

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

4-30-80



VOL. II

NO. 18

## ORLEANS COUNTY'S FIRST MUSEUM

Pictured here is Orleans County's first museum known as "The Log Cabin" which stood on the old Orleans County Fair Grounds in Albion. A booklet of its history was written by Judge Arad Thomas for the opening of this museum which took place Sept. 22 and 23, 1882. Referring to that document we find: "The County of Orleans was originally covered with a heavy growth of trees. From these, log cabins for the settlers' family home, have been built on almost every farm. Most of these buildings have gone to decay or been destroyed, and none new have been built for many years. "...For several years the managers of the Agricultural Society have been contemplating making a collection of old farm implements, and the Pioneer Association desired to aid in forming a museum of old curiosities..."

In January 1882 the project of building a log cabin museum was approved. Donations of logs were brought from all parts of the county to erect the 26 x 40 foot two-story-high structure which was raised on June 10. Stone for the foundation was donated by the Cleveland Quarry Company of Abion. Filled with donations of pioneer relics, curiosities and curios, the log cabin only remained for around two decades when it was torn down. The contents were removed to the second floor of the old Floral Hall on the Fair Grounds where they remained for fifteen or twenty years at which point they were given to the Rochester Museum. Those relics included: a cane made from a splinter torn from the hull of Commodore Perry's flagship Lawrence; a model of the first bean planter ever invented made by Davis Rozier of Gaines in 1842; an amputating case captured from the Rebels at Gettysburg, an arm chair made in France in 1634, gold beads made in 1801 and a vertebra from a horse's neck made into the form of a clergyman pronouncing a benediction in 1833.

Only one of the many items from the Log Cabin's contents remains in Orleans County today. It is a bear trap which was loaned to that exhibit by George Batchelor of Barre. It may now be seen at Farmer's Hall which will be dedicated on Sunday afternoon, June 1, immediately following the 2:00 o'clock farmers' parade from Gaines to Childs.

It is amazing that ninety-eight years later the Cobblestone Society is also attempting to gather up fragments of the past "for the amusement and instruction of the people". One cannot help but lament however, the fact that so many of our local relics are no longer in our midst.

In part Judge Arad Thomas ended his historical booklet with the following: "Don't say at any time I have at home such or such a thing that is curious and old, but bring forward your specimens of husbandry used by your father in his fields; and of the utensils used by your mother in her house; and of the fashions of things used long ago...Let the youth of today see the amazing improvements and progress..."