

### **3.0 NARRATIVE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

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#### **3.1 Landscape and Climate of Chautauqua County and Sherman**

The Village of Sherman is located south-west of Chautauqua Lake in the northern portion of the Town of Sherman in Chautauqua County, New York. Sherman is a small, rural Village centered on the intersections of Routes 15, 18, NY-76 and NY-430 and has a population of approximately 714 people.<sup>1</sup>

Chautauqua County encompasses 1,062 square miles and is the westernmost county in the state of New York, boarded to its north by Lake Erie, its northeast by Erie County, to the south and west by the state of Pennsylvania. To its east is Cattaraugus County. The county is characterized by its rolling, hilly landscape carved by glacial activity which resulted in many streams and rivers formed in the valleys. The county's largest lake is Chautauqua Lake which is approximately 20 square miles in size, followed in size by the Cassadaga lakes which encompass about 600 acres. The northern portion of the county lies within the Great Lakes basin, and the southern portion lies in the Mississippi River valley. Chautauqua County is divided by a belt of grass and tree covered hills which divide the watershed of the county into those which drain north into Lake Erie and those which drain south into the Mississippi system.

All of Chautauqua County lies over 570 feet above sea level, the elevation of Lake Erie, with hill regions away from Lake Erie rising about 1000 feet higher. Given the diversity of its topography and proximity to Lake Erie and the Great Lakes region, Chautauqua County has three different climates. The area which borders along Lake Erie, running approximately three to five miles in width, features a more temperate climate than other parts of the county. The deep valleys, carved through the hills by the numerous rivers and streams which lace Chautauqua County, has a more severe climate with a delayed warming in spring and typically an earlier and harsher winter season. A third climatological zone can be found at the pinnacle of the hills, and these portions feature a still more severe climate, typically receiving the most amounts of snow, lowest temperature and the highest winds during the prolonged winter season in all of Chautauqua County.

Within this county, the Village of Sherman is located within the boundaries of the Town of Sherman. The Town of Sherman comprises approximately 36 square miles. The town's east and west borders are about 6 miles from Pennsylvania. Its terrain is typical of Chautauqua County, and is rolling and hilly with deep ravines carved by several streams in the area. It is drained primarily by the French Creek and its tributaries. The French Creek runs in a southerly direction through the Village of Sherman. It crosses the west line of the town less than 2 miles from the south-west corner of the town. The soil of the Town of Sherman is comparable

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the 2000 census.

to that throughout the county, being clay and sandy loam, with a subsoil of hard pan.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.2 Early Settlement in the Town of Sherman (1800s- 1830s)

The earliest settlement in Chautauqua County and the Village of Sherman was by the Native American tribes, including the Huron-Iroquois groups. This family of tribes inhabited portions of Ontario, northern Ohio, nearly all of New York State, a majority of Pennsylvania, and portions of Quebec. The earliest identified tribe to inhabit Chautauqua County was the Erie, and later the region was occupied by the Seneca, an Iroquois tribe. These tribes shared a common language and were known to create permanent villages located in defensible positions, fortified with palisades and ditches. Limited agricultural practices were done by the Native Americans due to the dense forestation in much of their territory, and their primary crops included corn, beans, gourds, pumpkins, hemp and tobacco.

Evidence of the settlement of these earliest inhabitants was visible to the white settlers who came to the Chautauqua region. As farmers worked the land and settlement became more widespread in the early 1800s, it was not uncommon that artifacts, burials and settlements were uncovered. In Sheridan, an ancient three acre circular enclosure and skeletal remains were discovered on a farm, while near Fredonia additional fortified structures were located which yielded artifacts such as arrow heads, tools, pipes, hatchets and household objects as well as human remains. Early roadways with stone walls were also identified in the Chautauqua County town of Portland. In the county seat of Mayville, a notable circular earthwork fort was identified at the south boundary of the village. Despite uncovering thousands of human remains and numerous sites of past human settlements, many of the ancient remains were damaged and destroyed as farmers worked their fields and new settlement occurred in the early nineteenth-century.

The geographic and physical boundaries of the Town of Sherman evolved over several decades during the early nineteenth-century. Chautauqua County was formed in 1808, being carved out of the large Genesee County which at that time encompassed the entire Western New York area. At this time, Chautauqua County was one large town of the same name. The Town of Clymer was then partitioned off in 1821, with a large territory which encompassed the present Towns of Clymer, French Creek, Mina and Sherman. In 1824, Mina was further divided out, with territory that encompassed the present towns of Mina and Sherman. The community that became the Village of Sherman was established within the Town of Mina. The Town of Sherman was surveyed and mapped within the town of Mina by the Holland Land Company and on April 7, 1832 was declared a new town by the State Legislature. The Town of Sherman was formally incorporated in 1924. The Town of Sherman comprises township 2,

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<sup>2</sup> Information from this section comes from *History of Chautauqua County, New York* Boston, Mass.: W.A. Fergusson, 1894 and also *History of Chautauqua County* by Andrew Young, 1874.

range 14 as described by the Holland Land Company's survey. During the early 1800s, the Holland Land Company's primary office in the region was located in Mayville, with William Peacock serving as the local agent. The Village of Sherman was incorporated in 1890.

Under Peacock, the Holland Land Company sold land directly to the settlers, in quantities of one hundred and twenty acres (or more) at a rate of \$2.25 per acre. Following the hostilities of the War of 1812, this portion of New York State began to become open for increased settlement and for farming. Initial settlement in Chautauqua County began in the first few decades of the 1800s; the French Creek settlement was established in 1812, Mina was settled beginning in 1815, Clymer in 1820 and Sherman in 1823. According to the Holland Land Company's records, the Town of Sherman had the greatest number of original land purchases between 1825 and 1828 when compared to any other equally-sized town in Chautauqua County.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 3 Dearing Dorman, Sherman's first settler

The first settler to locate in the Town of Sherman is believed to be Dearing Dorman. Dorman arrived from Batavia in 1823, when he located on lot number 32 and erected a small "shanty." Dorman's residence was described as being a quintessential pioneer structure clad in tree bark and with a floor of split logs. On November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1823, Archibald Dorman, son of Dearing Dorman, became the first child born in Sherman. Following Dorman's initial settlement in the Town of Sherman, other settlers soon arrived. Shortly after Dorman located in the area, Harvey W. Goff purchased lot 2 and erected his residence there. In spring 1824, Alanson Weed erected a log house on lot number 32, and in the same summer Otis Skinner, Esq. arrived from Ellery, NY to build a small house on lot number 24. Jonathan R. Reynolds' log cabin on lot number 32 was built in the fall of

<sup>3</sup> Young, 544.

1824. 1825 saw the arrival of Hiram N. Gleason and Lester R Dewey, who had both cleared areas for log cabins.<sup>4</sup>

During this earliest phase of settlement in the Town of Sherman, this area was largely wilderness. It contained no good roadways, contained little open, unforested land and had no saw mill. The closest mill was located somewhere along Chautauqua Lake, owned by a Mr. Wing, where occasionally desperate settlers resorted out of necessity to crack their corn. While the dense forest provided ample trees to construct houses, without a nearby saw mill, residents were forced to float good lumber on barges from the closest saw mill at the southern end of Chautauqua Lake up to Mayville where it could be hauled through the dense forests over rough roads out to the Town of Sherman. Many early residents who could not afford the time and costs of getting lumber used elm bark for sheathing their houses, or constructed them of split linden logs with holes filled with "clay mortar" to stop drafts. Most early houses had packed dirt floors, although some houses such as Dorman's had floors of split logs. Large fireplaces, typically constructed within the walls of the house, provided a good source of heat during the cold winter months.<sup>5</sup>

1825 proved to be a successful year in the growth and development of the Town of Sherman. In this year, the Erie Canal opened with its western terminus in Buffalo just 75 miles north of Sherman. The canal connected Albany, New York City, and the entire east coast to Western New York, and funneled new residents and commerce into the area. The impact of the canal in Sherman was felt immediately. Immigration into the town increased beginning in 1825, and new, permanent development began. Charles Ross located on lot number 50, while Charles Hawley, Sr. constructed his modest dwelling on lot number 29. 1825 saw the construction of the first saw mill in Sherman, built in the summer of that year by Alanson Weed. This first mill was on the site of the mill later owned by Perry Dewey on lot 31. This was a landmark moment in the initial growth and development of Sherman, as now settlers could more quickly and cheaply access the lumber needed to construct solid houses and permanent businesses, commercial buildings, churches and other buildings which were vital to establish widespread, lasting settlement in the area. In the summer of 1826, William Williams, Esq. and Elisha Woodruff arrived in town, each building a small frame house on lots 29 and 38, which were the first frame houses in the town and were regarded as "pretentious dwellings."<sup>6</sup> Also in 1826, Hiram Northway erected the first house in what would become the Village of Sherman, located on the west side of a small stream which ran south through the Village.<sup>7</sup> During this same summer Elder Spencer, a Baptist clergyman, arrived in Sherman, and was the first to bring organized religion to the town. His first sermon was issued at the house of Jonathan Reynolds.

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<sup>4</sup> *Some Events in the History of Sherman*. Sherman: Centennial Celebration, 1923; 17.

<sup>5</sup> Edson, Obed. *History of Chautauqua County, New York*. Boston: W.A. Fergusson, 1894; 958.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Edson, Obed. *History of Chautauqua County, New York*. Boston: W.A. Fergusson, 1894; 958.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 958-959.

By this time, only a few years following the initial settlement of Sherman by Dearing Dorman, the roads which connected the growing rural community to its neighbors began to improve. By 1825 and 1826 the roads around Sherman were partially opened, and it was said that during the winter a team of oxen and a sled was a fine mode of transportation, enabling sleigh rides to visit friends only a few miles away.

1827 was noted as an especially busy year in the development of the Town of Sherman. With the establishment of a saw mill and improved roads, settlement began to increase. It was recorded that invitations to “come over and assist in raising a log house” were issued to fellow residents as often as five days a week.<sup>8</sup> A small and tight-knit community, the residents of Sherman all pitched in to assist their friends and neighbors, as was necessitated in any early settlement. Settlement was slowly increasing in Sherman in the mid-1820s, but the area still offered little in the way of comfort and security to those who chose to settle in what largely remained as a densely forested wilderness.

The economy of the settlement-period Town of Sherman was simple and traditional, focusing primarily on trade rather than retail. Residents hunted or grew much of their own food since there was no available grocery or market at this time. During this era, it was noted that the largely forested areas around the community provided ample supply of game including deer, and the many streams provided trout and fish. Settlers grew subsistence crops including corn and potatoes to feed their families. Food was not plentiful in the area and the typical diet of the early pioneers focused on grain, a few potatoes and milk and cheese from the family cow. These formed the backbone of the family meals. Money was very limited in 1820s-era Sherman, with most commerce taking the form of trade. One of the only items which commanded actual money were “black salts” which many families sold in small quantities in places such as Westfield or Barcelona for cash which was generally used to pay taxes.<sup>9</sup> During this earliest period in Sherman’s history, not only was the physical landscape still a wild, untamed frontier, but the economy and businesses within the city were based on necessity and subsistence living.

The Town of Sherman began to prosper in the late 1820s, as the earliest pioneer settlement began to be transformed into a larger and more sophisticated community. Like many areas, after a settlement grows to a certain “critical mass” level of residents, it becomes more feasible and profitable to provide a wider variety of goods and services locally to the growing community. While attaining food and basic shelter were foremost on the minds of the earliest pioneers in rural areas, once these are achieved, businesses like mills and general stores typically emerge to bring goods closer to the growing areas. As population

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<sup>8</sup> *Some Events in the History of Sherman*. Sherman: Centennial Celebration, 1923; 20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 20. Also Edson, Obed. *History of Chautauqua County, New York*. Boston: W.A. Fergusson, 1894; 959.

increases, typically residents begin to organize a local governmental system to aid in organizing and regulating the business of the town.

Business in Sherman began to grow and flourish in the 1820s as the effect of the Erie Canal began to be felt in the Southern Tier, and new trades and shops emerged in the growing community. While Alanson Weed's saw mill was opened in 1825 as the first real business in the town, in 1827 Mr. Pelton opened the first blacksmith's forge in town and soon after, Joel Hill constructed another one near the center of Sherman. In either 1827 or 1828 Spencer and Skeels constructed a saw mill on the French Creek, and soon after its completion added a pair of small mill stones which allowed it to function as a small-scale grain mill to serve the needs of local residents. During this same period Sherman saw the development of its first true shop, as Josiah Keeler opened a small store in the house of Asahel Hall, and soon after erected a store and ashery building near what was later known as Hemstreet's Corners.

Despite their tough lives in the wilderness of Sherman, residents began organizing an educational system for the children of the area. In 1825 the first school district in the area was formed which encompassed both the towns of Chautauqua and Sherman. A school was established in the town of Chautauqua located in what was later called the "Hustis district." Otis Skinner also taught school classes in his own home in the winter of 1828-29. Following these two steps, several additional small schools were developed to serve the growing educational needs of the children in Sherman.

In the early 1830s, the residents of Sherman began to become more actively organized in the political definition of their community. In 1832 the eastern part of the town of Mina beyond township 2 in the 15<sup>th</sup> range as surveyed and mapped by the Holland Land Company was by an Act of the State Legislature "constituted a new town by the name of Sherman."<sup>10</sup> The town boundaries were established to coincide with those previously identified as township 2, range 14 of the Holland Land Company survey.

With the Town of Sherman formally defined, area residents began organizing local government. On the first Tuesday of March, 1833 the first town meeting was held at the house of Asahel Hall. Elections of a Supervisor and Town Clerk were made and the Town of Sherman had its first official local government structure.

### **3.3 Formation and growth of the Village of Sherman (1830s- 1890s)**

While much of the landscape of the Town of Sherman continued to be characterized by its densely forested wilderness well into the 1830s, the area that became known as the Village of Sherman in 1890 began emerging as a center for population, growth and commerce. One of the factors which may have prompted the settlement in this area was the location of French Creek which

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *Some Events in the History of Sherman*. Sherman: Centennial Celebration, 1923; 21.

could provide the necessary water power to turn mills for sawing lumber and grinding grain, as well as providing fish to feed the hungry residents. The landscape of Chautauqua County itself likely influenced the growth of the Village of Sherman, as the area of the Village is generally flat and level in comparison to the rolling, hilly terrain surrounding it.

While Hiram Northway erected the first house in 1826 located in what would become the Village of Sherman, new growth and development occurred in the Village in the early 1830s. In May, 1832, Benjamin H. Kip and Otis and Elijah Miller purchased a mill site on the French Creek as well as additional land in the Village. This group of men became leaders in aiding the growth and development of the Village of Sherman and were responsible for establishing some of its earliest businesses. Under the firm name of Kip and Miller, the men constructed a saw mill in 1832, and by the spring of 1833 had also established a wool carding and cloth dressing business. Otis Miller built the Village's blacksmith shop and also a tannery in 1833. The Kip & Miller firm also erected a grist mill in 1838 which provided a much-needed mill location for area residents.

Benjamin Kip and Otis and Elijah Miller were regarded as the "founding fathers" of the Village of Sherman, due to their role as prominent local business leaders. The Millers and Kip owned much of the land surrounding the Village of Sherman as well. The Village itself was nicknamed "Millerville" at early points in its history, and was also dubbed "Kipville" as well. The three men became so strongly associated with the foundation of the community that these nicknames for the Village of Sherman persisted well into the 1800s beyond the early decades of its growth.<sup>11</sup>

In 1839 Sherman was recorded as containing twelve families and sixty-three residents according a student composition from this year. Business continued to grow and prosper in the fledgling Village during the mid-1800s. Otis Miller and Kiler Dean ran the tanner business and also ran a shoemaking shop. A small grocery store run by James Barker was noted as being the first store in Sherman in 1839. The community also contained a blacksmith's shop, a cabinetry and carpentry shop, a gristmill, a physician, and several churches. At the close of the 1830s, the Village of Sherman was emerging from its earliest pioneer, hard-scrabble origins and was well on its way to becoming a thriving, self-sufficient community. The optimism felt in the growing and rapidly developing area was described as such:

*"The cleared fields around the Village look new and rough, and are thickly covered with stumps, but undoubtedly the place will grow and improve a good deal in the future, as I heard of a number of parties contracting for lots and preparing to building. I think and believe, Sherman will some day grow into quite a respectable Village."<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Edson, 960-961.

<sup>12</sup> From the description of F.R. Case, a student in the Sherman school, dated July 13, 1839. Edson, 961.



During the mid-1800s, Sherman had grown into a prosperous community, with a variety of businesses and agricultural interests which provided a stable, comfortable life for its residents. In 1850-51 the Westfield and Clymer Plank Road was constructed, running right through Sherman, and this newly opened road encouraged the growth of settlement and business in the Village of Sherman. An increase in horses in the area also spurred the growth of Sherman, and led to the founding of S. Cushing's harness shop and Frank F. Fowler's livery stable in the 1850s.<sup>13</sup> In 1852 Sherman also saw its first, albeit unsuccessful, railroad line run through the area (see 'The Railroad in Sherman' section for more information). New residents continued to settle in the Village area, and new business enterprises also were established. Main Street (then spelled "Maine" according to an 1854 map) in Sherman began to develop as the central business district for the Village, while the area just north of the commercial area was occupied by a growing residential neighborhood. The French Creek ran just south of the Main Street core, crossed by Franklin Street where it was dammed for use by the planing mill which lay to the west of Franklin Street. A large Mill Pond formed on the opposite side of Franklin Street, just south of the Main Street core. Further south along Franklin and adjacent streets was additional residential growth in the Village.

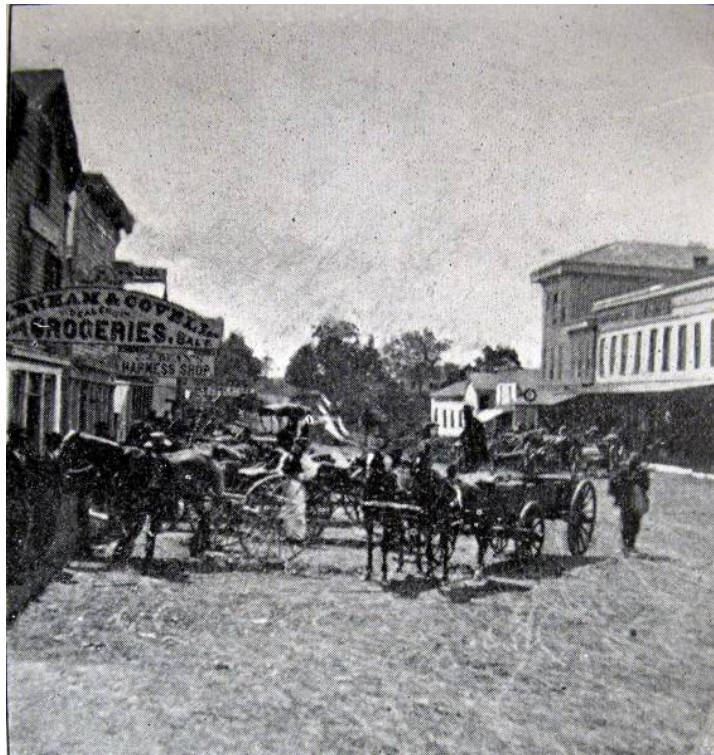


Figure 4 Main Street in Sherman, 1854

<sup>13</sup> French Creek. *Sherman's Sesquicentennial, 1823-1973*. Youngsville, Pa.: Youngsville Courier, 1973; 55.

In the 1850s, Sherman offered its growing population a wide variety of shops, stores and businesses. The growing Village featured several dry goods and grocery stores, a blacksmith shop, a shoe shop, a drug store, post office, cabinetry shop, harness shop, candy and notions store, a machine shop and a variety of other businesses. The Village boasted several doctor's offices and a dentist to care for its growing community. Many of the shops and businesses which were recorded in this period are difficult to pinpoint on contemporary maps due to the inexact description of their locations coupled with the repeated loss of many of the Main Street buildings during the late nineteenth-century.

During the 1850s, Sherman saw many advancements. Miles J. Clark built a blacksmith shop there in 1851, and Patrick McFarland published the first newspaper in 1853. In 1854 the Metropolitan Block was constructed, located near the corner of Main and Church Streets.

The 1850s also saw an outbreak of smallpox in the Village of Sherman, which affected several area families. Chester Bullock, a merchant, returned from a trip to New York City in November 1853. Upon his return, Bullock fought a mild case of the disease. James Barker was soon struck by the disease and died shortly after contracting it. Another child in the Village also died from the disease within a short span of time. Several other residents became ill in the neighborhood, prompting the establishment of the board of health in Sherman. The panic in the community regarding the disease was so intense that the board of health established a "pest house" to which all afflicted people were forced to locate while they were ill.

An 1862 student composition by William H. Sperry recorded the following description of the growing township of Sherman:

*"Several years ago there was an Ashery in this place. At present there are in town 4 dry goods stores, 1 hardware store, 1 drug store, 2 clothing stores, 2 post offices, 2 cabinet shops, 2 millinery shops, 2 shoe shops besides several farmers that work at it some, 4 blacksmith shops, 1 grist mill, 10 saw mills, 1 tannery besides one farmer that does considerable tanning, 2 harness shops, 1 imbrotype room, 1 cheese box manufactory, 3 wagon shops, 1 tavern... This town contains 268 dwellings... The population of the Village was 401, the Town 1,314... Sherman is considered a dairying town."*<sup>14</sup>

Sherman was a Village on the rise in the 1860s, and had a wide variety of shops, stores and businesses which catered to the local community. The community became a center of trade and commerce as farmers would come into the Village to sell or trade their products and purchase goods. As a result of this new influx of money, the Village established its first known formal bank during this period. In about 1865 the first bank was built in Sherman, known as the Sherman

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Some Events in the History of Sherman*. Sherman: Centennial Celebration, 1923; 25-26.

Exchange, which was located on Franklin Street just south of Main Street. This bank was rebuilt twice, once in 1869 and again in 1877 as a result of the fires in this area. The Sherman Exchange continued in operation until 1884 when it ultimately failed during a period of financial depression.



Figure 5 The south side of Main Street, 1868

By the 1860s, Sherman had become a thriving community with a wide variety of businesses and shops, but the dairy industry emerged as the main agricultural focus of the area and its most profitable industry. The climate and landscape of the Town of Sherman made it an ideal region to grow foraging crops for cows. During the early period of the Civil War the price of cheese dramatically increased, since it provided an easily portable and long-long lasting source of dairy calcium for the soldiers. This increased demand made its manufacture a lucrative trade for area farmers. In 1862, Ed Coon built a cheese factory on Hart Street just south of Main Street. By the end of the war, the price of cheese had dropped, but the price of butter had skyrocketed. Many cheese factories were subsequently converted to produce butter. Soon after the opening of the Coon Cheese Factory, others were building including one owned by Ira Marshal, one by Jay Williams and one owned by Fred W. Edmunds. Days during which the farmers brought their butter stock to town to sell, usually during the Fall season, were known as Butter Days. These days became the most important and most active days of the week.



Figure 6 "Butter Days" in the Village of Sherman

During the last half of the 1800s, the Village of Sherman was devastated by a series of floods and fires which destroyed many of the area's earliest homes and businesses. A fire in 1850 destroyed a grocery store on the corner of Main and Franklin Streets. In February of 1865, another fire swept through the Village, which was noted as completely destroying four businesses including the Post Office, Town Clerk's Office, a tannery and a shoe shop. In August of the same year, two dams in the Town of Sherman as well as the dam in the Village broke, flooding massive swaths of land in the area. The Village flood washed away the Franklin Street bridges, the cheese factory and livestock. These fires and floods destroyed many of the area's early records.

On November 5, 1869 an event known as the "Great Fire" devastated Sherman. This fire destroyed much of the core of the small community, including the entire north side of Main Street from Church to Miller Streets, as well as additional adjacent structures. At the time, these buildings had all been constructed of wood frame, making them susceptible to fires. The fire was reported to have begun in a chimney of the Sherman House inn and tavern at the corner of Main and Church Streets, which then spread to the entire block within a few hours. Several of the Village's primary businesses were completely lost due to the fire including the Sherman House, what had been known as the Metropolitan Block, S.T. Hawley's building which contained the Good Templar Hall, and the Trinity Block which contained Miss Nettie Tousley's dressmaking shop, the Masonic Hall and dry-

goods store building of J.T. Green, and the Hawley & Myrick dry goods store at the corner of Main and Franklin Streets.

The north side of the Main Street business district was struck by a second devastating fire, shortly after rebuilding had begun. In December 1876, two brick blocks and a wooden building used as a drug store and residence were ablaze. The fire eventually spread to all the properties on the north side of Main Street between Church and Miller Streets, which had been devastated by the fire of 1869.



Figure 7 The Dean House, 1879 (demolished)



Figure 8 The Sperry Block at the corner of Main and Franklin Streets, built 1878 (altered)

As a result of these two significant fires and the threat of flooding, the primary buildings on the commercial artery along Main Street were eventually reconstructed in brick. Rebuilding continued throughout the late 1800s in Sherman as a result of these devastating fires, constructing new buildings in the established framework of streets and lot divisions, but property owners largely constructed their replacement structures in brick for its improved fire-resistance. This is the era in which the buildings along the north side of Main Street were reconstructed, following their loss in the 1860s. The three-story brick commercial block at the north side of Main Street was built in 1870. In 1877 the two-story brick block at 33-34 Main Street was constructed, followed shortly by the larger three-story brick block to its east which contained the Masonic Hall on its upper floor and also the two-story brick block at the corner of Main and Mill Streets. These buildings were all constructed between 1877 and 1881 and were done in a simple commercial Italianate style with elaborate bracketed cornices atop each block. The two story block at the corner of Main and Miller Streets was known as the Thayer Block. Also during this period on the site of the former Sherman House was constructed an elegant Second Empire inn and tavern, known as the Dean House, at the corner of Main and Church Streets. The elegant two-and-one-half-story frame building featured a Mansard roof with a series of round-headed dormers. The Sperry Block at the corner of Main and Franklin Streets on the south side of Main Street was built in 1878. Another two-story commercial block which contained two ground-level retail spaces was constructed ca. 1886 at 31-32 Main Street and featured an Italianate bracketed cornice, round-headed windows with elaborated hood molds with keystones and springers. Eventually by the late 1880s, a continuous porch was constructed across the front of all the brick commercial buildings along the north side of Main Street, protecting pedestrian shoppers from the harsh snow and rain, and also acting as a place to tie up horses and wagons.



Figure 9 The south side of Main Street prior to the 1890 fire



Figure 10 The Old American Block at the corner of Main and Franklin Streets, lost in 1890 fire (currently site of Hubbard Block)



Figure 11 The Hubbard Block, built 1895



Figure 12 The W.J. Corbett Block, built 1898 (presently Napa Auto Parts)



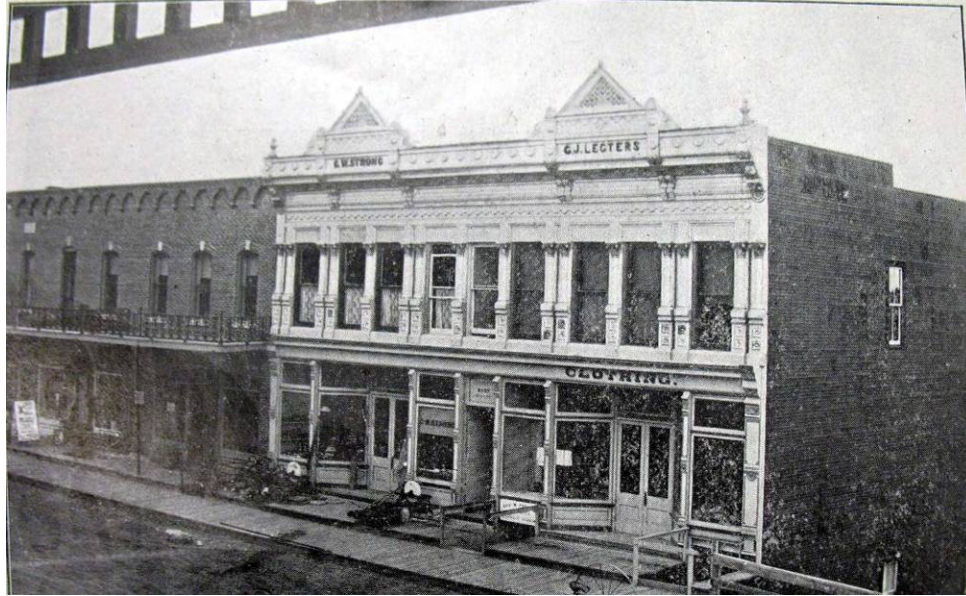


Figure 13 The south side of Main street showing the Hubbard Block (at left, extant) and the Sperry Block built 1890s, damaged in 1895 fire and reconstructed as a one-story building (extant).

The south side of Main Street fared little better than the north side, and was also swept with devastating fires in the nineteenth-century. A blaze on July 14, 1890 destroyed the entire south side of Main Street from C.J. Palmer's blacksmith shop at the western end all the way around the corner to Excelsior Hall on Franklin Street. The American Block at the corner of the two streets as well as several other businesses and homes in the area, many of them of wood frame construction, were lost. Buildings along the north side of the street also were damaged in the fire, including the wood Dean House at the corner of Main and Church Streets. Much of the block on the south side of Main Street between Hart and Franklin Streets remained vacant for several years after the fire with the exception of the replacement of the old American Block building. The new Hubbard Block dated 1895 was a solid two-story brick building which featured a two-story porch with cast iron railing along its north façade as well as heavy corbelled cornice surmounted by elegant iron cresting which originally crowned the building. Next door to the west was an elegant, two-story brick building with a fantastic cast-iron façade known as the Sperry Block which dates to the late 1890s.<sup>15</sup> The Dean House across Main Street was also restored, adding a two-story Eastlake spindled porch across its front façade. Further down the street along the south side, W.J. Corbett constructed a two-story brick block also in a modest commercial style which housed Corbett's furniture and undertaking shop.

<sup>15</sup> This building, at the west of the Hubbard Block should not be confused with the earlier Sperry Block which was located at the south-eastern corner of Main and Franklin Streets, built in 1878.



Figure 14 Flood of 1892 showing the Franklin Street bridge swept away

Although the Village of Sherman was highly vulnerable to fires in the late 1800s, the community also faced a threat of a different kind. The wood damn which was constructed along the French Creek in order to power the mills was highly susceptible to damage. During the winter, the water behind the dam would freeze, causing it to strain under the weight and pressure of the ice build up. During other parts of the year, debris frequently was caught in the dam. On August 24, 1892 the dam ruptured, flooding the Franklin Street bridge and washing it, along with numerous bridges all along the French Creek, away.

Only a few years later, on January 2, 1895 the Village of Sherman faced another devastating fire. The fire damaged the same area which had been destroyed during the 1890 fire, including the Hubbard Block, the Sperry Block, and a photography studio along Franklin Street. The north side of the block faced some damage from broken glass and debris, but it was largely spared from extensive damage.

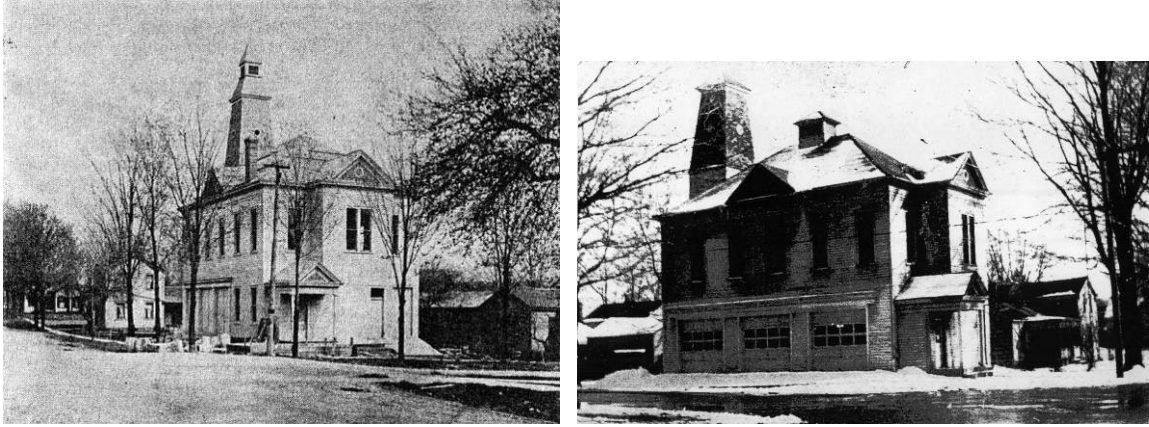


Figure 15 Sherman's Old Village Hall and Fire Hall (demolished)

Despite the loss and damage of so many of the buildings and businesses in the Village of Sherman during the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, the community was able to rebuild not only its physical environment but also its political identity as well. After two unsuccessful initial attempts dating as early as 1885, the electors of the Village of Sherman voted to incorporate on September 8, 1890. On March 19, 1901 the Village of Sherman voted to build a Village Hall at the corner of Miller and Railroad (later Park) Streets. This new Village Hall contained the Village lockup, the fire equipment and also an assembly hall which was used for demonstrations. It has since been deemed structurally unsound and was demolished.

Not long after the incorporation of the Village, in May of 1896 a group of men in Sherman organized a privately-owned waterworks company in Sherman. A five hundred barrel tank on a seventy foot high derrick was constructed for the Sherman Water Works, as well as a windmill to pump the water from the well below into the tank. A large pipe was laid on Main Street in order for many of the street's businesses and residences to connect to the new water system. Later, a pump in the Edmunds mill was connected to the main water system which could take water from the pond in the event of a fire. Eventually the windmill system became antiquated and a contract with the Sherman Electric Light Company to pump the water was issued. The Sherman Water Works plant was eventually sold to the Village of Sherman for \$1,550 in 1908.

The Village of Sherman exhibits a wide variety of popular nineteenth-century residential architectural styles which complement the commercial architecture along the Main Street artery. Residential neighborhoods in Sherman are located largely north of Main Street, with additional development south along Franklin/Osborn Street as well as west and east along Main Street. While the original 1820s-era "shanty" houses have long since disappeared, the Village retains a good collection of ca. 1840s-50s Greek Revival and vernacular houses, especially along West Main Street and on Kipp Street. These houses display features typical of the Greek Revival style including prominent front gables, often with broad cornice returns, a heavy entablature-type molding beneath the eaves,

and elaborated entranceways. One of the best examples of the Greek Revival style in Sherman is the Miller House (ca. 1840s, extant) at 137 West Main Street. Sherman retains an excellent core of Italianate style houses, a style which was popular just after the end of the Civil War in the 1860s-80s. The J.T. Green House (ca. 1870s, extant) at 128 Miller Street is an excellent example of Italianate residential architecture which retains its brackets and unique “wishbone” hooded front window. Sherman also retains examples of the Second Empire style which was also popular following the Civil War. The W.H. Hart House (ca. 1870s) at 146 East Main Street is an excellent example of the style, and although the building is in poor condition, it retains most of its original historic features including the flared-roof tower with ornate cast iron cresting. One of the more popular styles during the late 1800s was the Queen Anne style. While several earlier buildings were modernized with turned details such as spindles and columns of the Eastlake variant of the Queen Anne style, such as the former Presbyterian Parsonage (ca. 1850s originally, updated in 1890) at 142 Main Street, several houses in Sherman were constructed in the style. Perhaps the grandest house in the entire Village of Sherman is the T.J. Newell House (ca. 1880s, extant) at 123 Park Street which features the irregular silhouette, patterned shingles, overlapping gables and general sense of whimsy which are the hallmarks of the Queen Anne style. The Newell House also retains an excellent Eastlake-detailed sleeping porch on its south façade.

### **3.4 The Village of Sherman in the Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Centuries (ca. 1900-Present)**

Many of the themes and trends which had carried the Village of Sherman through the nineteenth-century continued into the twentieth-century. The community continued to prosper as a center for the surrounding agricultural businesses, acting as a connection point between farmers and the markets available across the country via the rail lines. The Village of Sherman continued to grow from its early pioneer roots to become the area’s center for spiritual, intellectual and social activity.

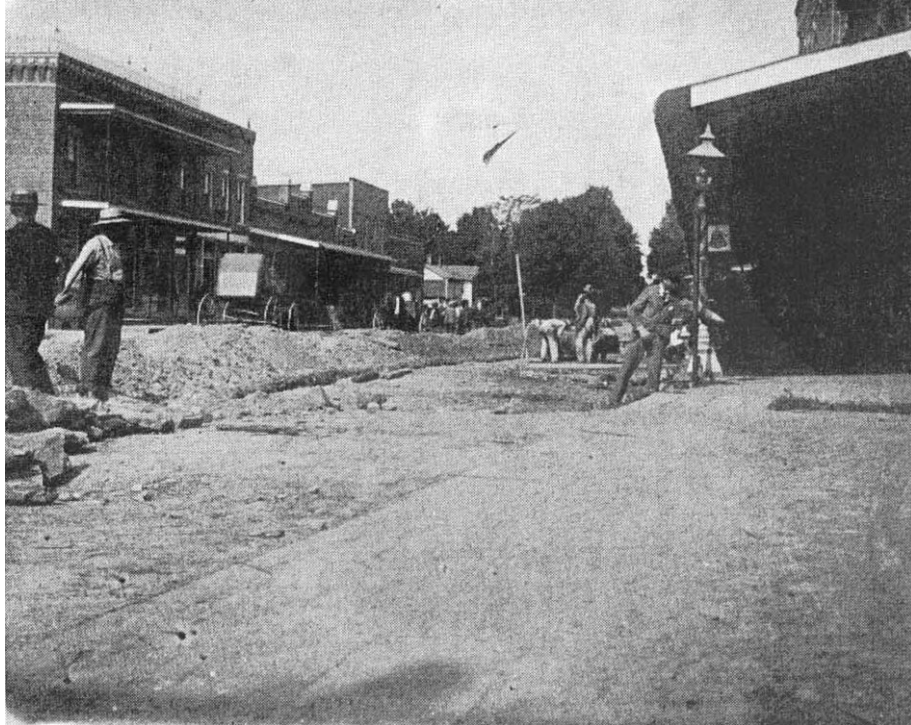


Figure 16 Installing the water lines along Main Street, 1908

Early in the twentieth-century, the residents of the Village of Sherman established a library, the Minerva Free Library, through the assistance and patronage of Oliver W. Norton in 1908 (refer to the Section 3.7 for information on the Minerva Library). The Sherman Electric Light Company built a new power house on the south side of Main Street in 1902, early in the history of electrification. The Village continued civic improvements such as building a concrete dam along the French River in 1914, and paving Main and Railroad (now Park) Streets with concrete in 1920. In 1918, three churches in the Village combined to form the Community Church in a rather progressive manner, which served a wide range of religious needs. When the Village purchased the Sherman Water Works Company in 1908, new work was undertaken to enlarge and expand the water system. A new well for Sherman was constructed in 1933.



Figure 17 The north side of Main Street, circa 1923

The residents of Sherman found new means of entertainment as well. A new Main Street Theater opened on December 12, 1929, under the proprietorship of Fred and Neil Russell. The building located on the east end of Main Street was constructed by the Buss brothers, who were also proprietors of the Main Street Garage (built 1925 almost next door to the theater). The theater also featured a miniature golf course in its basement in the 1930s. In 1930 the Ritz Theater was constructed (location unknown).

The dairy industry which had flourished in the 1860s continued to play a significant economic role in Sherman into the twentieth-century. In 1885 cream separators and churns had been installed in nearly every dairy factory in the area, as a means to increase the production capacity of butter. The proximity to the railroad network in Sherman encouraged the utilization of new methods for shipping the ample supply of dairy products to distant regions. However since butter and cheese could be difficult to transport over long distances, other more modern methods of shipping milk products became more common in Sherman. New technologies in shipping and storing during the early twentieth-century such as the tin can also played a role in the new dairy businesses in Sherman. In 1908 the Mohawk Condensed Milk Company constructed a milk condensery in Sherman located along Kendrick Street near the railroad depot. It provided a market for dairy farmers to bring in their surplus milk supplies for condensing into a more shelf-stable condensed milk product. In 1910 the Powdered Milk

Company of America bought the former creamery property and began operations for turning milk into powder which could also be more easily transported by train.

Sherman is also home to the French Creek Yorkers. Headquartered in Cooperstown, NY the Yorker group is dedicated to historical studies and history, and has several chapters throughout New York state. The French Creek Yorkers began in 1946-47 with five members who were at the time in the seventh grade. Projects undertaken by the French Creek Yorkers included constructed full-scale models of forts, bridges and other objects, making historical scrapbooks from newspaper clippings, dressing dolls in authentic colonial-era clothing, making braided rugs and quilts and refinishing antiques for their museums. By 1950, the French Creek Yorkers boasted 162 members. Perhaps the most significant contribution to the Village of Sherman made by the Yorkers is the Yorker Museum at the corner of Park and Church Streets which was opened in 1951. The Museum features a collection of historic buildings and structures collected from throughout the area and relocated in one location. Buildings located in the open-air museum include the Peter Ripley House (dating to ca. 1830s), a French fort recreated as an 1800 pioneer dwelling, a general store, a school and several other 1800s-era buildings and objects. To this day the Yorkers continue to make contributions towards the study and promotion of Sherman's history.

While few significant commercial or civic buildings have been constructed in the twentieth-century, the Village of Sherman has had notable growth of its residential architecture. The Irving Ottoway House at 143 West Main Street reflects the popularity of the Dutch Colonial Revival style in its ca. 1900 construction. The popular Craftsman Bungalow style was utilized for the house at 151 West Main Street which dates to ca. 1910. One of the standouts in the housing built in the early decades of the twentieth-century is the Coe House at 118 Columbia Street (ca. 1920s). The elegant Colonial Revival house appears to preside over the other smaller houses along Columbia Street from its location terminating the north end of the street. Many buildings along Main Street, Kipp Street and Park Street especially reflect trends in housing from the early twentieth-century. Several examples of "kit" or Sears housing appear to be present in popular styles such as American Foursquare, Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival.<sup>16</sup> 155 Main Street (ca. 1939), 110 (A) Kipp Street (ca. 1900s), 162 Main Street (ca. 1910s) and several others may prove to have originally been "kit" houses. "Kit" houses were extremely popular during the early decades of the twentieth-century as they could be purchased pre-cut through a variety of catalogs from various manufacturers and were commonly shipped by rail to their destination. Since everything was pre-cut and they arrived with plans, "kit" houses could be assembled by anyone familiar with building and construction, as many farmers were during these days. They provided a stylish, inexpensive and

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<sup>16</sup> Further investigation is required to verify the presence of these "kit" houses, to identify the manufacturer/distributor as well as to identify the pattern or model of the property. Visual inspection of the noted properties during the survey indicates their potential for being identified as "kit" houses. It is also possible that these houses were built by local contractors or builders to mail-order plans.

easy to obtain housing option for an isolated rural community such as Sherman which had easy access to rail lines.

While much of the historic architecture from the nineteenth and early twentieth-century remains in the Village of Sherman, there have been some notable additions to the historic fabric of the neighborhood from the mid-1900s. The house at 153 East Main Street is an excellent example of the rather uncommon Art Moderne style applied to a residential building. Constructed ca. 1960 and likely dating even earlier, this stucco-clad house features curved wall surfaces which reflect the popularity of “streamlined” shapes in everything from cars to airplanes to toasters during this period. The use of glass block, a new technology at the time, set into a ribbon-like band of windows which turns the corner of the facade, is also a hallmark of the Modernistic style. The house next door at 149 Main Street is a good example of period Ranch housing from ca. 1955 which almost evokes a Prairie style aesthetic. The house features a long, low-slung profile beneath a flat roof with overhanging eaves, varied materials of Roman brick and stone, and its original wood door with a center-located door knob. Both of these modern houses are unique to find in most any municipality and are rather unexpected treasures found in the small Village of Sherman.

### **3.5 Churches of Sherman**

The Village of Sherman at one time contained a wide diversity of churches and religious groups. The variety of religions which were practiced in Sherman, predominately during the 1800s, is an indication of the relative mixture and range of backgrounds which the settlers to the area brought with them. While several churches continue in operation in the Village, several of the community’s earliest religious buildings have since been lost. The historic nineteenth-century churches were primarily located along Church Street, giving this street its name. Today the most prominent extant churches in the Village are the Community Church (former Methodist Episcopal Church) at 107 Church Street (1866), the First Baptist Church at 113 Church Street, the Assembly of God Church at 131 West Main Street (1976), and the St. Isaac Jogues Catholic Church at 119 Miller Street (1946).



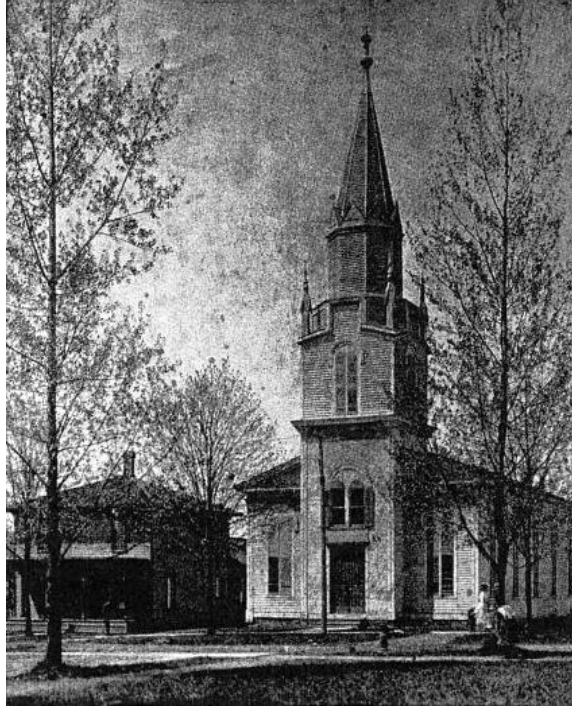


Figure 18 The Baptist Church of Sherman (extant)

The earliest religious group to establish itself in Sherman were the Baptists. The first Baptist sermon was given by Rev. Organe Spencer in 1826, and the first Baptist Society of Sherman was founded on August 28, 1827. Services were held in the homes of residents and in school houses until 1841. The first church service was held in 1843. In 1867, the church was rebuilt and remodeled and was rededicated in 1868. This new church featured a steeple, the choir loft was removed, and the windows were enlarged. New pews were also added. In 1871 a new parsonage was constructed. In 1903 a chapel was added to the west side of the church, as well as a prayer room, a dining room and kitchen. The church was enlarged with a new wing in 1957-59.

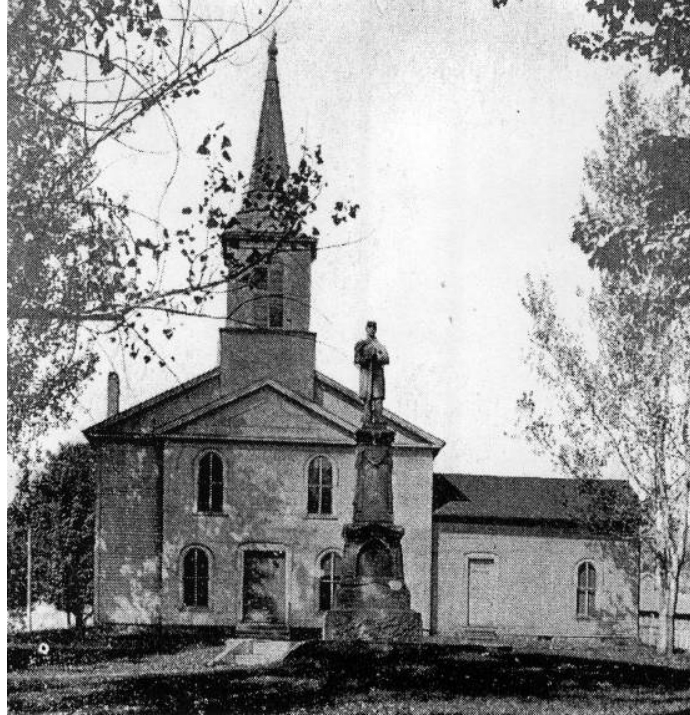


Figure 19 The First Presbyterian Church of Sherman (demolished)

The First Presbyterian Church of Sherman was organized on June 23, 1827 as the First Congregational Church of Mina. The church was made of many members from the Congregational church of Farmington, Connecticut who had brought their families out to Sherman and established a new congregation. The church building was constructed on land donated by Charles Hawley, located near Keeler's Corners on Presbyterian Hill and was dedicated on March 7, 1833. The building was later taken down and rebuilt in the Village of Sherman during the fall of 1845 and in 1856 was enlarged and repaired. A new gallery extending around both sides and the north end was added, and a massive pulpit was also constructed. The church was again enlarged and improved in 1856. A parsonage was purchased in 1855. During the mid-1800s, the Presbyterian Church served a role in the Underground Railroad. During this period Sherman became a prominent station on the route to Canada, and the Village harbored many escaped slaves. The Presbyterian Church housed the slaves in its belfry, and also sat on an elaborate series of tunnels which were constructed beneath the church and connected to the homes of four leading citizens.<sup>17</sup> In 1888 a chapel was added with money bequeathed to the church by Miss Mary Osborne. While the Presbyterian Church continued to be a successful and thriving parish for several decades, dwindling numbers of parishioners encouraged the Presbyterian Church to merge with two other churches, the Methodist and Universalist churches, to become the Community Church in 1918. The vacated Presbyterian Church building was recreated as Memorial Hall. It served as a

<sup>17</sup> When the church was razed in the 1940s, the tunnels were discovered. Due to safety concerns, they were subsequently bulldozed and closed.

community center for several decades before it was ultimately torn down in the 1940s. Today, the Yorker Museum is located on its site.



Figure 20 The Centenary Methodist Church, now the Community Church (extant)

The roots of Methodism in the Village of Sherman date to 1832 when a class was organized by Otis Miller and several other local families from Newark, NY. The first Methodist sermon was preached on December 12, 1833 in the home of Otis Miller whose house was located on Miller Street. The earliest Methodist sermons were preached by circuit riders; Methodist ministers who travelled often on horseback between two or more churches which did not have a permanent minister. The Methodist minister came every four weeks on his circuit through Westfield. Eventually the Methodist community grew in Sherman, necessitating the construction of a church. A lot was donated by Elijah Miller, and with donations of about three hundred and fifty dollars the new church was constructed and dedicated in 1848. In 1866 the congregation began work on creating a new church structure which was dedicated in 1868 under the name of Centenary Methodist Church. In 1918 the Methodist congregation joined with the Presbyterian and Universalist churches to form the Community Church which occupied the former Methodist church building.

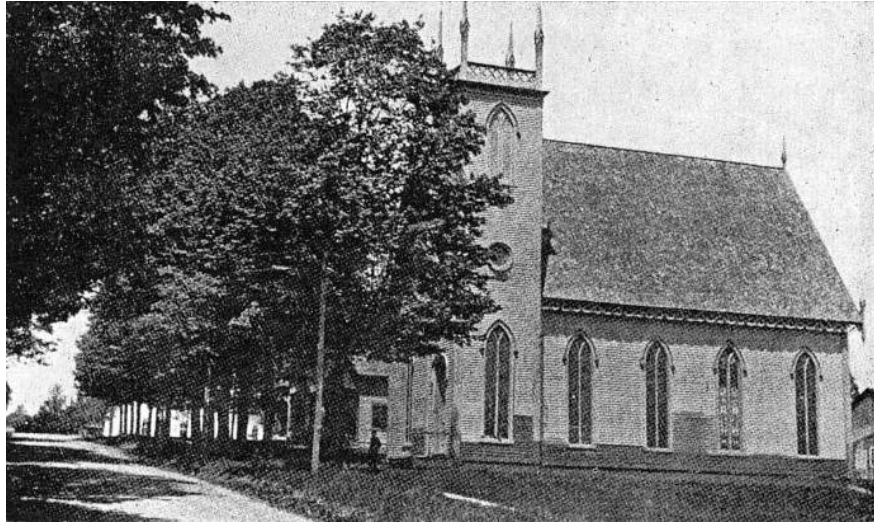


Figure 21 The Universalist Church of Sherman (demolished)

The first Universalist sermon was preached in Sherman by the Reverend Stephen R. Smith of Williamsville, NY in January of 1817. The first local preacher of the religion likely preached in the red schoolhouse on the corner of Main and Kip Streets. The First Universalist Church congregation of Sherman was organized in 1842, and a building lot was purchased in 1846 from Walter Strong. The church itself was likely built in 1847. This original building was sold in 1868 to a Catholic congregation who relocated the building to Park Street where it later was divided into a double residence.<sup>18</sup> In 1868-69 a new church was constructed on the same lot on the east side of Church Street just north of Main Street. This new church was noted as having large stained glass windows and decorated walls and ceiling. Interior woodwork was of chestnut. In 1906 the building was renovated which included removing the steeple, parlor, dining room and kitchen from the west end. In 1913-15 the building was again altered to include a new pipe organ at the eastern end as well as new chairs installed for the orchestra in the auditorium. In 1918, the Universalist congregation joined in to form the Community Church, and the organ was relocated across Church Street into the former Baptist Church building. The former Universalist Church building was sold to the Sherman Grange for use as a hall before it, too, was later demolished.

One of the more unique religious groups in the Sherman area was the Shiloh group, a Christian community. Founded in 1941 by Rev. Eugene Crosby Monroe who was born in Sherman in 1880, the Shiloh group was a Christian community which focused on personal spiritual development rather than social activism. Rev. Monroe was a successful businessman for many years, designing metal office furniture while also serving as an ordained Apostolic Church of England minister. He retired to Sherman in 1942, and was visited by many young men who decided to stay on with him at the farm which became known as Shiloh Farms. The farm was the primary business organization, supplying their income by selling dairy products, butter, eggs, operating a baker and meat market and

<sup>18</sup> This building has since been demolished.

selling other products. Rev. Monroe preached a sort of utopian view of the world to his followers until his death in 1961. His son, Rev. Raymond Monroe took over as the head of Shiloh until his death in a plane crash on May 30, 1962. Following his death, the Shiloh movement in Sherman lost some of its momentum, and the business gradually transitioned from retail sales in Chautauqua County to a wholesale health food distribution business which by the 1970s served a nationwide audience. In order to centralize their operations, the Shiloh group left Sherman and relocated in Sulpher Springs, Arkansas in 1968.

### **3.6 Schools of the Village of Sherman**

Early on in Sherman's history, the need for educating the children of the town became a high priority. In the earliest pioneer days in Sherman, children would have studied with their parents at home, working the farm as needed by their families. The first school in the town was constructed in 1826 (only about three years after the town's first settler, Dearing Dorman, was said to have settled the area), located at Hemstreet Corners. This initial educational building was not in operation for long, as it was lost to fire in 1830. In 1830 a log cabin school house was constructed in the area which would become the Village of Sherman, with Lydia Tanner serving as its teacher. Of this early school house it was noted that class sessions were only held during the summer, and since the cabin was so unbearably hot, many classes were held outside. A second school in Sherman was a wood frame structure which was located at the corner of Main and Kipp Streets. Henry Blackman served as the teacher at this new school, and also served as the Baptist minister.

By 1843, schools in Sherman totaled eleven "country" schools and the one village-area school. By 1845, the school in the village was becoming too small to adequately serve the growing student population, and a new village school was constructed in 1846. This new school was located at the corner of Church and Park Streets, and later had an addition added in 1861 in order to run two class rooms from the building at a time. The Free Union School was organized here in 1867. This building later served as a private residence.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This school house may still be standing as part of the much-altered house at 115 Park Street. The front-gabled portion which faces east towards Church Street and appears to have once been a Greek Revival design may date to the 1840s.



Figure 22 Sherman's old school house, built 1869 (demolished)

Sherman took great strides towards promoting the growth and organization of its educational system in the mid-1800s. A Board of Education was organized in 1867. The following year a meeting was held to vote on the construction of a new school. Completed in the Fall of 1869, this new school building was located on the site of the present school at Park Street at the end of Miller Street. This new school building was a large Second Empire styled building with an elegant mansard roof and central bell tower.

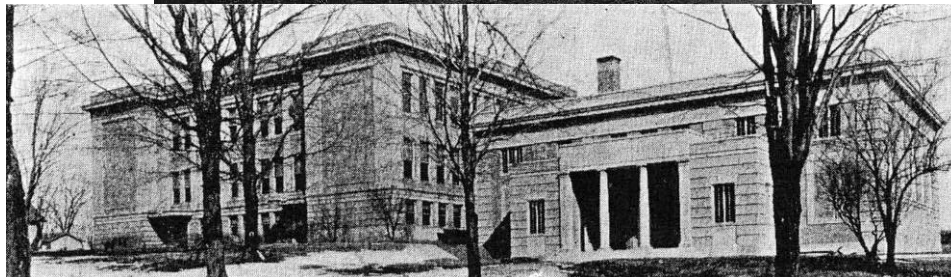
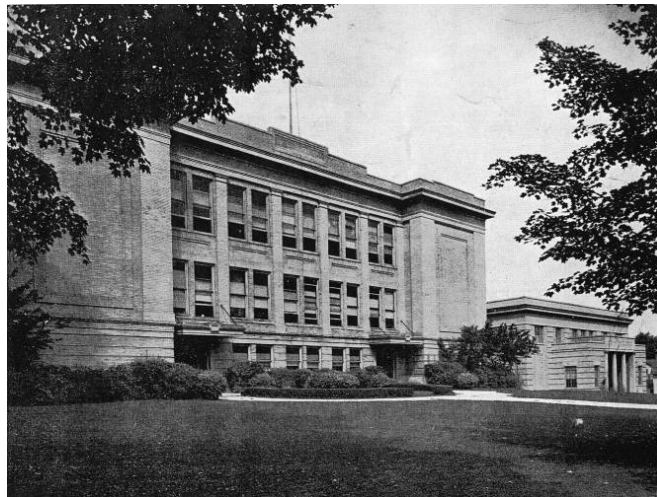


Figure 23 1950s views of Sherman High School, constructed 1938 (extant)

In November of 1935, Sherman received a grant from the federal government for the construction of a new, centralized school building. By centralizing the numerous smaller schools throughout the area, a new larger facility was said to provide many benefits for residents and students including: a modern school building, a community center for residents, and shop, homemaking, cafeteria and automobile repair departments to teach a wide variety of modern skills to students. Since the construction was partially subsidized by grants, the cost of the new building was also said to be less expensive to taxpayers. On December 11, 1935 the vote to centralize the schools was passed.

The present Sherman High School was built between 1936 and 1938, replacing the former Second Empire school building from 1869. The contract for the new school was awarded to J.M. Genzinger, contractors from Jamestown, NY. Carl A. Shellberg of Jamestown was given the contract for excavation, Jamestown Plumbing and Heating installed the plumbing system, and electrical work was handled by Turnquest Electric also of Jamestown. In 1941 a bus garage was added to the site, completed in 1942 by Tallman and Sons. By 1953, 640 students from throughout Sherman, Clymer, Harmony, French Creek, Mina, Chautauqua, Ripley and Westfield were bused in to the school. A new wing housing a gym and auditorium was added to the building, as well as a new elementary school wing. More recently, a new vestibule addition has been added to the front of the building.

### **3.7 Prominent Businesses and Industries in Sherman**

Because of its proximity to the rail lines connecting Sherman to cities across the United States, the railroad had an enormous impact on the development of the small Village. While the Village of Sherman boasted a number of industries throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth-century, the character of the community was dominated by its location in the heart of an agricultural region. Many of the most prominent businesses and industries which developed and flourished in Sherman were based on the region's strong agricultural ties. Aided by its connection to the vast railroad network, the Village of Sherman became a center for local farmers and tradesmen to ship their products and goods to a wider customer base.

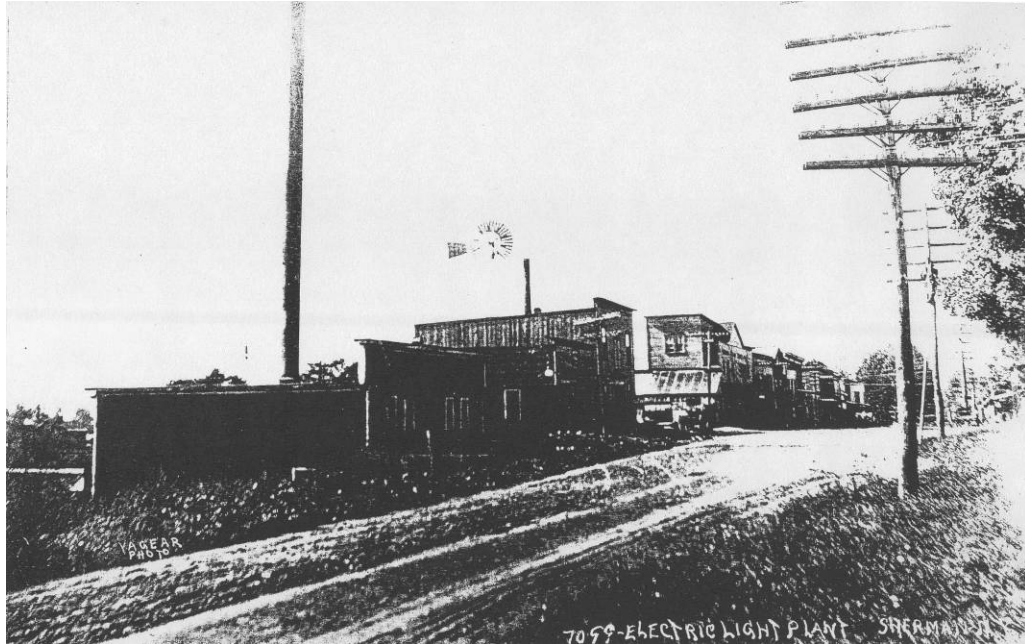


Figure 24 The Sherman Electric Light Plant on Main Street (site of present Main Street Theater), 1898 view (demolished)

On October 3, 1898 a stock company was formed to construct an Electric Light Plant. Initially a contract was created with W.A. Edmonds to furnish power from his mill to operate the new plant and two direct current generators were installed in an addition to his mill. The following year the company incorporated, and in 1902 the Sherman Electric Light company purchased a lot on the south side of East Main Street to build their complete power house which was equipped with two 250 light General Electric Company generators. In 1917 a special election of the Village was called for to vote on purchasing the Sherman Electric Company, and ultimately the Village assumed ownership of the company. By 1920 the old plant no longer served the needs of the Village and a new facility was constructed at Mill and Hart Streets which contained two alternating current generators.





Figure 25 The Sherman Chair Company, 1903 (demolished)

The Sherman Chair Company was also a prominent enterprise in the Village of Sherman for many years. In the nineteenth-century, furniture and cabinet makers who worked in Sherman produced hand-made products which served the needs of local citizens. However, new machinery and easy access to local wood coupled with the Village's connection to the railroad, promoted the growth of one of Sherman's more significant companies. Organized in 1903, the company purchased the C.E. Cobb mill near the train depot off of Kendrick Street and installed the chair making machinery. Production began in February of 1903 and a box-car filled with chairs was shipped by rail on April 16<sup>th</sup>. In 1905 the company reorganized and continued its business until 1911. The company then was operated under different management, but it was financially struggling. In 1916 the company relocated to Jamestown, ceasing operations in Sherman, but after a few years the Sherman Chair Company went out of business.

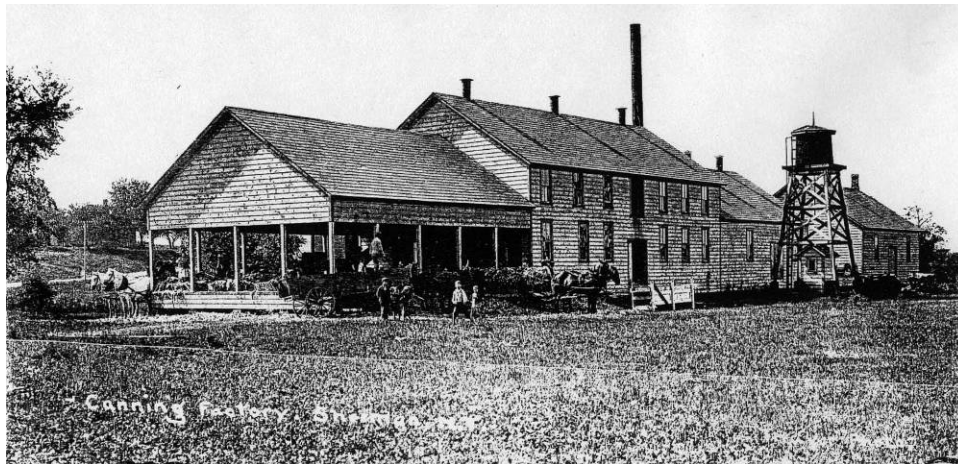


Figure 26 Sherman Canning and Preserving Company, ca. 1916 (demolished)

Agricultural products had formed the backbone of the Sherman economy from the area's earliest settlement and development. As the Village moved into the

twentieth-century, new companies devoted to new methods for packing, preserving and shipping agricultural products flourished. One of these companies was the Sherman Canning and Preserving Company, which formed in March of 1905. The plant, located west of Hart Street where it intersected with Mill Street, opened in July of 1905 and five hundred cans of string beans were produced the first day. The Sherman Canning and Preserving Company packaged beans, corn and pumpkins in its first year, but since the plant lacked the more modern machinery, most of the canning was done by hand. This factor would prove to make the plant inefficient as it was unable to compete with the larger companies, and the endeavor began losing money right from the beginning. The factory was later sold to Fink & McLaughlin of North East, Pennsylvania who enlarged it and installed new machinery, and built new storehouses. The company began to turn a profit in the next few years; however a fire in 1916 destroyed the storehouses and the main factory building. Although the buildings were reconstructed, the company was sold in 1918 to the M.W. Clark & Co. of Rochester, NY who ran the plant for several years before ceasing operations in the early 1920s.

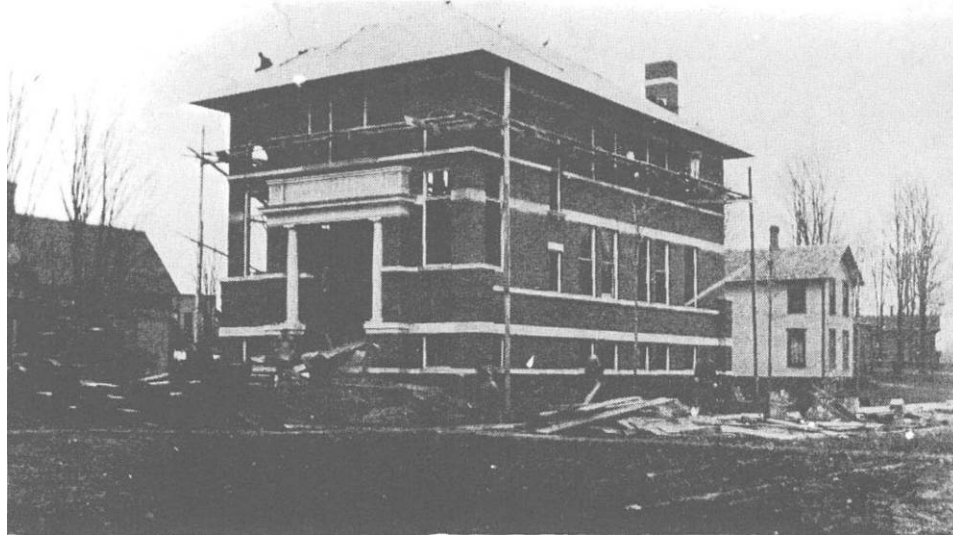


Figure 27 Constructing the Minerva Library, ca. 1909

The Minerva Free Library is a centerpiece of both the architectural history of the Village of Sherman as well as the cultural history. In 1906 the Minerva Club of Sherman voted to use their surplus funds of that year to purchase books for a new library. The following year a board of trustees was elected and the Minerva Free Library Association was formally organized. Initially the books for the library were kept at the home of Mrs. C.H. Waterhouse who served as the librarian. On April 17, 1908 an offer was made by Oliver W. Norton of Chicago to fund the construction of a library building, with the caveat that the town would raise \$500 annually to support its operation.<sup>20</sup> Norton selected the northeast corner of

<sup>20</sup> Oliver W. Norton was one of the Village of Sherman's most beloved patrons. Born in Angelica, NY on December 13, 1831, Norton and his family relocated to Sherman in the late 1850s. In 1861, Norton enlisted in the Union army where he was commissioned by President Lincoln as First Lieutenant of the Eight U.S. Colored Troops, a position he served until 1865. Norton is perhaps most famous for being the

Railroad (now Park) and Miller Streets, and the new Minerva Free Library was opened to the public on February 13, 1909.



Figure 28 The New Whitney Hotel as it appeared circa 1908



Figure 29 The Morse Hotel destroyed by fire, 1991

One of the key businesses in the Village of Sherman for many years was the hotel located at the corner of Main and Church Streets. James Baker built the first hotel to occupy the site. Baker had purchased the land from Miller and Kip who in turn had purchased it from the Holland Land Company. The devastating

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first person to play "Taps" on a bugle for Union Army Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield, which General Butterfield had composed. Following the war, Norton set up in the manufacturing of tin cans and later merged his company with American Steel Company, making a tidy profit. Despite his success in the Midwest, Norton supported the small community of Sherman. He was greatly interested in the welfare of the town, and was a patron for many of Sherman's endeavors such as the Minerva Free Library, the electrical light company, the water system and other projects. It was estimated that Norton's gifts to Sherman totaled nearly \$75,000. Oliver W. Norton died in Chicago on October 1, 1920; a date which is still commemorated by the lowering of the flag outside of the Minerva Library each year.

fire of 1869 destroyed this early building. It was rebuilt in brick in 1878 as the Dean House by Jerome J. Dean. In 1890, the Second Empire hotel building received an Eastlake two-story front porch. BY 1908 the hotel had become known as the Whitney Hotel. The name of the hotel then was changed to the Sherman Hotel, which it remained throughout much of the twentieth-century. Known as the Morse Hotel by the late decades of the 1900s, the building was devastated by a fire in 1991 which spread through the hotel and the two adjacent buildings to the east along Main Street. The historic Second Empire building was lost and has since been replaced by a one-story bar and restaurant.



Figure 30 The Sherman Apple Drying Company

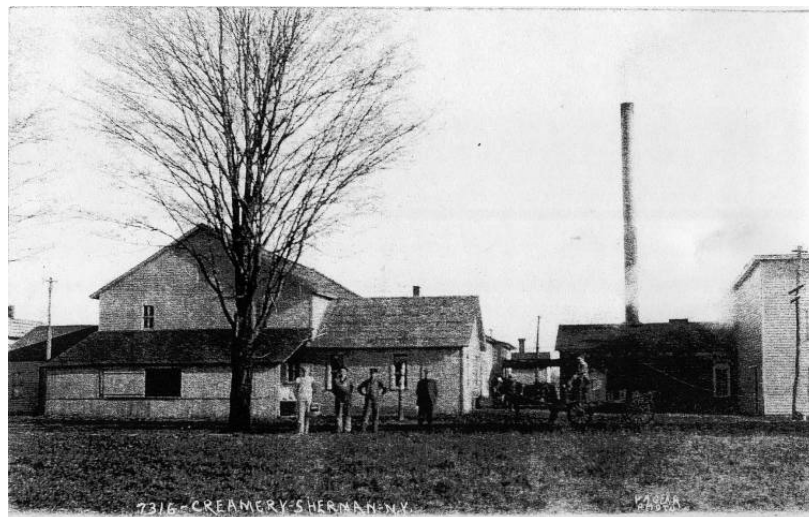


Figure 31 The Sherman Creamery

Sherman contained a wide variety of other prominent businesses and industries throughout its history. While the Village was dotted with a variety of small cheese and butter factories, it also featured several notable larger companies as well. Companies such as the Apple Dryer Factory, the Sherman Creamery, Sherman Greenhouse, the Duplex Factory (in the former Empire Chair Company plant

located off of Depot Street near the rail lines), and Larson's Poultry Supply reflect the Village of Sherman's ties to the agricultural products of the region.

### **3.8 The Railroad in Sherman**

Western New York was an early center of railroad trade in the 1800s. Buffalo became a prominent port location for ships and freighters arriving from the Great Lakes and transferring their cargo to barges which headed further east on the Erie Canal. In the 1840s, Western New York saw the growth and consolidation of several rail lines which connected Buffalo to a wide network of cities such as Albany and Pittsburgh.

The first railroad that passed through Sherman was constructed in 1852, crossing through the north side of the Village across Kipp Street, Miller Street and what was then the Mayville Road. A depot for this rail line was located west of the intersection of Church and Ohio Streets, according to an 1854 map. This initial railroad was abandoned not long after its construction. In 1865 the Buffalo and Oil Creek Cross Cut Railroad Company was formed, and in 1867 the company ran a line through Sherman which ran from Brocton, NY to the Pennsylvania state line south of the Village. During the 1860s and 70s, the Sherman rail depot was located just north-east of the main settled areas of the Village, and allowed for easy access to the trains for trade, commerce and passenger travel. In 1869 the railroad was purchased by the Buffalo, Corry and Pittsburgh Railroad Company, and subsequently in 1873 was sold to the Dunkirk, Chautauqua Lake and Pittsburgh Company. This new railroad company operated trains through the Village of Sherman for five years, before they abandoned the line and ceased train traffic on June 8, 1878. During this interim period, when trains ceased their traffic through the area, residents relied on their horses and also a stage coach line run by C.J. Dodge for their transportation and mail service.

Almost a year passed before the railroad began operating the line through Sherman again in January 1879. In 1881 the Pittsburgh, Titusville and Buffalo Railway Company purchased the property and extended the service from Brocton, NY to Dunkirk, NY. It was not uncommon for smaller rail lines to consolidate or be purchased by larger companies in the nineteenth-century, and in 1887 the line was purchased by the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad which connected the line to its network running throughout the eastern United States. On August 1, 1900 the company became known as the Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

During much of the twentieth-century, the trains which ran through Sherman provided transportation of people and goods, helping the small Village survive. However, following World War II, the railroads as a means of transportation declined sharply. New technologies such as airplanes and improved highway networks quickly supplanted the railroad as the primary mode of shipping freight

or moving people over long distances. In the late 1940s the passenger trains ceased operation through Sherman, and the Penn Central Railroad ceased its freight operations through the area in the 1970s.<sup>21</sup>

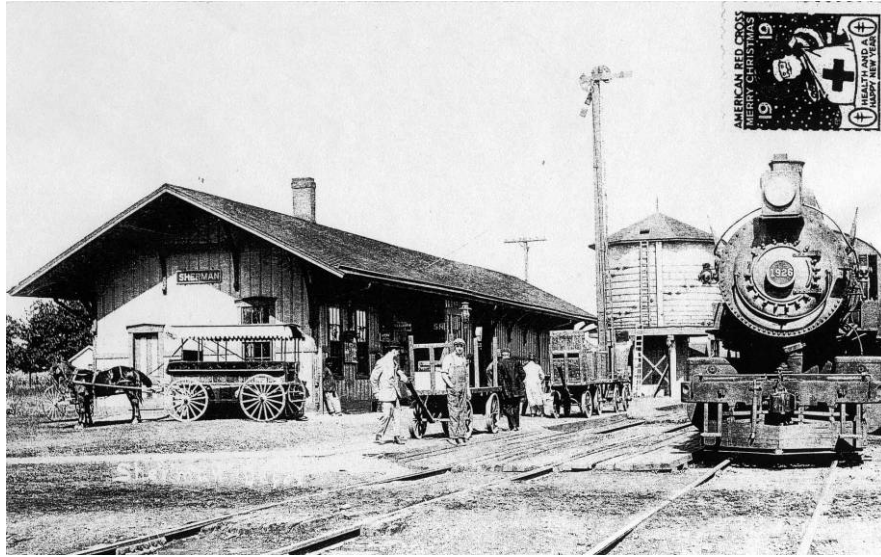


Figure 31 The old Sherman Railroad Depot, ca. 1910 (demolished)

Fires, which devastated the Main Street core of Sherman throughout the nineteenth-century, also devastated the Village's railroad structures. Originally constructed ca. 1870, the small Pennsylvania Railroad depot was a wood frame structure with broadly overhanging eaves which measures roughly 20 feet by 90 feet. It was located, aptly enough, on Depot Street off of Kendrick Street. In February of 1955 a fire broke out in the small depot building and it was completely destroyed.

In the 1970s, the abandoned rail lines in the eastern area of the Village of Sherman were removed. The unused corridor was transformed into a recreation trail as a part of the Chautauqua Rails-to-Trails program, which created the Sherman Recreational Trail along the former rail route through the Village. Today, the path of the historic rail lines is still a physical presence through the community, but instead of an unused eyesore, this area has now been transformed into a unique and revitalized feature for the Village of Sherman.

### 3.9 Streetscapes of Sherman

A collection of images and photographs which document the historic streetscapes of the Village of Sherman.

<sup>21</sup> French Creek. *Sherman's Sesquicentennial, 1823-1973*. Youngsville, Pa.: Youngsville Courier, 1973; 56.

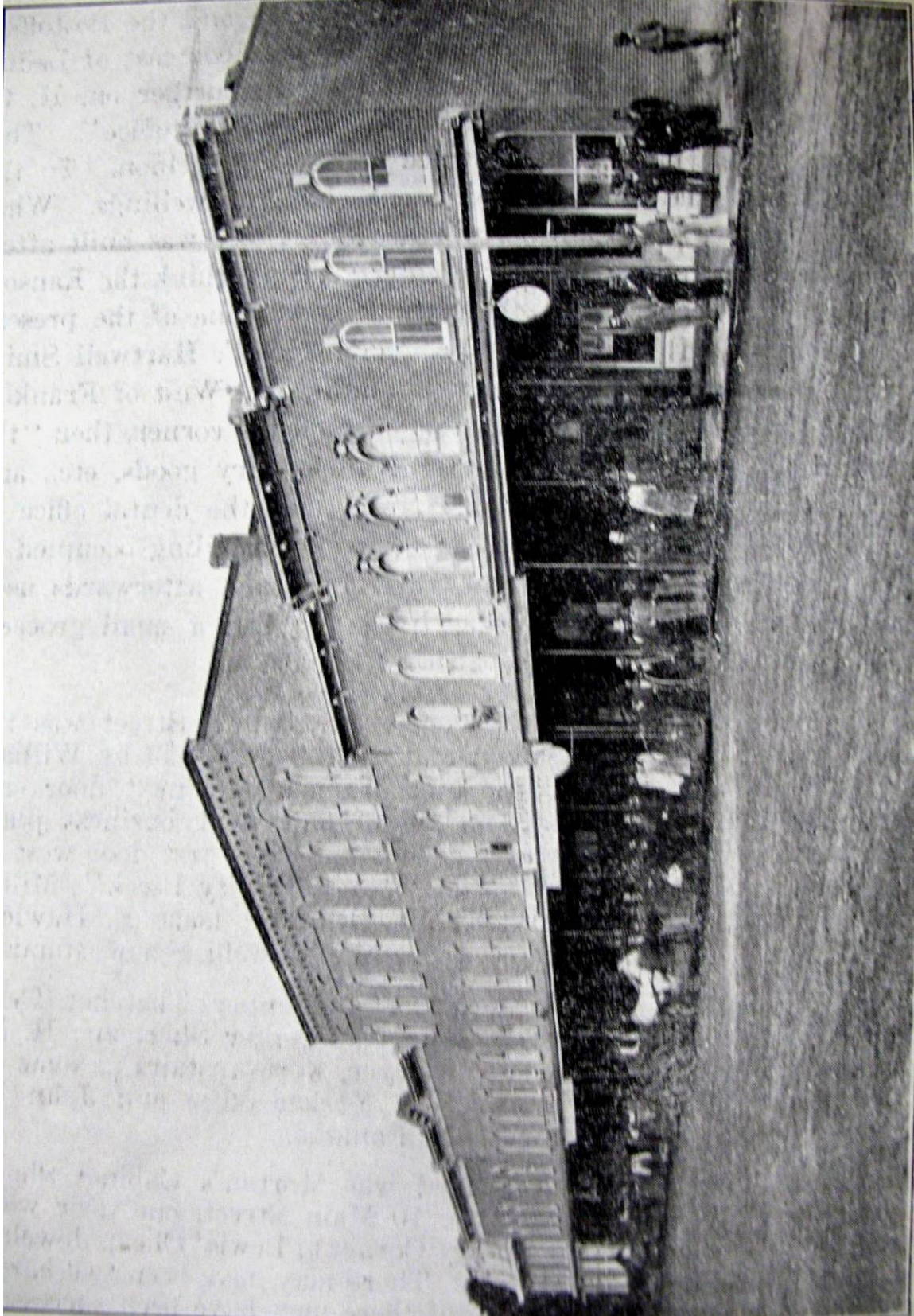


Figure 32 The north side of Main Street, looking NW (undated photo)

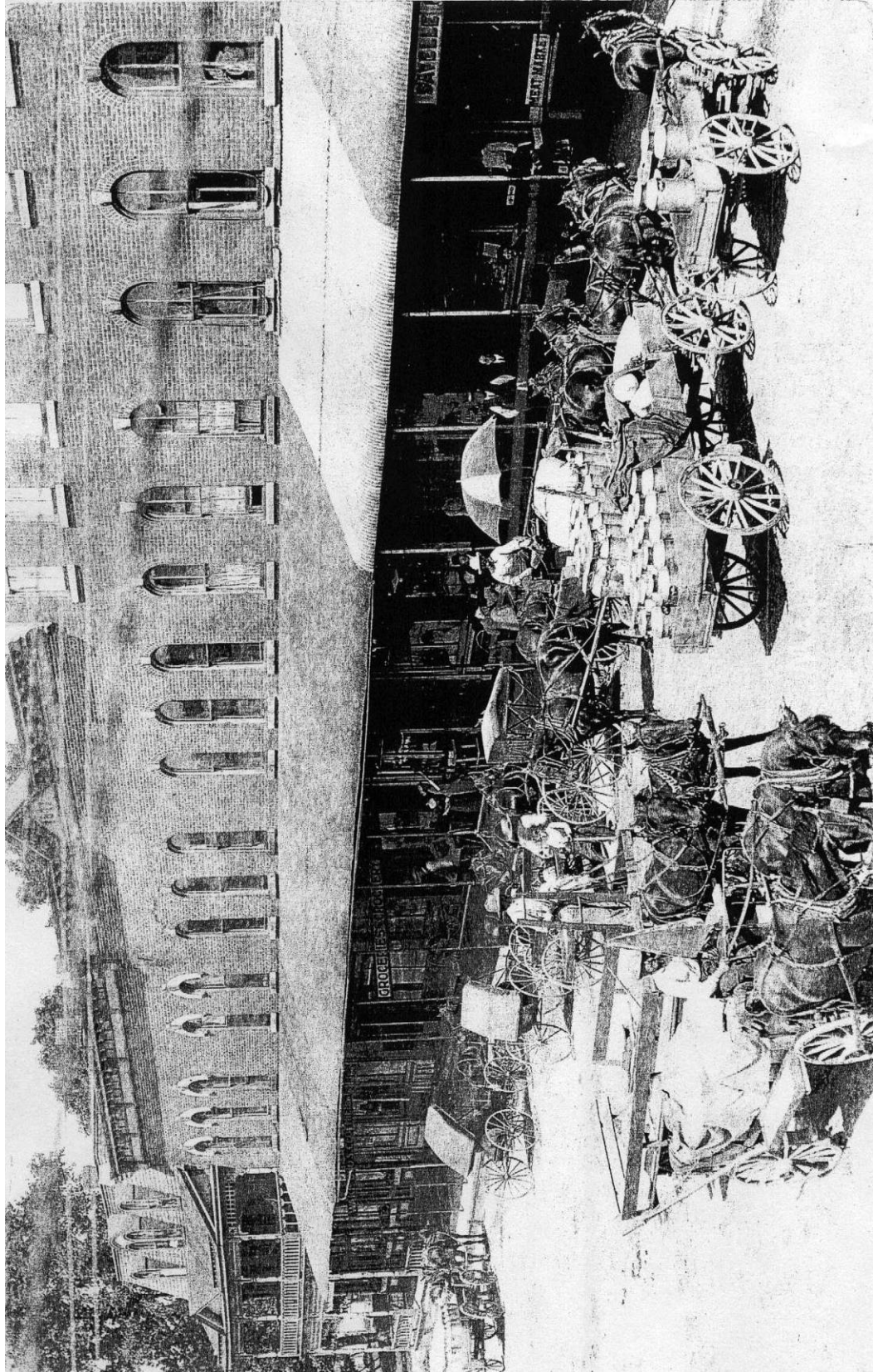


Figure 33 The north side of Main Street, looking NW, ca. 1890s-1900s





Figure 34 The south side of Main Street near Franklin Street looking SW, ca. 1900

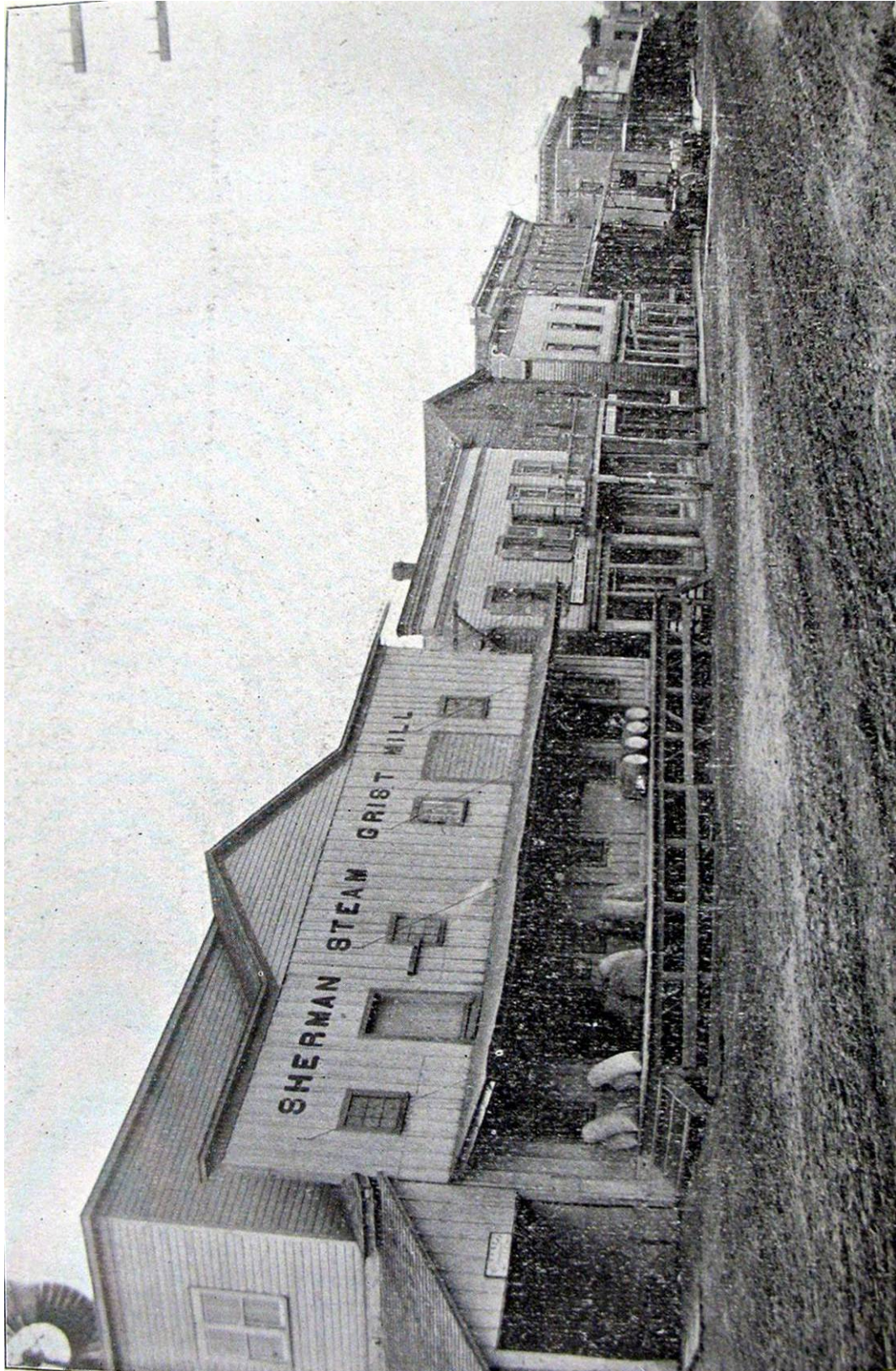


Figure 35 The south side of Main Street looking SW, ca. 1900

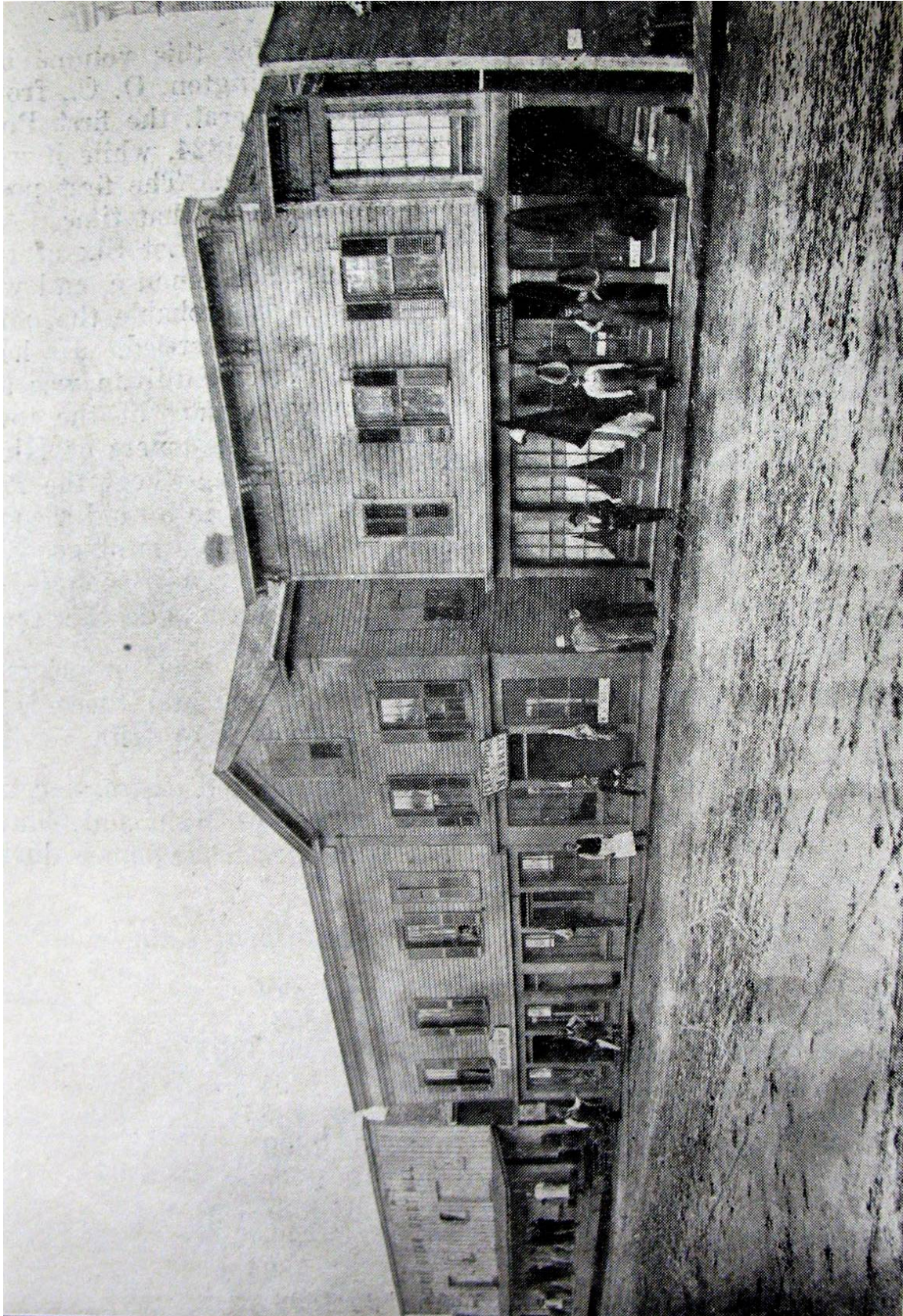


Figure 36 The south side of Main Street near Franklin Street looking SE, ca. 1900



Figure 37 Main Street at Franklin Street, looking SW at Hubbard Block (undated)

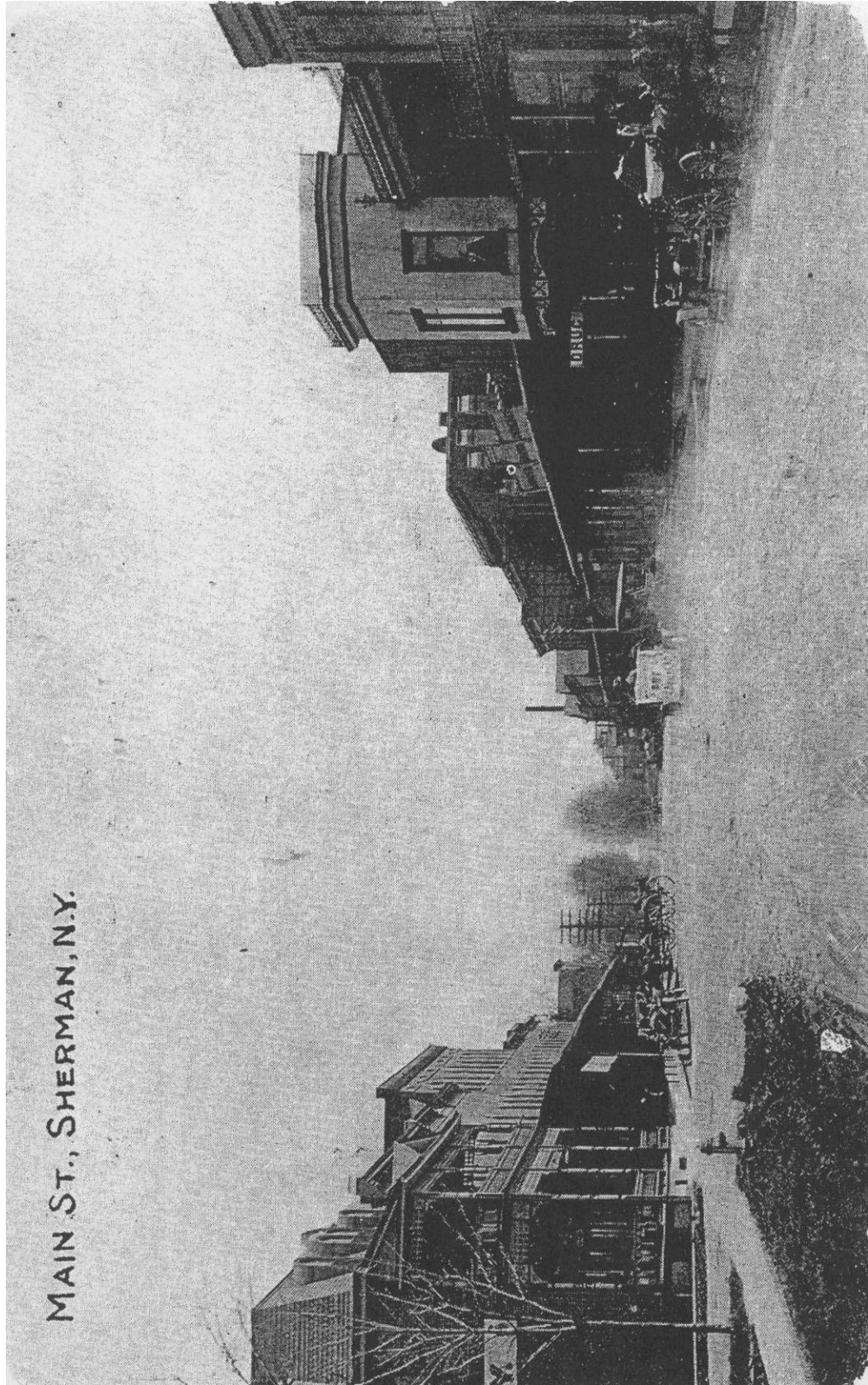


Figure 38 Main Street, Sherman NY postcard, looking east down Main Street (undated)

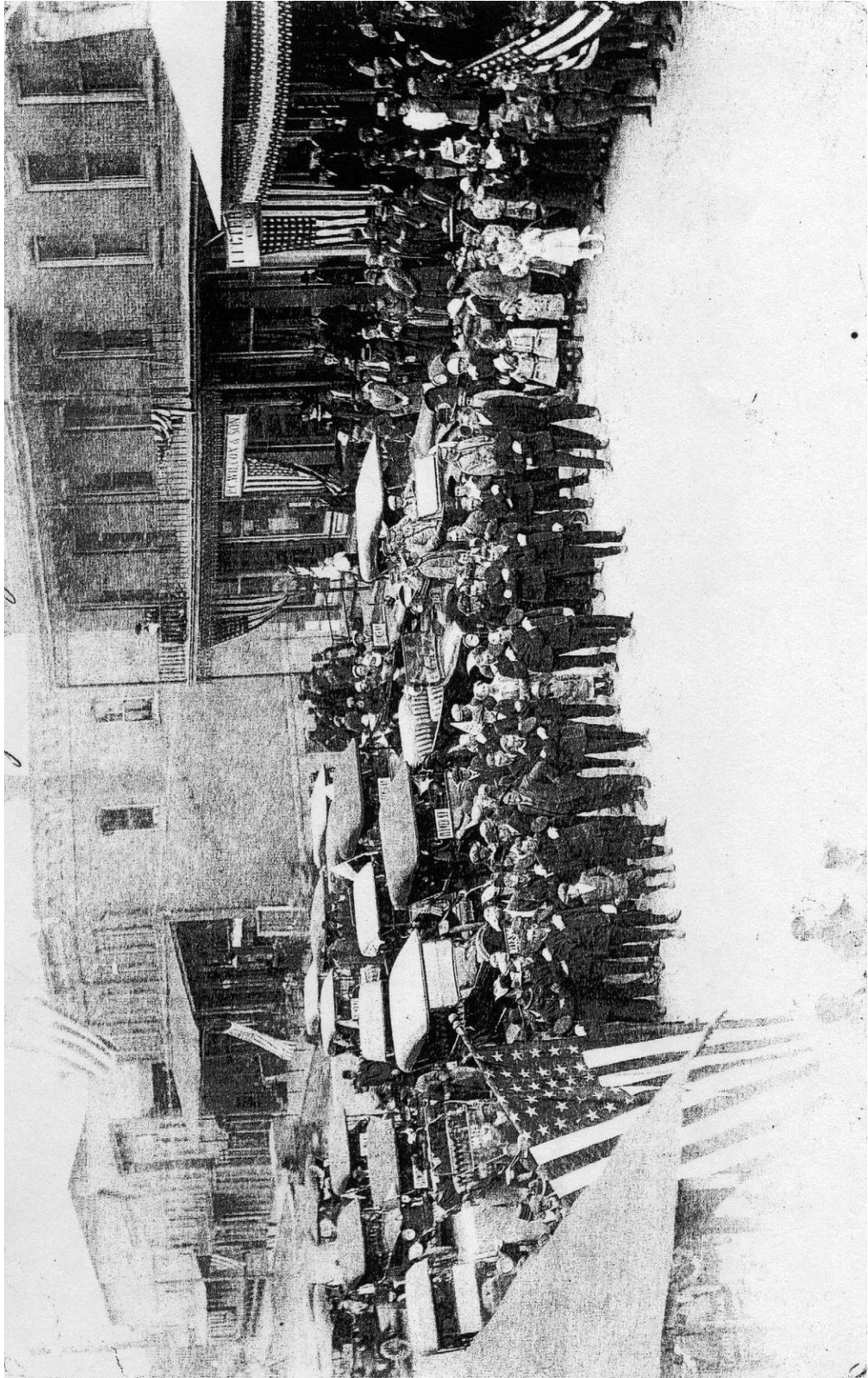


Figure 39 "Farewell celebration" on Main Street, looking SE toward Franklin Street (ca.1910s)

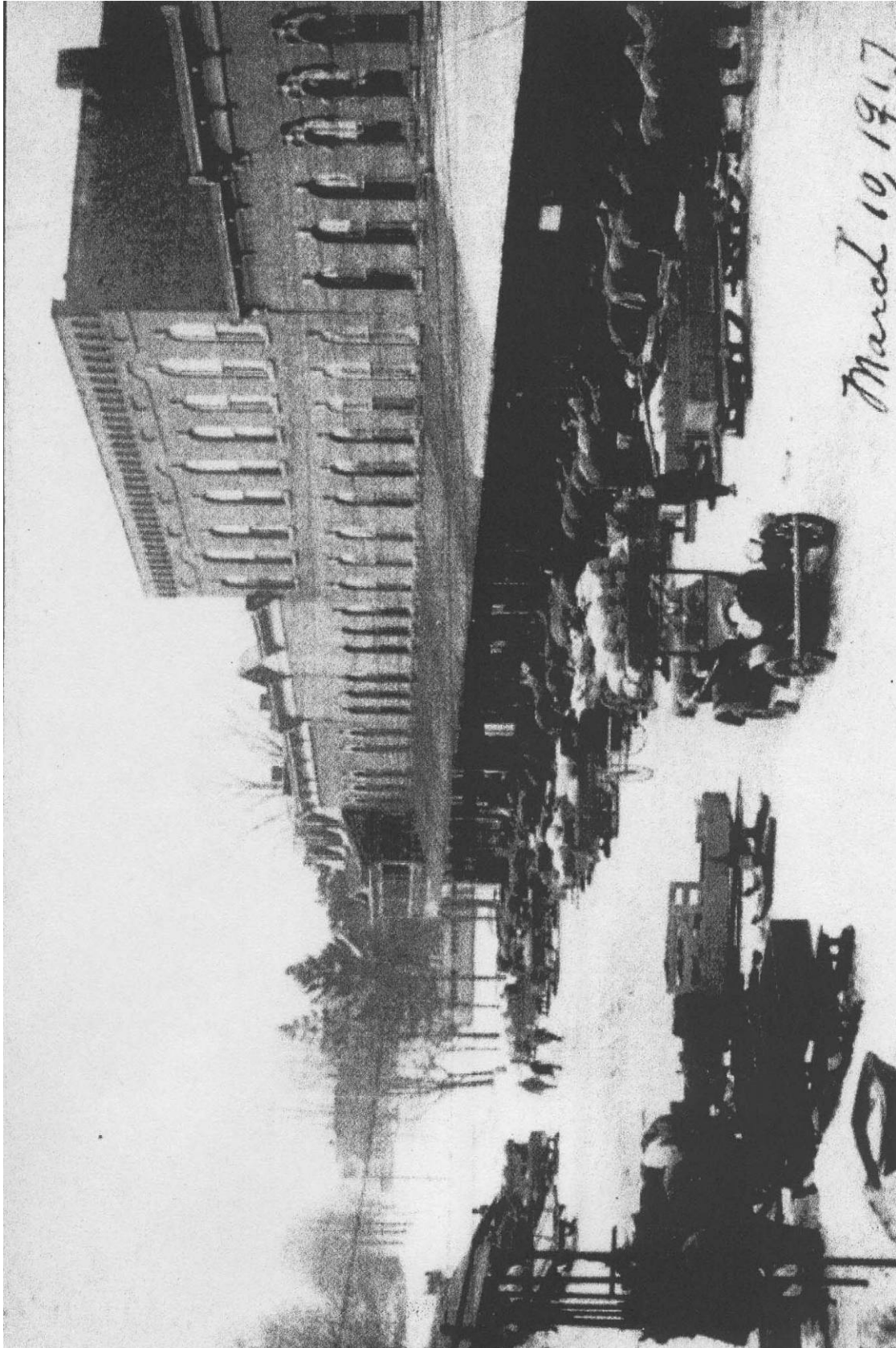


Figure 40 March 10, 1917 on Main Street in Sherman

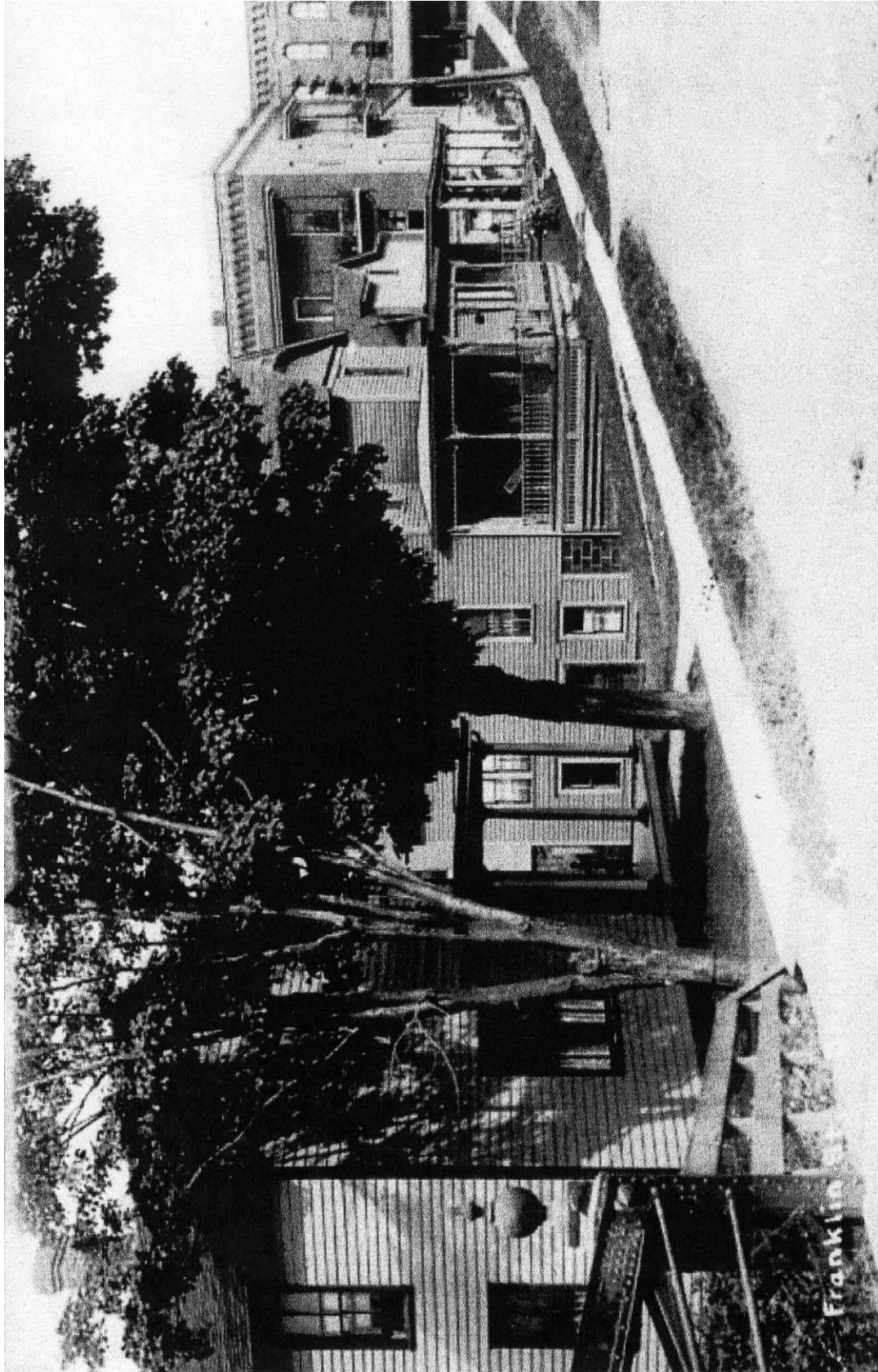


Figure 41 Franklin Street, looking north towards Main Street, ca. 1920s



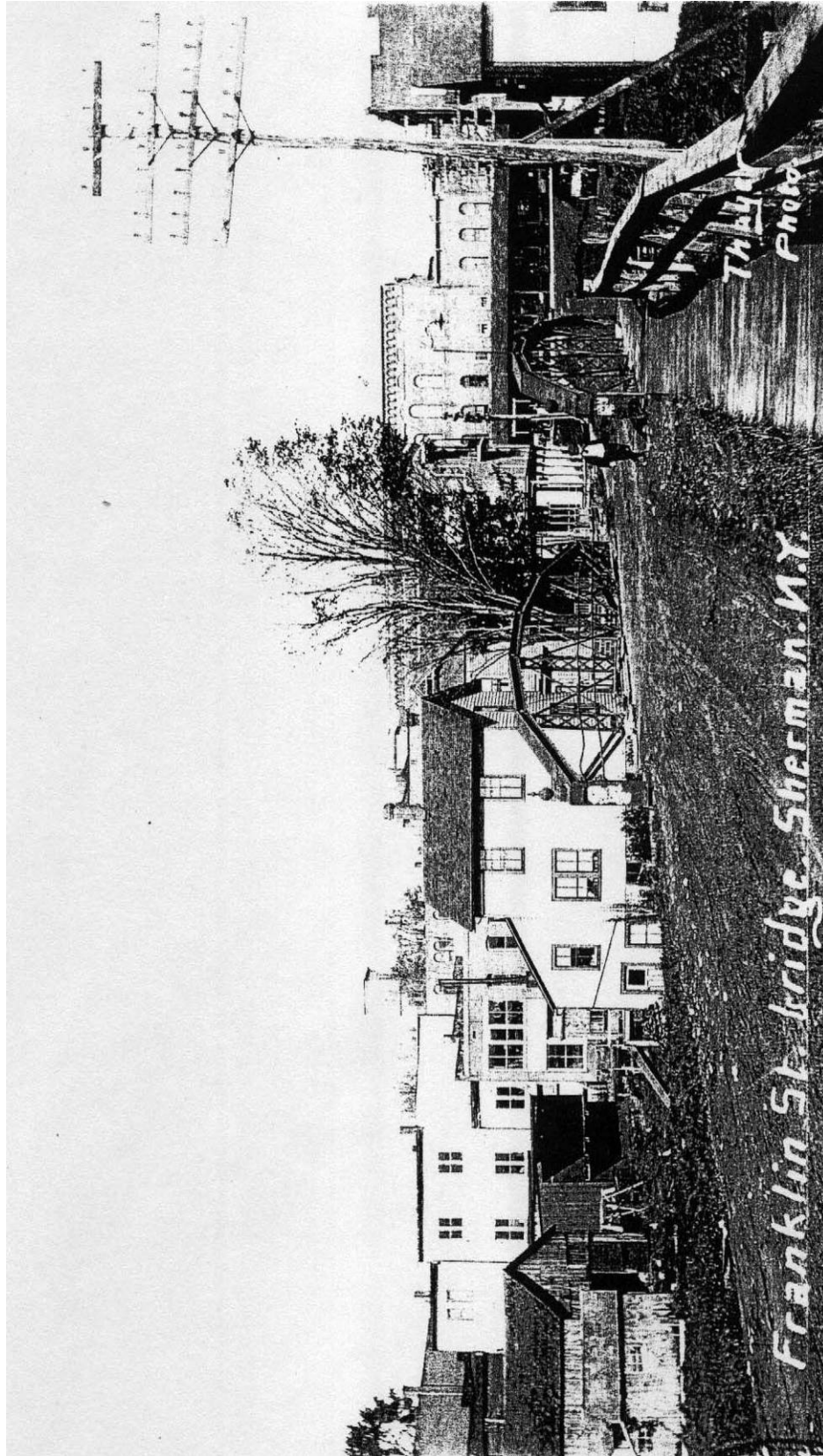


Figure 42 Franklin Street looking north at bridge towards Main Street (undated)

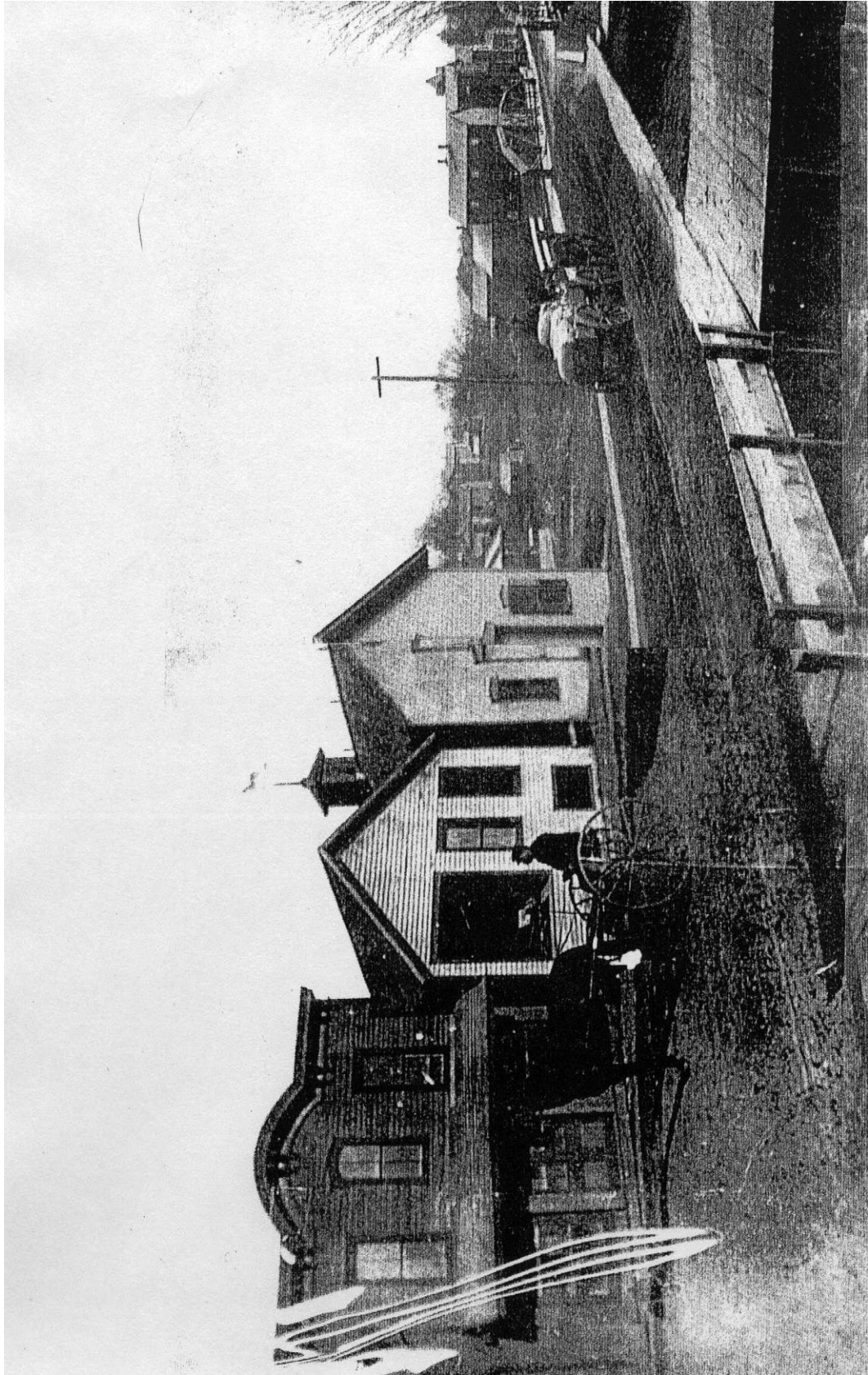


Figure 43 Franklin Street near Main Street looking east (ca. 1890s)

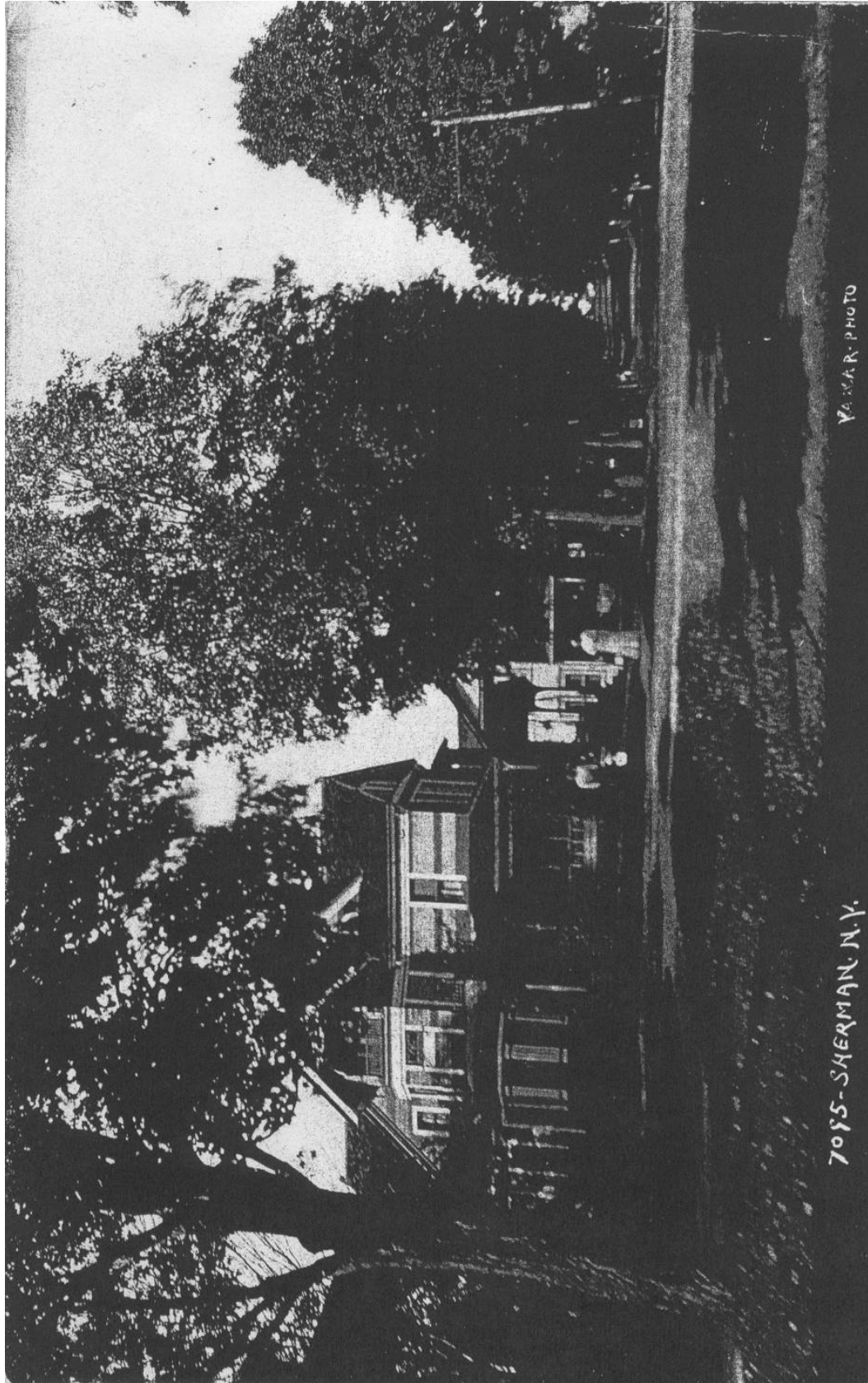


Figure 44 Miller Street, looking north (undated)

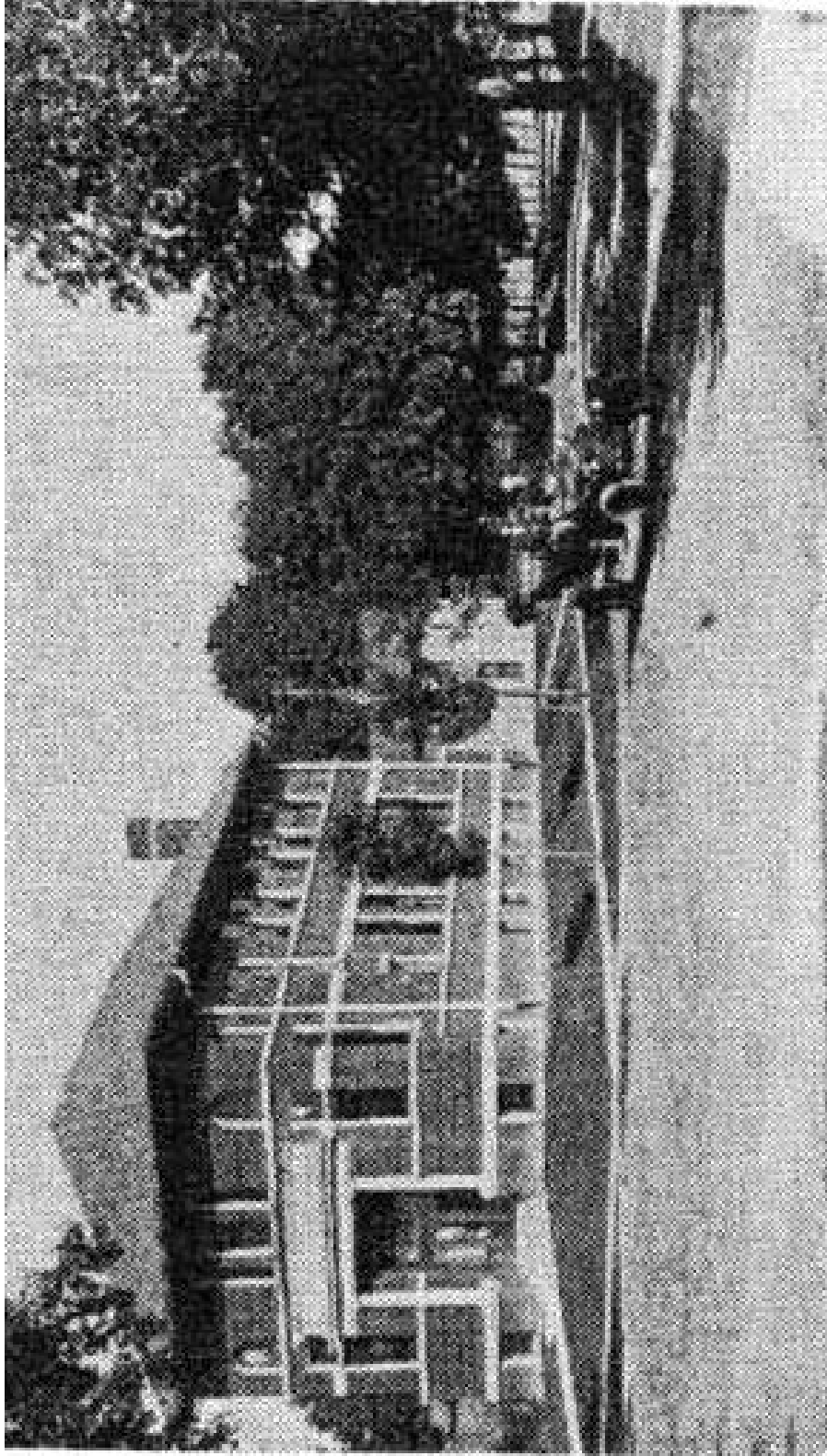


Figure 45 Park and Miller Streets, ca. 1920s

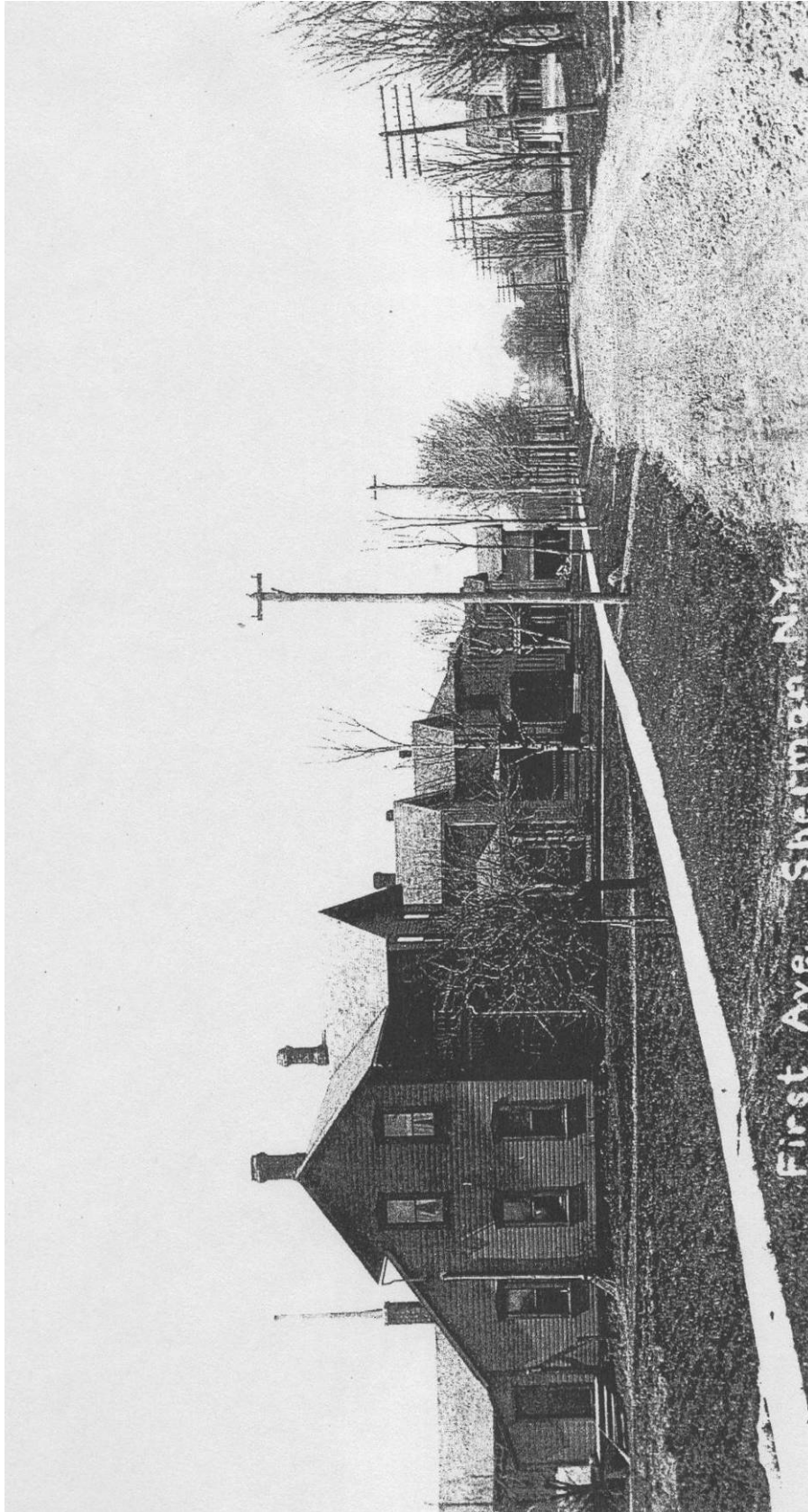


Figure 46 First Street, looking west (undated)



Figure 47 148 and 152 East Main Street, ca. 1900s

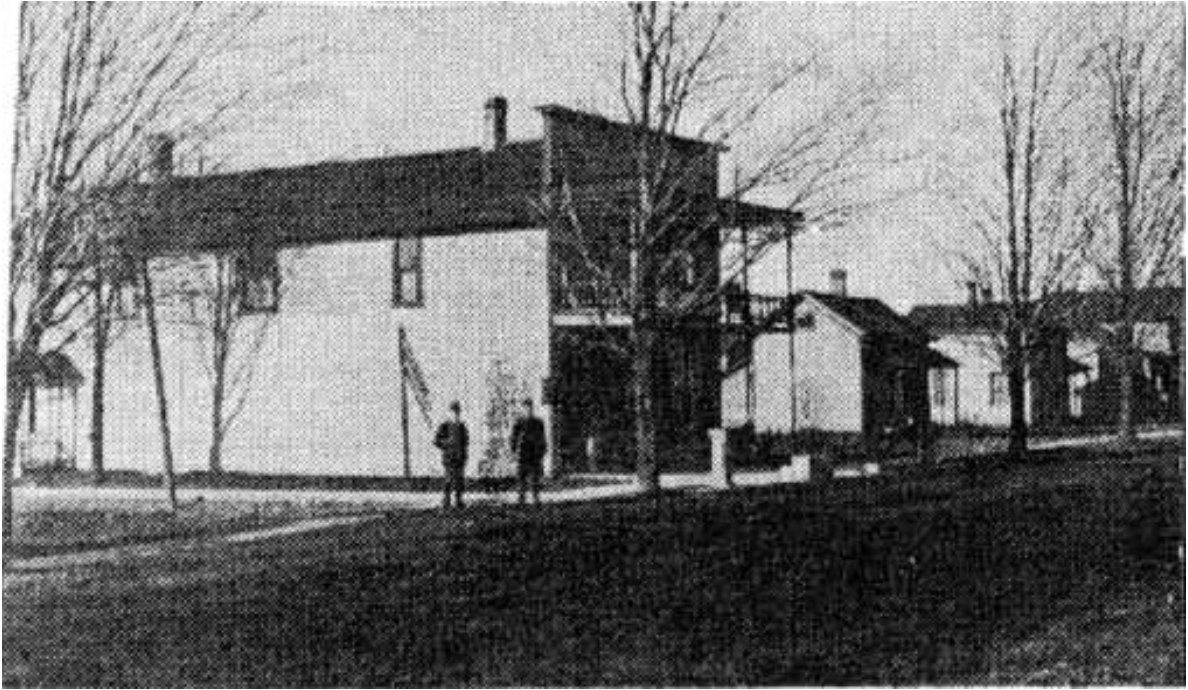


Figure 48 Kendrick Street, looking north, ca. 1920s



Figure 49 Columbia Street looking north at Coe House, ca. 1920s