

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W. Lattin • County Historian

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CROSSROADS - OAK ORCHARD  
RD. BATAVIA TO OAK ORCHARD  
CREEK SURVEYED 1803 AND  
ONTARIO TRAIL KNOWN AS  
THE RIDGE ROCHESTER TO  
LEWISTON IMPROVED IN 1814

DAR & CO. DEPT. OF HIST. 1984

6-6-84

## CROSSROADS

On Sunday, June 10 at 2:00 p.m. the Orleans Chapter DAR will dedicate an historic marker at the intersection of the Ridge Road Rt. 104 and the Gaines Road Rt. 279 in Gaines. The precise location of this is in the front lawn of the home of Virginia Lattin Morrison who has graciously given permission to have it placed there.

The public is invited to attend the ceremony which has been planned as part of the Historic Gaines Jubilee 1809-1984 celebration. Those who will be conducting the dedication exercises are: Edith Anderson, DAR Regent; Virginia Brobst, 2nd Vice Regent and Janice Thaine. In case of inclement weather the program will be held in the Gaines Congregational Church. A reception and Open House will take place at the DAR Chapter House on North Main Street in Albion following the marker dedication. At that time an 1873 sculptural portrait of Electa Cook Tousley, wife of Orson Tousley will be unveiled by Irene Gibson. She was a daughter of Lemuel Cook the last pensioner of the Revolution. The Tousleys lived in what is now the DAR Chapter House. The portrait was a recent gift of Mr. George Beach of Rochester.

Now back to the marker and the reasons for its erection. The illustration of the marker to be dedicated indicates the following simple facts: "Crossroads - Oak Orchard Road, Batavia to Oak Orchard Creek surveyed 1803 and Ontario trail known as the Ridge. Rochester to Lewiston improved in 1814." The DAR logo is placed at the top of the sign and a credit line includes: "DAR and Co. Dept. of Hist. 1984."

In essence, this marker indicates the first North-South and East-West crossroads in Orleans County. Joseph Ellicott who was a land agent for the Holland Land Company sought to develop this area during the late 1790's and very early 1800's. Delia Robinson in her new book Historic Gaines 1809-1984 can be quoted as follows:

"Joseph Ellicott saw the best route for trade as the Lake in the early 1800's and throughout the purchase encouraged north-south routes to what he envisioned as future lake ports. In what is now Orleans County he planned a port at the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek. He drew up a plot map, named the port Manilla and sold building lots. The second road in the County, and in what is now Gaines, led from Batavia to the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek. The establishment of this second road, Oak Orchard Road, is found in Mr. Ellicott's report to the Company in 1801."

"To effect a Communication with Lake Ontario I directed two of my Surveyors to explore, Survey and mark out a road from Batavia to the Mouth of Oak Orchard Creek...I employed a person well acquainted

with the Situation of the Country who with two Indians his assistants, has marked out the said Road...thus a Communication will be opened for the Immigration of Settlers, and for the Transportation of Salt and other Articles deposited on the Lake."

"This road, in Gaines, followed the latter route to the Lake."

Where this road crossed Oak Orchard Creek in the Town of Carlton there is also an historic marker. It is located on the Oak Orchard River Road just north-east of Waterport and reads as follows: "Fording place used first by Indians, later by early pioneers. The Oak Orchard trail from Batavia to Ontario crossed the creek here."

Oak Orchard Road as we know it today travels directly north through Childs to the Lake and not through Gaines village. This change in road names took place around 1900 with more modern improvements to the road's surface. During the 1850's these roads were surfaced with plank from Barre Center to Gaines.

The first road in Orleans County was the Ridge Road which was surveyed in 1798. Prior to that time it was an Indian Trail that followed a natural sand bar created about 100,000 years ago by a pre-historic lake which later receded. It was not however, until 1814 that any real improvements took place. From Laws of New York State we find the following:

Passed April 15, 1814

"I. BE it enacted by the people of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, That Isaac W. Stone, Eil Moore, and Sheldon Thompson, be, and they are hereby appointed commissioners for the purpose of improving the road leading from the Bridge over the Genesee Falls to Lewiston, on the Niagara River, called the Ridge Road, and the treasurer of this state is hereby required, on the warrant of the comptroller, to pay to the said commissioners, or to their order, the sum of five thousand dollars, to be applied in due proportion to the improvements of such parts of the said road, as may stand in need thereof, and as the said commissioners shall think proper, for the public benefit..."

"II. And be it further enacted. That each of the said commissioners appointed by this act, shall be entitled to two dollars per day, for each day they shall be respectively employed in the discharge of the duties imposed on them by this act, to be paid out of the aforesaid money."

With these facts as heritage, the Historic Gaines Jubilee celebrates another facet of its past with an historic marker as a reminder. This will now make the sixth historic marker just in the Village of Gaines which as Robert Waters of the Journal Register recently said, "...is sprinkled with historic markers."