

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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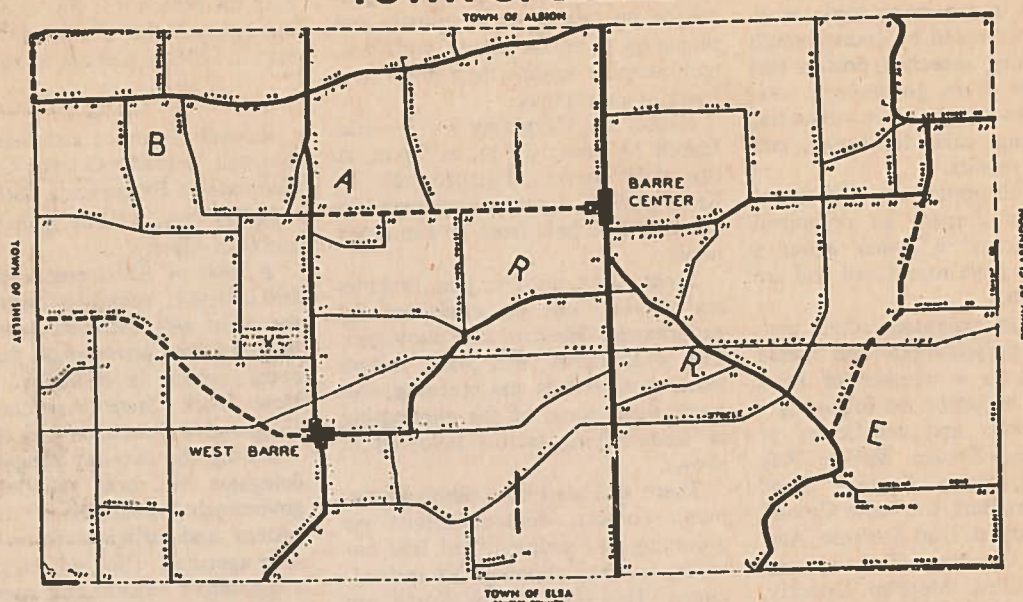
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TOWN OF BARRE

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TOWN OF BARRE



Naturally Barre has not always been called Barre. From 1772-1784 all of Western New York was called Tryon County. After 1789 this part of New York was known as Ontario County and in 1802 we were subdivided further to create Genesee County. Orleans County was separated from Genesee County November 12, 1824 to become effective Jan. 1, 1826. The Town of Barre was originally included in the Town of Ridgeway which extended west from the Transit Line or Road. The Town of Gaines was created from Ridgeway Feb. 14, 1816, and included Barre until March 6, 1818. The Town of Albion was split off Barre in 1875 and since that time Barre's boundaries have remained the same.

In the beginning, central and western New York was claimed by the Iroquois and also by the Colonies of New York and Massachusetts. In 1788 Massachusetts sold western New York to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham, two of its citizens, who would get title after buying the Indian interests. After the federal government was established, these men, unable to meet their obligations kept title to a smaller piece of this western end of New York was sold to Robert Morris, financier of the Revolution. In 1792 Morris sold the area including Barre to a group of Dutch speculators and it became known as the Holland Land Purchase. The company obtained Indian title to the tract at the council at Geneseo in September of 1797. Joseph Ellicott surveyed for the company, forming six mile strips running north and south called ranges and townships with the lines running east and west. These townships were then divided into 16 one-half mile squares called sections. Each section was then divided into 12 lots, each 3/4 mile times 1/4 mile containing 120 acres a piece. Each division was numbered on a map which is still in use today.

From Pioneer History of Orleans County compiled by Arad Thomas and published in 1871 we can find many personal accounts written by early pioneers. The following excerpts by Lucius Street, one of Barre's original settlers, gives us a flavor of those early times.

"I was born in West Springfield, Massachusetts Dec. 19, 1795. My father gave me a good common school education for those times and brought me up in his occupation, as a farmer.

"May 5, 1818, my brother Chapin and myself started from my father's house in Hindsdale, Mass., on foot, with knapsacks on our backs, for the 'Genesee' country.

"After going to Batavia and looking over the towns of Orangeville and China, we came to Barre and settled about two miles south of Barre Center where we still reside. (1864)

"We took our article for our land, May 18, 1818, and immediately began chopping, boarding with a family named Cuthbret.

"I taught a district school, in all, seven winters, and singing school two terms.

"One of our neighbors, Henry Edgerton, a strong, athletic man, carried a bushel and a half of wheat on his back, to Farwell's mill, in Clarendon, eight miles, got it ground and brought it home.

"In the fall of 1820, my brother and myself, having partially recovered from fever and ague, from which we had suffered, and getting somewhat homesick, went on foot back to Mass., being quite discouraged at the prospect of ever paying for our land, as the price of produce was so low. We wanted to sell out. Finding no opportunity to sell our articles, we worked out for farmers in Massachusetts the next season, at \$8 a month, then the common wages, and returned to Barre, in the fall of 1821, to sell our improvements, but found no buyers.

"We had agreed to give \$6 an acre for our land, on 10 years' time, wheat was worth in Rochester from 31 to 37 cents.

"In the summer of 1822, I boarded with Mr. Edgerton, and worked two days of every nine for him, to pay my board. That season I cleared, fenced and sowed 10 acres with wheat, from which next season I harvested 255 bushels of good wheat. The canal being then navigable west as far as Brockport, I could sell my wheat there for \$1 a bushel.

"In those days we were required by law to 'train' as soldiers, two days in each year, viz: on the first Monday in June and September, company training, and one day for a general muster, which was often held at Oak Orchard Creek. We were often called to meet at Oak Orchard and made the journey, 16 miles, on foot, carrying our gun and equipment and paying our own expenses. We would drill until near night, then on being dismissed, return home the same day, if indeed we were able to reach home before the next morning.

"Bears, wolves, wild cats, deer, raccoons, hedge hogs and other wild animals, were plenty here then.

"In the summer of 1818, my brother and I being at work chopping on our farm, heard a hog squeal, and saw a bear walking off very deliberately carrying the hog in his paws. We gave chase and as we came near, the bear dropped his prey and ran off. He had killed the hog. We then made a "dead fall" as it was called, in which to entrap the bear, which was a pen made by driving stakes into the ground and interweaving them with brush horizontally, in which the hog was placed. Into this pen we expected the bear would come and spring a trap, which would let a weight fall upon him. It proved a success, for in the morning we found the bear in the pen; he had sprung the trap and a spike of the dead fall through his leg held him fast.

"Many pleasant reminiscences of pioneer life might be mentioned, for though we endured many hardships and privations, we had plenty of sport mingled with them, giving us a pleasant variety of mirthful enjoyment.