

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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COLDEST WEATHER



The coldest weather recorded locally occurred on February 9, 1934 when the thermometer plummeted to minus 23 degrees. The whole northeastern United States was affected by a cold air mass which slid south from Alaska. Both Rochester and Buffalo recorded minus 22 degrees while Arcade, N.Y. reported 50 below. This cold spell lasted for over three days. Temperatures had dropped rapidly beginning on Thursday night to the all time low on Friday the 9th.

On February 18, 1979 temperatures again plunged to minus 19 degrees which suggests that February is our coldest month.

The Orleans American reported on February 14, 1934 that about sixty water meters in the village of Albion were put out of commission and that a number of households had one or more frozen pipes. The biggest concern for the cold snap came from local farmers who feared the Arctic blast had ruined orchards.

On February 16 the Albion Advertiser reported that E.R. Wagner, Farm Bureau Agent for Orleans County indicated that buds on pear and peach

trees were damaged the most which would result in poor yield for the coming fall. In March 1934 the Albion Midlander reported the following: "There may be a short crop of apples, peaches and cherries in this section of New York State when picking time arrives. Examination of orchards by Farm Bureau and Cornell University investigators disclose that thousands of fruit trees have been killed or split open by the intense cold spell. Peach buds have suffered the worst and it is estimated that the peach crop will be from thirty to fifty percent of normal this fall."

Indeed, many area apple orchards were ruined along with other species. And area farmers talked about this disaster for years afterwards as their worst fears from the beginning were confirmed when spring came.

The photo shown here taken in the 1930's by Fred Holt shows ice mounds along the Lake Ontario shore line. It was also on February 9, 1934 that Lake Ontario froze over for the first time in recorded history. Several local people dared go out on the ice a mile or so, a hazardous adventure to say the least.