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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

My family's early home

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The small building pictured here was located in the side yard of my family's farm house on Gaines Basin Road. It was torn down more than 20 years ago, a result of a lack of maintenance over a lengthy time. As I look back now I'm sorry my father didn't take better care of it back in the 1950s, when deterioration started to occur.

According to stories handed down in my family, this was the second dwelling on the farm. It seems that in 1815, David Bullard bought 100 acres of land and first built a log cabin in which to live. By the 1820s, conditions had improved enough for him to build this small frame house, as saw mills had been erected.

It was one step up from a log cabin, however. The outer walls were framed in with 4-by-4 studs, but the inner partitions were plank.

The first floor was finished off with split lathe and soft plaster with ox hair as a binder. The second floor was accessible by a steep staircase but was never finished off with lathe and plaster, leaving it one open space with exposed rafters and studs.

The first floor plan was simplistic, consisting of basically two rooms. The larger room was the cooking and living space with a fireplace. Off this room were two spaces, an alcove for a bed and a small pantry. The other room, with slightly decorative woodwork, probably served as a small parlor.

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Bethinking of Olde Orleans

As I noted earlier, this was the first step up from the log cabin. In my observations this was a common occurrence on many farmsteads.

In 1834, the property was deeded to David Bullard's son Brigadier. He and his wife, Lovina and their son John lived in the little house. In 1842, again as times improved, the little house seen here was moved about 60 feet to the north and the Bullards had built on the site a fine cobblestone house. Their son John, who was 12 years old, picked up all the stones used on the front of the house from a Lake Ontario beach.

In 1885, my great-grandfather bought the property from the heirs of Brigadier Bullard. The little house was then used for many years as a shop to fix things, and as sleeping quarters for hired men.

I guess the point I want to make here is we just didn't go from log cabins to mansions. Indeed, there were transitional homes in between. The little house shown here was strictly utilitarian with no frills. It was expressive of a hard-won fight with the wilderness and existence in the pioneer spirit of things.

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