

# Historic Preservation Commission

## Summer 2012 - Property of the Season

### 20 South Main Street

Oswego Historic Preservation Commission proudly honors 20 South Main Street as the 2012 Summer "Property of the Season". Built circa 1870, the home is a standard upright and wing style with a cross-gabled roof. Two tall windows grace the first floor of the original home with a large square window on the second floor. Two major additions were added, the last occurring in 1987, expanding the building to just over 2,800 square feet. Both additions included large bay windows. Little remains of the original building materials, but some portions of the home retain the original slat wood flooring. The building was painted yellow in recent years, but previous pictures indicate that it was blue or grey.



The land was originally owned by Walter Loucks, who sold lots 2 through 8 to Decolia Towle, the Village's first tavern owner, in 1842. Mr. Towle's first wife, Elizabeth, died tragically at the age of 21 in 1842, and shortly after he was remarried to Emeline Wilder in 1843. Unfortunately, their marriage was cut short by his untimely death at the age of 29 in 1847. Decolia and Elizabeth, his first wife, are buried in the Oswego Township Cemetery; his second wife remarried Roland McCloud 2 years later and moved to Kane County. Before his death, Mr. Towle sold lot 6 to Henry A. Clarke, a well known pioneer whose daughter Josephine was reportedly the first burial at Pearce Cemetery in 1845. Mr. Clarke owned and operated grocery stores in Oswego for a generation, and later turned his property over to Nathaniel Rising in 1851. Rising, who also owned Levi and Darwin Groton's Mill at one time, sold his lot to John Sanders and soon moved with his wife Almira Gray Rising to Rockford where he died in 1865.

John Sanders was a fascinating character. He arrived in Oswego around 1847 from New Jersey and was one of a small group of men who volunteered in the U.S. Army during the Mexican

War. Sanders, a silversmith by trade, stayed in Mexico City after the war and worked for three years until returning to Oswego in 1851. He married the widow Nancy Pearce King and lived in Oswego for several years before selling his property and opening a new business in Dallas, Texas. Sanders returned to Oswego again in 1872 when his eyesight began to fail. He spent the remainder of his years here, passing away in 1885. His lengthy obituary in the Kendall County Record states, "The deceased was 72 years of age, was quite peculiar; many of his business ways were quite contrary to that of the general custom, yet he always prospered... Whatever failings John Sanders may have had, he was at least a strictly honest and upright man." He and his wife are buried in Pearce Cemetery, and a United States flag marks his grave in salute to his service.

After Mr. Sanders' death, the property was sold to returning Civil War Captain William S. Bunn and his wife Sarah. Captain Bunn enlisted as 2nd Lieutenant in the 127th U.S. Infantry in August of 1862 and served through the remainder of the war. He was promoted twice, first to 1st Lieutenant and second to Captain. He was known for his bravery throughout the southern campaign, especially the battle of Ezra Church, July 28, 1864 in Fulton County, Georgia where nearly all but a handful of Captain Bunn's men were killed or wounded. Back in Oswego, Captain Bunn was a successful businessman who was well known throughout the region. This was one of several properties that he and his wife sold off after deciding to leave Oswego. They moved to Montgomery in 1880, and two years later, in 1882, the couple moved again to Leland.



From 1895 to 1923, the Main Street lot was owned first by Samantha Kennedy and then by the Shoger family after Carrie Shoger sold it to Robert and Susan Gates. During the twentieth century, the property changed hands numerous times and included as its owners Earl Zentmyer, Clarence and Gladys Lindemier, Cyril and Hazel Matter and Gladys and Herbert Rucks. The home has been used as commercial property for generations, and many businesses have operated there since the 1970s, including Fabric's Unlimited, Joanne's Distinctive Interiors, Pamme Jo's "Country at Heart" gift shop, Coda Music, Valbert Cabinets and Merit Corp.

*(all historic photos courtesy of the Little White School Museum)*