

Old Millville store has rich past

OVERLOOKED ORLEANS: Historic stone store has roots believed to stretch back to the 1830s

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MILLVILLE — I received a request in January 2019 for information on the old stone store once belonging to T. O. Castle of Millville.

Daniel Hurley had purchased the building and pushed for the State Historic Preservation Office to consider the building for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. I was informed that the building is eligible and the process of researching and documenting the building's history has commenced.

A photograph of the stone store appeared in "Bethinking of Old Orleans" volume 24, no. 1 authored by Bill Lattin. The article, entitled "Winter Gathering," called attention to the large crowd gathered in front of the store, located at the intersection of Maple Ridge Road and East Shelby Road.

Although the occasion for the photograph is a mystery, Lattin wrote, "Whatever was going on at the time must have seemed like a worthy event for taking a picture." Several teams of horses are visible in the image, including at least one hitched to a bobsleigh.

Born at Parma, Monroe County in 1826, Thomas Oliver Castle came to Shelby Center in 1846 where he worked for Reuben S. Castle for several years. He later worked for George Sweeney at a store in Buffalo before relocating to Millville around 1850.

Although Thomas presumably owned the property in the photograph it was in fact deeded to his wife, Mary Anna Timmerman Castle, by James Potter in 1851 for the sum of \$525. A parcel of land containing the Castle home was deeded to Mary from John and



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The old stone store in Millville was once part of a small business hub in Orleans County. The building still stands and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Harriet Knowlton around the same time for the sum of \$500.

The date of construction remains a mystery but tracing the transfer of the property starting in 1830 provides some clues.

That year, the property was transferred from the heirs of David Bottum to Daniel S. Root for \$200.

According to the history of the Frost family, Bottum was a pioneer in the silk industry.

Settling at Oak Orchard in the Town of Ridgeway, he planted mulberry trees, raised worms, and spun silk, establishing a trade in sewing and knitting silk along the Ridge Road. He died in 1828 and his wife continued the business until 1831 when she remarried.

It is surmised that Bottum may have intended to use the site in Millville for his silk venture, dying before it could come to fruition. Root, an early postmaster and merchant, died unexpectedly in 1833 at

the age of 33 and the property was later sold to James Potter by Root's widow in 1849.

At that point, the value of the property increased to \$450 (nearly three times the original value when considering inflation) and likely contained the stone store in this picture. With all evidence considered, a date of construction sometime between 1830 and 1833 make sense.

The property also consisted of a tannery and post office, visible to the right of the store in this image. An 1860 map of Orleans and Niagara Counties also confirms this, showing an adjacent building to the west.

That makes sense considering both Root and Castle served as postmaster for Millville while Castle's son George also worked as a tanner.

For many years, T. O. Castle and Son operated out of the stone store at Millville, dealing in general merchandise, dry goods, and groceries. The 1903 Orleans County

Directory also indicates that George Castle was a local dealer in Shropshire Sheep at Millville in addition to working in his father's store.

On an interesting side note, the Millville Congregational Church constructed a house of worship on the south side of Maple Ridge Road in 1848. When a conflagration leveled the building, courtesy of an exploding kerosene lamp in 1870, Thomas Castle was placed on the fundraising committee responsible for securing money to rebuild.

A new building was constructed from brick in 1871, which is visible in the background of this image.

The congregation fell apart in 1900 when congregants discovered the minister to be of low moral character. The parcel of land was always referred to on maps as the "Presbyterian Society" even though the group adopted the congregational form of church government soon after forming.