



The First Church Between the Genesee and Niagara Rivers

## BETHINKING OF OLDE ORLEANS

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# 'A Big Whistle'

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The following anecdote is taken from the Gaines Centennial booklet published in 1909.

"Deacon Perry Davis was one of the most enterprising men that Gaines ever had. He built a grist mill and a small iron foundry. A part of these buildings now stand northwest of the corner. There were driven by a steam engine — the first ever brought into Orleans County.

He soon after added a tinshop to the works, and imported a skillful tinman — one who could tin sheet copper — for in those days that was a part of a tinworker's trade.

The tinman answered expectations, and he signaled his advent by making a big tin whistle about the size of a half-bushel measure.

The tinman, one Friday evening, together with the engineer and Romeyn Ostrander, fitted a steam escape pipe from the boiler to and through a window in the engine room, and put the big whistle on the end thereof.

That evening there was a prayer meeting at the old church, and John Anderson, as usual, was leading in prayer.

Suddenly there came a noise. Never before had the like been heard — no, not from Rochester to Lockport. It blew — and screeched — and yelled — and roared with tearing and rending roar.

Uncle John was dumbfounded — he stopped and stood stock still. The seven rams horns before the walls of Jericho were nowhere. It "shouted with a great shout." then held its breath, and shouted and roared again.

The people looked at each other in amazement. When Uncle John opening his eyes said, "Why, deacon what's the matter at the mill?" Deacon Davis shook his head, said nothing, but took his ivory-headed cane and went to see about it.

All bolted out of the church, Uncle John with the rest, went to the mill, where half the village were already looking at the thing. The big whistle was suppressed."

Our photo shows the first church built between the Genesee and Niagara rivers in the hamlet of Gaines. This was constructed in 1824 by both Baptists and Congregationalists. It later became the town hall and highway garage in Gaines and was torn down in the mid-1990s.