on goods, \$12,000 with \$6,000 insurance

Martin Rawson, on goods, \$5,000 with no insurance

Orleans American, \$6,000 with \$2,500 insurance

John Bradshaw, hatter, on goods, \$3,000 with no insurance

J.S. Northrup, \$1,000 with no insurance

Fred Butler, tailor, on goods, \$1,000 with no insurance

Collins Hill, owner of a nearby building, \$3,000 with no insurance