



Bethinking of Old Orleans

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YE OLDE COUNTRY STORE

One hundred years ago almost every four corners and every little hamlet had a country store. It was a way of life, a necessity and an American institution which has largely vanished from our contemporary way of life. From penny candy to lampwicks, from horse whips to calicos, from kerosene to fly traps and button hooks to 5 cent cigars, you could get practically anything you wanted at a country store. Local farmers brought in their eggs, butter, cheese, etc. for trade. It was a place chucked full of merchandise with a special aroma and an atmospheric quality in brownish tones all of its own.

Aside from being a trade center the country store was a social center where particularly the men of the neighborhood would gather around the pot belly stove after supper for a hot game of checkers. And yes, it was a Post Office, a gossip, message and information center where the ideas and decisions of the day were often made.

I say center, because that's where it was most frequently geographically located. It was not the church, not the school, not the home but the country

store which occupied the most prominent and prestigious corner or spot in a small village. Take for example, Clarendon, Eagle Harbor, West Kendall, Two Bridges, Kenyonville, Millville, Gaines, Barre Center, Childs, Carlton Station or Kent. The prominent location in each of those places has or had at one time a country store. Beside those hamlets there were country stores which have long been forgotten in such places as Rich's Corners, Gaines Basin and Hindsburg to mention a few. Some store keepers even ran delivery wagons.

Surely the country store was where everybody went sooner or later making for close-knit communities of the 19th Century until the advent of the gasoline engine and automobile.

Next week at the Orleans County Fair, visitors will have a chance to catch a glimpse of an old-fashioned country store. Through the combined efforts of the Orleans County Historical Association, the Medina Historical Society and the Cobblestone Society a Country Store exhibit will be set up in the Log Cabin. Artifacts typically found in country stores will be on display along with books and cards for sale.