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Home of "Mover & Shaker" Replaced by Post Office

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This postcard, sent February 27, 1912 to Mrs. D. C. Hopkins of Batavia, shows the Greek Revival house constructed for Alexis Ward in 1841. The postcard also shows the home of Alexander Stewart to the left. At the time this photograph was taken, the Buffalo, Lockport, and Rochester Trolley was in operation as the tracks are visible running through the center of State Street.

Alexis Ward was born at Addison, Vermont on May 18, 1802. His parents relocated to Cayuga County, New York when he was a very young boy and he attended the local schools in that vicinity before studying law at Auburn. He arrived at Albion in 1824, one year after his admittance to the bar, and was appointed Justice of the Peace shortly thereafter.

Ward was quite the “mover and shaker” in early Albion, playing an instrumental role in securing the charter for the Bank of Orleans, serving as the president of that institution for a number of years. As Caroline Phipps Achilles worked to open the Phipps Union Seminary in the early 1830s, Ward was an ardent supporter of that effort and the efforts to open the Albion Academy, always seeing the value in higher education. He understood the value of the railroad, lobbying for the construction of the Rochester, Lockport, and Niagara Falls Railroad, which brought about the start of the Suspension Bridge Company in 1855. Numerous residents of Orleans County became charter stockholders in that venture, including John Proctor and William Swan, which brought considerable wealth to Albion.

The well-respected Ward was elected as the first president of the Village of Albion after its incorporation in 1828 and received an honorary A.M. degree (Artium Magister, or Master of Arts degree) from Middlebury College in 1836. Around the time his house was constructed, Ward was appointed to a two-man committee along with Lorenzo Burrows, charged with the task of locating a suitable location for a new cemetery. That site, now Mt. Albion Cemetery, was formally dedicated on September 7, 1843 on land purchased from Jacob Annis and Lyman Patterson.

On November 7, 1854, Ward was elected to the New York State Assembly to represent Orleans County for the 78th New York State Legislature. Unfortunately, he died on November 28th before he could take office. A special election was held on December 28, 1854 to fill his vacancy; Elisha Whalen, a merchant from Medina on the Know-Nothing ticket, served one term in office in Ward's place.

This beautiful home, once located on the southwest corner of Main and State streets was demolished in 1936 to make way for the new Post Office. That building was constructed at a cost of \$52,699.00 in the Colonial Revival style.