

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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County 7-18-84
Historian

Vol. VI

No. 29

ARCHITECTURE DESTROYED

Part XXII

Eagle Harbor

Wesleyan Methodist Church

Only two Wesleyan Methodist Churches have ever been organized in Orleans County. This one pictured, which was at Eagle Harbor, and the Ashwood Wesleyan Methodist Church which remains very active today. The denomination itself was founded in Utica, New York in 1843 in opposition to the way the Methodist Episcopal Church was being ruled. At a conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held in 1840, northern delegates tried to present a report condemning slavery. They were however, ruled out of order and not allowed to present it. Following this, a number of ministers withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal denomination and with full support of their congregations, took the name Wesleyan Methodist. The Methodist Episcopal Church had been strongly ruled by Bishops whereas the forming of the Wesleyan Methodist Church was under more congregational and democratic rule. They adopted a discipline which prohibited the owning of slaves, and the use of intoxicating liquors.

The Eagle Harbor Wesleyan Methodist Church was organized in July 1843, only two months after the denomination was legally formed. Construction of their church which is shown here began in the summer of 1845 and was completed the following year. It was of simple Greek Revival plan which greatly resembled the Presbyterian Church ediface (1854 - c. 1960) that was located at Two Bridges.

On March 30, 1918 while the grounds were being raked and the building put in order for a conference which was to be held there, it caught fire from the burning of leaves. In spite of all efforts to save it, it burned to the



ground. One of the only items saved from the church was the pulpit which was stored away many years until it was given to the Gaines Congregational Church in the early 1950's where it is still used.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church was located just east of the Eagle Harbor lift bridge on the north side of the road backing up to the canal. After it burned, services were held for a while in a hall at Eagle Harbor but the congregation decided not to rebuild. After that, most of the members attended the Eagle Harbor Methodist Episcopal Church.

