

The **Woleben** Block /45-53 West Main Street  
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2012

The site spanning today's *45 West Main Street* to today's *53 West Main Street* has had three major buildings on it. In the summer of 1816, a large wooden building was put up on the site just east of the alley that would become Forest Place. It was put up by **Risley & Fellows**. **J. & R. Plumb** had a store in the east part, and there was a large room over their store, with just the floor laid, used for Baptist meetings. Mrs. Rachel **Cushing's** funeral was held there in August 1816. In another upper room, the *Chautauque Gazette* was begun in January 1817.

Over the years the building deteriorated until on 13 April 1843 the village Trustees ordered that the ramshackle building be removed, lowered or torn down. It was finally removed and on 26 May 1846 a new building, this one of brick, was begun. It was completely up by March 1847 and finished in April. A May 1847 woodcut advertisement shows the new building and its tenants: **J. Havens**, at #1, at the corner of Forest Place; **D. Barrell** at #2; **P. Perkins & Son** at #3; and **Hilton & Case** at #4. The New Book Store was over #2; **H. F. Smith**, trunk and harness maker, over the front entrance; **F. P. Isherwood**, tailor over #3; and the *Fredonia Censor* printing Office over #4.

On 28 February 1850, the building burned. At the time it was occupied by **C. Dudley & Co.**, dry goods; **Perkins & Webster**, dry goods; **Hilton & Lamson**, dry goods; the Odd Fellows Hall; **Dr. Hall's** office; **H. F. Smith's** saddler shop; and the *Censor* office.

A new larger brick building was in the planning by 23 April 1850 and was partially ready in April 1851, utilizing some of the bricks from buildings abandoned when the Van Buren community collapsed. (Other bricks were shipped to Buffalo for building there.) There is a chart of the building's occupants in the *Censor* of 8 February 1853 showing the IOOF Hall on the third floor over stores #4 and #5.

In 1915 the Odd Fellows bought Mrs. **Fenner's** lot on West Main Street adjoining the **Woleben** Block, intending to put up a large building next door, occupy the upper two floors and open the third floor into their **Woleben** Block quarters. The plans were never carried out, with the Odd Fellows, instead, taking over the American Block at *5-11 East Main Street* in 1923.