

Bethinking of Old Orleans

7-20-01

Vol. XXIII

C.W. Lattin, County Historian

No. 29

Unusual barn

The barn shown here was built by Lucius Sanford about 1850. It was located in the Town of Gaines on Route 279 (Gaines Road) around a mile north of Route 104 on the east side of the road. John Carr later owned this farm where the barn was situated. In 1936 a fire of undetermined origin destroyed this unusual piece of agricultural architecture. It was the only eight-sided barn ever built in Orleans County.

During the 1840s and 1850s octagon buildings became somewhat of a fad introduced by a man named Orson Fowler. Although he was not an architect, he published a book entitled "A Home For All," in which he promoted the multi-sided building. His claim, proved geometrically, was that one could get more interior space within an octagon and less outside exposure as compared to more conventional shapes like rectangles.

The barn shown here was built of stone and then stuccoed. It had a high gambrel roof with an enormous eight-sided cupola on top. The high roof served as storage space for loose hay. The cupola served as a means to ventilate the barn. Judging from the picture, each side must have measured at least 25 feet in length. The diameter of the barn must have well been over 60 feet across. After this barn was destroyed, it was replaced with a more standard type of barn.

