

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County Historian

Before the fire

Today's photo shows the original Gaines Congregational Church building, which was destroyed by fire Dec. 24, 1950.

The first Christian house of worship erected between the Niagara and Genesee rivers was built in Gaines in 1824. Baptists and Congregationalists used the church on alternate Sundays.

But in 1834, the Congregational Society decided to erect its own church building, which is seen here.

Construction was done on a lot just east of Route 279 on Route 104, near the first burial ground in Orleans County, at a total cost of \$2,500.

The church was an imposing New England-style meeting house and originally had a steeple extending more than 80 feet.

By 1938, the steeple had become structurally unsound and was removed. The tower in the photo shows how it had been

modified.

Stained glass windows were added to the church in 1914.

Records indicate the large window in the second story, which shows a bust of Christ, cost \$100 and was a memorial to William A. Lafler.

The transom over the front door displayed the name "Congregational" in stained glass and was put up at a cost of \$12.50.

The fire, which destroyed the church, was believed to have been caused by a faulty furnace that overheated.

The congregation did not despair and met in the Gaines Grange Hall for a year.

Plans immediately were undertaken to construct a new church on the same site.

By January 1952, the new church was made available to parishoners for worship, which took place in the basement, and by September 1952, the sanctuary was finished.

