

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## DANGEROUS SPORT



**Warning** — I do not advocate this form of skiing. Do not attempt to copy what you see being performed in this photo. You run the risk of being arrested or even being killed.

Our picture was taken around 1924 or 1925 by Fred Holt on an Orleans County country road. I judge that we are looking north and that it's mid-afternoon from the shadows cast on the snow. The man driving the car is pulling another man on skis. Note the tow rope the skier is holding on to which is attached to the car.

I've sometimes heard older people tell about such wintertime activity of years ago and this vintage photo shows it. The driver might go pretty fast too, while the skier might just be riding the drifts up and down in a field along side the road, which was even more dangerous than what you see here. We've known of people who have suffered fatal accidents because of snowmobiles. This was no different. An unseen fence post, a guide wire or barbed wire in the way was an accident for sure.

Aside from the skiing taking place, let's look at some other things in the picture. Along the right side of the road there is a stone wall or fence. These were

quite common on the Orleans County landscape until roads were paved with them. Large stone-crushers were brought in and frequently farmers would donate an old wall like this to the town which got it cleaned up in the eyes of the farmer sixty years ago. We notice also behind the stone wall, an orchard. This too, was a common sight on all county roads years ago.

As to the open car which might be a Model T Ford, imagine driving a convertible with the top down in January. We can see that the windshield is divided in half so that the upper portion would fold down. A manually operated windshield wiper is on the driver's side only. The wheels are made of wooden spokes. In the distance we can see a couple of other vintage cars. To the left, out in the field, we see snow fence which has also become a thing of the past. Local highway departments years ago always put up snow fence along areas where drifts were known to occur. In this manner, drifts were created out in a field rather than in the highway. The snow fence here makes sense. As the picture is oriented to the north, the fence on the west catches the prevailing westerly winds blowing the snow.