

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## BARRE CENTER



This past weekend the Town of Barre celebrated its Septucentennial (1818-1993). In relationship to this event let's look back to the year 1934 when the *Albion Midlander*, a paper published occasionally by Marine Midland Bank, printed an article and photos on Barre Center. The photos are reproduced here as they appeared then.

1. This shows the Barre Center Grange No. 1026, the way it looked. This building is now owned by the Barre Center Presbyterian Church.

2. The Barre Center District School, Dist. 13, one of the last in the county to centralize. It is now owned by the Fire Company.

3. This photo shows Wendell Phillips, Town Clerk and owner of the Arrowhead Store in Barre Center.

4. The *Midlander* simply labeled this photo - Enos Rice and George Culber - two older residents of Barre Center.

5. Homer J. Dawley evidently owned a store where Bentley Bros. recently operated a business.

6. This picture shows the evaporator which was operated by John Benthin & Son.

7. The Orleans County Canning Company, later owned by Wallace Dale, appears here as it did in 1934, from Maple St.

Here follows some excerpts from the article on Barre Center which was printed in the *Albion Midlander*.

### Gateway to Mucklands

Barre Center, the northern gateway to the fertile Genesee-Orleans mucklands, was founded in the spring of 1817 when Jesse O'Hara cut the timber and built a log cabin on this site. At that time only about twenty pioneer families were scattered throughout the Township of Barre. Two years later, however, settlers coming to the Holland Land Office to purchase articles of land, desired to

be told about the new and thriving village of Barre, located between the Tonawanda swamp and the Ridge Road.

The most important factor in the early growth of "the Center" was the Oak Orchard Road, reserved by the Holland Land Company as a public road four rods wide through its domain, and not included in any grants to settlers bordering on it. This road became a great artery of travel between Oak Orchard Harbor and the inland country. When the Erie Canal was completed, traffic increased on this road as goods and produce were carried to and from the surrounding countryside to the canal port at Albion. About 1845 the road was planked between Barre Center and Albion and tolls were collected for using it. So much freight and stage travel was carried over this road that many inns were established along it. A tavern existed where the Grange now stands, and the houses of Harry Waldo, William Schuler and Carl Hakes at one time in their early existence served as inns.

In the last twenty-five years a rich tract of land has been opened up about a mile and a half to the south of Barre Center. The road on which the teamsters drove many years ago through Barre Center now carries thousands of truckloads of lettuce, onions, potatoes, carrots, spinach and turnips to the markets in Buffalo, Cleveland, New York and Philadelphia. Many people are employed on this muckland. Besides its population of 250, Barre Center has a trading area which extends to the southern county line. The business places of the village include Phillips & Son General Store, Homer J. Dawley General Store, Orleans County Canning Company, and the evaporator of John Benthin & Son, also the garage of S. Elton Miller and the Albion Oil Company garage, Bruce Clapp, manager.