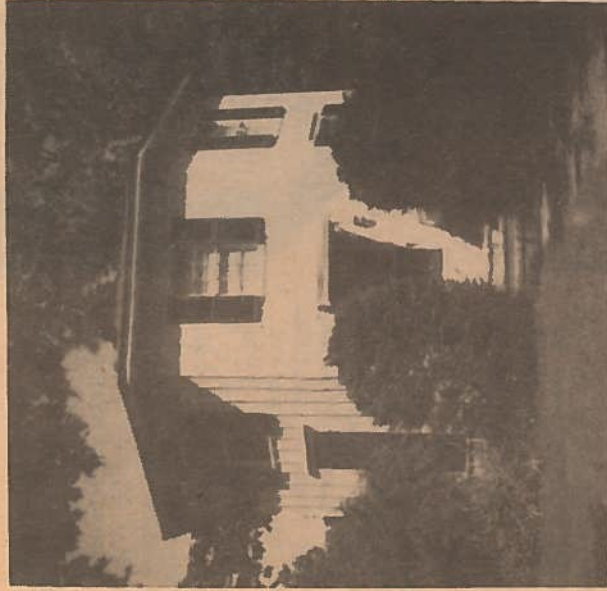


Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian



in the octagon house. This past week the octagon house and three acres of land have been put up for sale through Westridge Realty.

When unusual historic buildings of architectural significance are up for sale, local historians and preservationists frequently become somewhat concerned about the buildings' future. Hence the purpose of this article is to attract a possible buyer who will continue to maintain the integrity of Orleans County's only octagon house. In the past we have seen great cruelty done to many older homes. The octagon house surely needs an owner who will give it tender loving care.

You might ask what was the inspiration behind the octagon house? It is almost certain that the inspiration for this dwelling came from Orson S. Fowler's book published in 1853 entitled "The Octagon House A Home For All." This book was widely circulated throughout the eastern United States during the 1860's and probably had its effect upon a thousand structures or more. Fowler write "Why continue to build in the same square form of all past ages? Nature's forms are mostly spherical... then why not apply her forms to houses?... The octagon by approximating to the circle, incloses more space for its wall than the square, besides being more compact and available."

Orson Fowler was an extraordinary person, being no doubt a complete individualist. He was born in Cohocton, N.Y. in 1809 and educated at Amherst College with plans for becoming a minister. However, he became captivated by Phrenology, a doctrine holding that the character of an individual could be analyzed by examination of the cranium. In fact, Fowler became a practicing phrenologist and published the "American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany." Along with this, amateur architecture was one of his pursuits in a many-faceted life. Ironically, today it has become his lasting contribution.

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Tucked away on the Bills Road in the Town of Carlton is one of Orleans County's most unique examples of 19th Century architecture. It is an octagon house which was built by Henry D. Hobbs, perhaps in the late 1850's or early 1860's. By the 1870's this property was owned by Joseph H. Clement who operated a shingle, stave and heading mill nearby.

Around fifty years ago the Robert Warren Family purchased the property from Mary Clement Madison and have since lived