

The Center Block / 10 – 18 West Main Street
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2012

For almost the first 50 years of the Fredonia settlement's existence, large gatherings had to use borrowed sites: schoolhouses, barns, inns, and churches. However, in 1851 the Erie Railroad reached Dunkirk, which caused Central Avenue to be made into a plank road, which allowed a horse-drawn omnibus to connect the Village to the Railroad depot, which made it possible for lecturers and theater companies to easily reach Fredonia.

In 1852, the Center Block at today's *10-18 West Main Street* was built with a Concert Hall on the third floor, the first "purpose-built Hall" in the Village. In 1871 the American Block went up at today's *5-11 East Main Street*, with its Union Hall on the third floor. (The Union Hall did so well that the Concert Hall in the Center Block was sold and remodeled for the Masonic lodge.)

In April 1891 the Village Hall/Opera House was opened and became the venue for most performances. Fire and other accidents since the late 20th century have left only one of the original Center Block buildings intact (10 West Main Street.)