

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C. W. Lattin County Historian

Vol. XX

10-27-98

No. 42

OZRO H. BATES

Ozro H. Bates (1827 - 1923) is not a person local historians talk much about. On the other hand, his partner William V. N. Barlow, is frequently mentioned as a local architect of note. Barlow is remembered for designing many buildings in the vicinity of Albion including fine residences and business blocks. Per chance, our County Court House is revered as one, if not the best, example of his work.

However, it was Ozro H. Bates who personally made by hand the beautiful fluted columns which adorn the front of the Court House. Likewise, he made most of the interior doors and windows. A master craftsman, he was considered a genius at close joiner work and was much sought after for fine interior finishing.

Ozro Bates and Wm. Barlow together, built houses for John H. White, Wm. G. Swan, Stephen Hallock, John Dixon and many others. They also built the Swan, Sickels, Blott, Royce and Hanington business blocks. But it is perhaps their collaboration on the Court House that remains their best work. The four forty-foot-high pillars on the facade remain today a true memorial to Ozro Bates and his splendid craftsmanship.

Mr. Bates was one of nine children born in the eastern part of Barre. He therefore grew up on the family farm. In 1848 he moved to Albion where he became a pattern maker in the King stove foundry. He then learned the carpenter's trade under George Cox, an early builder. Later, Mr. Bates became connected with W. V. N. Barlow and the two became known for building many of the better class homes and structures in the area.

I think Barlow had the ability to design buildings as well as execute them. But with Bates' ability to do extremely fine workmanship, the two complimented each other. Anyone who had the ability to make patterns out of wood for die casting, had to be pretty good. In a stove foundry the die cast finished parts had to all fit together air tight. Everything hinged on the pattern maker.



The four Greek Revival columns on the Court House are assembled with, I believe, hollow cores. Each one is surmounted with an Ionic capital. Note that two outer ones are atypical in that the scroll-like shape goes around the corner. The two inner columns have normal capitals. This is a little deviation to note the individual builder's self expression on the Greek Revival norm.

So the next time you admire the facade of our Court House (1857 - 58) remember Ozro Bates, local carpenter with an eye for perfection.