

# KNOWLESVILLE PRESBYTERIAN

7-20-66

BY C. W. LATTIN

This picture which was taken in the late 1890s shows the Presbyterian Church at Knowlesville. The photo has been contributed by Mark Turner.

The congregation of this church was formed in 1817 as Congregational. In 1821, they reorganized as Presbyterian. In 1832, a church of brick was erected on Presbyterian Road in Knowlesville which backed up to the canal. In 1893, the old brick church was torn down and the one in this picture was built in its place.

Designed in the Victorian Romanesque style, it was in an asymmetrical format. By 1966 the congregation had dwindled to a few members and the church was turned over to the Genesee Valley Presbytery which had it torn down in 1969.

The interior floor plan was of an unusual layout. The auditorium or sanctuary was square in its shape. The pews were arranged diagonally in a semicircular fashion so that the interior front of the church was actually a corner rather than a wall.

The Methodist Church at Millville,

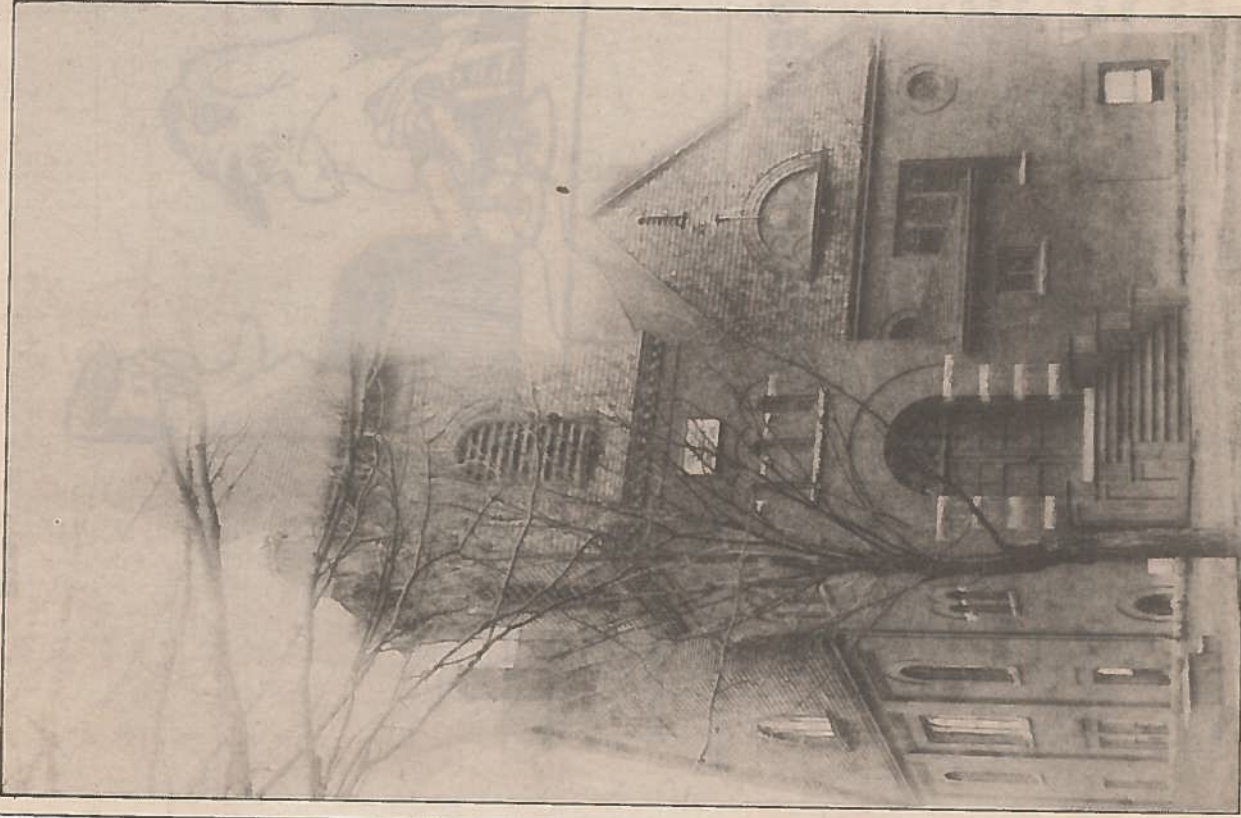
which was built in 1896 in the Queen Anne style, also has a square sanctuary with the diagonal arrangement of pews. Recently a member of that church asked me why it was done like that.

My feeling is that it was simply innovative and breaking away from the norm. Both Victorian Romanesque and Queen Anne architecture lended themselves to asymmetrical plans and creative innovations in arrangements. These buildings were by no means traditional in the sense that they expressed rigid liturgy. Semicircular seating brought people together more and the diagonal arrangement was perhaps an expression or Protestantism at the time. In other words, it gave a

visual expression to the reformation in that things did not have to be done as they were in more liturgical church settings.

The Knowlesville Church had a pipe organ across the front corner as a focal point with a center pulpit in front of it. Likewise, the Methodist at Millville had a center pulpit in the front corner. In both cases, Presbyterian and Methodist, the focus was on preaching when these late 19th Century houses of worship were erected.

My final take on the question is: I think for a short time in the 1890s it was simply a fad. These two churches were by no means the only two ever built like this. Believe me, there are more.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO