

KATHERINE BELLE ROWLEY

BY C.W. LATTIN
Orleans County historian

Katherine B. Rowley was born May 19, 1870, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Rowley of Gaines. She received her early education in the district school and later graduated from Albion. After graduation, she taught district school.

In the latter part of her life, she confined her attention to the management of her farm. Her family home was located on the southeast corner of Ridge Road, and Crandall Road which in Miss Rowley's time was known as Rowley Road.

On Thanksgiving Day 1916, the old Rowley homestead burned to the ground. By the following year, she had rebuilt on the same site, the present Colonial-style house now owned by Jack and Marita Dumrese.

Upon her death, an Albion newspaper gave tribute to her by saying in part: "The sudden death of Miss Katherine B. Rowley this morning is a distinct loss to Orleans County. A recognized authority on early



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Orleans History, Miss Rowley was a descendant of a pioneer family who took an active part in the early development of Gaines. For years she had spent her spare time in research in county history and was influential in having markers placed at historic spots along the Ridge Road."

Indeed these markers exist today along the historic Ridge. One located at Murray bespeaks the 200th birth of Washington and of the Revolutionary soldiers from the Town of Murray. Another at Transit Road and Route

5-21-09
Vol. XXXI, No. 21

Bethinking of Olde Orleans

104 tells of the Connecticut Tract of land and the Holland Land Purchase.

A large monument at Gaines near the Congregational Church speaks of the trek of DeWitt Clinton along the Ridge in 1810. And still another, although smaller in size, is located in Childs in the front lawn of the residence built by John Proctor, known as the Paul Revere of the Ridge Road.

Although all these bronze and stone markers were erected by the DAR in the 1930s, they were done under Miss Rowley's influence and remain today as an indelible reminder of her enthusiasm for pioneer history.

In 1926, she authorized a 24 page booklet entitled "The Historic Ridge," which was printed by the DAR and "dedicated to the memory of the Pioneers who blazed the trail for us to follow after."

She also had planned to chronicle in book form many anecdotes of pioneer life which she had gathered.

On May 14, 1934, Rowley was appointed Orleans County Historian by the Orleans County Board of Supervisors. In this capacity, she was responsible for compiling a permanent record of historical data and military statistics on Civil War and World War I veterans.

Rowley was one of the very first people locally to actively collect antiques. She was an active member of the DAR and served as their State Chairman of the Old Trails Committee. She was also a member of the Orleans County Pioneer Association and the Albion Historical Club. She was a member of the Gaines Congregational Church.

On June 17, 1936, she died suddenly at her home of angina pectoris.

On Saturday, the Gaines Bicentennial committee will present a musical review at the Cobblestone Church in Childs. There will be two shows, one at 3 p.m. and one at 7 p.m., for a \$5 donation.

At the 3 p.m. show, a historic marker will be dedicated to Katherine Rowley. This will later be erected at her former residence on Ridge Road. The marker states:

Home of
Katherine Belle Rowley
1870-1936
Teacher, Farmer,
Author of "The Historic
Ridge",
Erected DAR Historic
Markers,
1st Orleans Co. Historian
May 14, 1934
Town of Gaines 2009