

Bethinking of Old Orleans

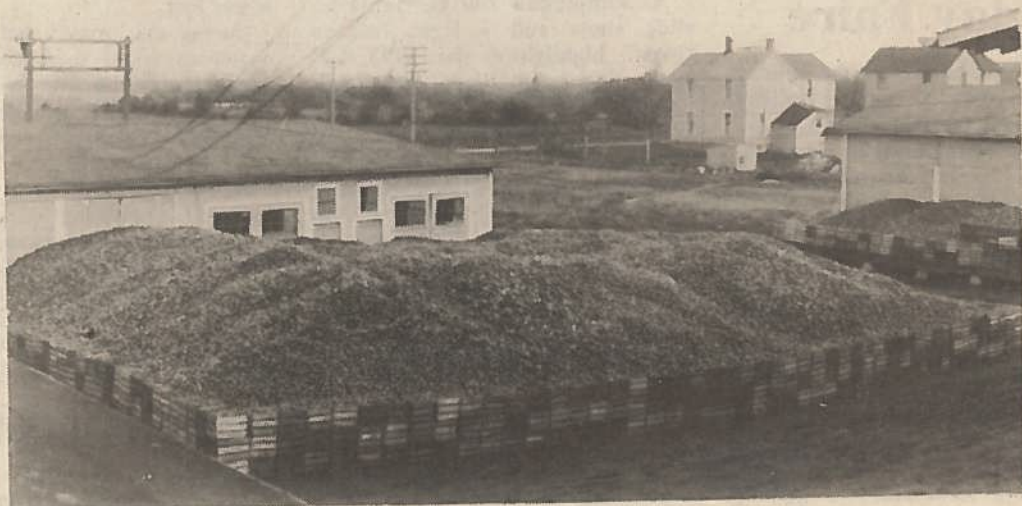
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APPLE HARVEST SIXTY YEARS AGO



In the November 1933 issue of the Albion Midlander published by the Orleans County Trust Company, we find an interesting article on apple harvest in Orleans County. Here are some excerpts:

"The tang of fall is in the air and with it comes the harvesting of Orleans County's most famous crop. Commercial apple growing was established in New York State 50 years ago and Western New York is considered the oldest commercial apple section in the world. Last year 4,550,000 barrels of fresh fruit were packed in New York State and of that number Orleans County produced approximately 1/10th or 418,770 barrels. Baldwin, Rhode Island Greening, McIntosh, Wealthy and Dutchess make up about 75% of the different varieties. At the time of the 1930 Federal Census 845,456 apple trees were growing in Orleans County. Stated another way 8.2% of all apple trees in New York State were in Orleans County.

"The climate and soil of this region have been conducive to orchard husbandry. Shape, size, color and flavor of the apple are dependent upon these conditions. The proximity of Lake Ontario limiting the daily range of temperature to 20 degrees or less, prevents the fruit from becoming exposed to excessive heat or excessive cold, thus allowing it to fully develop and mature. The average rainfall is sufficient to give the needed moisture. The type of soil covering a great part of this section is particularly adapted for growing apple trees.

"From the time the young trees are in the ground the grower must wait 7 to 15 years, depending on the varieties, to enjoy any dividends on his investment. Not until the orchard has been bearing for several years is a dividend realized on the investment.

"From the time the first crop of apples appears on the young trees both the care and expense of the orchard increase. The average orchard in Orleans County contains 352 apple trees; these must be trimmed at least every other year in the late winter and early spring. With the trimming over, the grower must turn his attention to the annual struggle against insects and scale. These are fought by periodical applications of chemical spray, put on the trees by means of a hose attached to a tank and wagon. Beginning with the first or "dormant" spray, which goes on before the buds have appeared on the trees

in the spring, five to seven applications must be made at intervals during the spring and summer. Cost account studies estimate the average expense of spraying to be between \$8 and \$11 per acre. It is very essential that these applications of mineral oil, lime and sulphur, lead arsenate, and black leaf 40 be applied at the proper time. A twenty-four delay may mean a loss in the effectiveness of succeeding applications. One of the most valuable services which the Orleans County Farm Bureau, under the direction of Elton Wagner, performs is the notification to its members of the exact time to put on the various sprays.

"Autumn arrives and the trees in well-cared-for orchards are weighed down with tempting fruit. The grower's work is half done. He has brought his crop through the periods of destructive insects and scale, of damaging summer wind and hail storms, drought and other natural impediments to the raising of a good crop. He now enters upon his final stage, the most important from his viewpoint, that of harvesting, packing, and marketing his product. Pickers must be hired, containers provided, and the crop started on the way to the markets or the storages with dispatch.

"The fruit must be cleaned and graded as to size, color and quality. Some of this fruit will be sold by the hundredweight to canning factories to be manufactured into such canned fruit products as our delicious applesauce. Certain grades will be manufactured into evaporated products. Culls will go to the cider mills, largely for vinegar manufacture. The better grades are packaged into barrels, baskets, boxes, crates, etc. Of these, some are immediately bought by produce dealers who truck them to the various markets of the cities. The bulk of the fruit, however, will be stored in the eleven cold storages about the County. These storages have an aggregate capacity of 606,000 barrels. Here they are held at a temperature of about 31 degrees above zero until such time as the owner wishes to dispose of them.

"Orleans County and Western New York used to be considered the barreled apple section of the country. Of late, however, very few barrels are used except in the export trade, most of the fruit in this section being packed in bushel baskets."

Our two photos here, show the Lyndonville Canning Company dock and yard around sixty years ago brimming with huge piles of apples.