

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



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British monarch 1837 - 1901

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Now what does Queen Victoria have to do with anything in Orleans County? Actually quite a bit! Because a goodly portion of our heritage in Orleans County is Victorian -- believe it or not. In part, Webster describes Victorian as "relating to the ... art, letters or taste of her time." Therefore, anything created between 1837 and 1901 can certainly be considered Victorian. When we think of Victorian in terms of style, many people immediately picture something which is ornate, overdone, ostentatious, stuffy or even hypocritical. However, let us consider for the moment some of our county's notable landmarks. For instance, the very simple Federal Style Universalist Church in Clarendon was built the year Victoria was crowned. Our County Court House built in 1858-59 in the Greek Revival Style is also a Victorian building. The First Baptist Church in Medina built in 1872 is a beautiful example of the Gothic style but it is also Victorian. The list could go on including most of our cobblestone buildings and no doubt, a goodly proportion of our existing dwellings and residences. Perhaps that treasured heirloom with a plank seat or cane bottom or rustic homemade farm tool or any number of your treasured antiques are Victorian. To call something Victorian gives it a general description and time frame of 64 years. But actually during that 64 years a great many styles prevailed and our country and county underwent one of its greatest developments - stylistically, politically and economically. A larger influence being the Industrial Revolution. And no doubt some of this all occurred as a result of the first exposition held in 1851 at Hyde Park, the center of Britain. The first glass and steel building "The Crystal Palace" was erected for that exhibition and was auspiciously opened by Queen Victoria herself on May 1, 1851.