

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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TOWN OF BARRE 1818 - 1993



It is now one hundred seventy-five years since the Town of Barre was erected from the Town of Gaines on March 6, 1818. Barre was named after Barre, Mass. by a native of that community, Judge John Lee, who came to this area in 1816. The name Barre comes from a Colonel Barre who was a member of the British Parliament during the American Revolution, and who was a firm friend of the American Colonies.

The first actual settler in what is now the Town of Barre was Stephen Paine who came early in 1816 with his wife and children. They came, using the Ridge Road from Rochester, using a yoke of oxen and a hired horse team and sleigh to bring their family consisting of twelve people. About one-half mile north of their land they had to stop and cut underbrush to get through to their homestead. They first lived in a bark-covered shanty while getting the log cabin built. This was the first log cabin in Barre located near the corner of the Lee Road and Route 98.

Stories like this and that of Lucius Street whom I quoted in last week's column give us a pretty vivid idea of times and circumstances the early settlers had to live with. Indeed, times have changed.

We often hear people speak of the good old days but quite frankly, I'll take radial tires to the iron-rimmed wheels of an oxcart any day. However, it is fun to reminisce and if for a few brief moments put ourselves back into time. That is what the people of Barre did on August 16, 1968 when they celebrated their Sesquicentennial.

The accompanying photo shows Barre Supervisor George Batchellor, General Chairman of the Sesquicentennial Committee holding an "ancient" bear trap. A large display of historical artifacts under the chairmanship of Mrs. Gerald Wells and Mark Turner was on display at the old Grange Hall in Barre Center for the occasion. Incidentally, the bear trap is now a part of the permanent collection of artifacts at the Cobblestone Museum in Farmers Hall.

A variety of activities took place in 1968 for the Barre Centennial including a beard contest as we might surmise when we see the other photo. Shown at the Barre Sesqui Lock-up are from the left: Merle Hazel, Charles Persons, Robert Hackenberg, Herbert Lowman, Crawford Hucknall and Leonard Snyder. The day's events also included a parade, turkey shoot, street dance, barbecue and an historical booklet prepared by Helen Mathes, Barre Historian with assistance from Frances Ferris.

