

Bethinking of Old Orleans

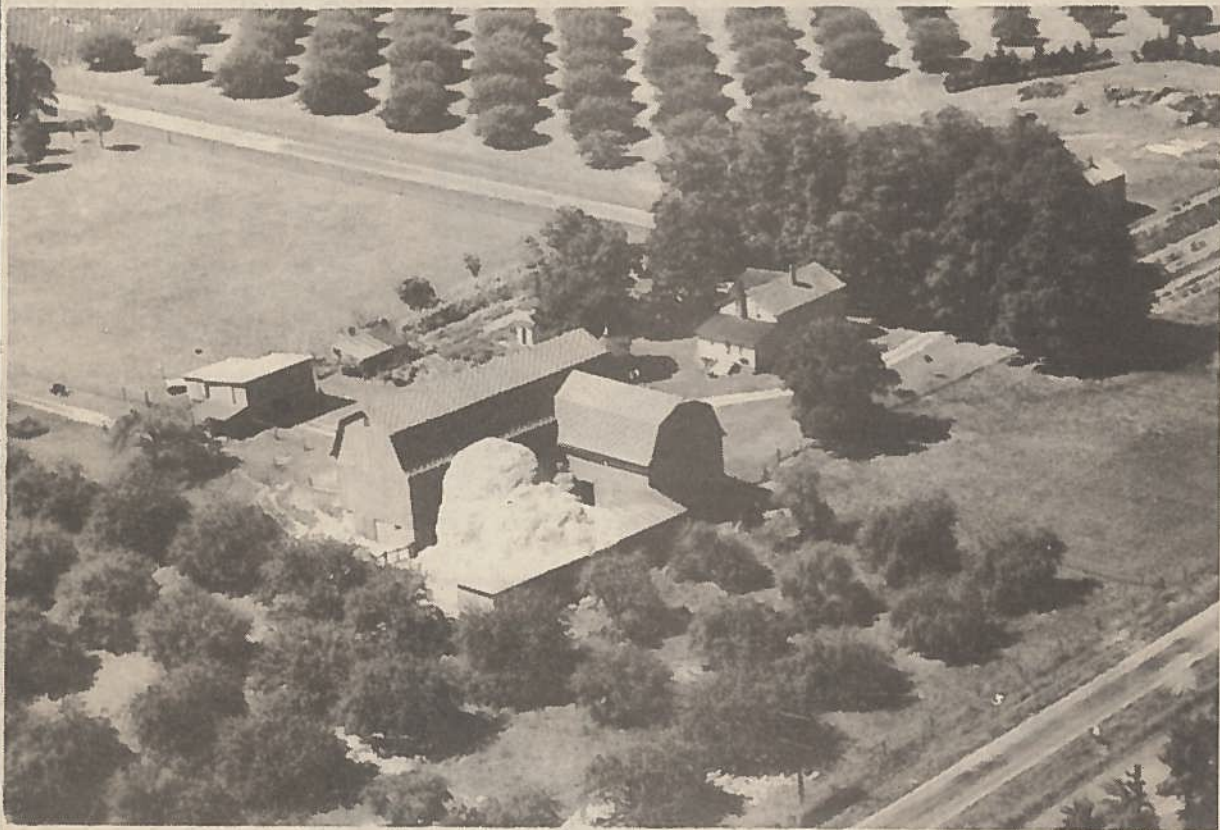
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A THING OF THE PAST



Around four weeks ago there was an article which appeared in this column under the title "Amber Waves of Grain", dealing with wheat harvest. As an addendum to that story showing a grain binder I would like to point out here one of the end results of the grain threshing process - the straw stack. A thing of the past! About in the center of this aerial view taken in the late 1940's, we can see a huge straw stack (3 stories high) in the middle of a barn yard. Straw like this was used for bedding in barn stables, swine houses, sheep bays, etc. Such straw stacks were a common sight forty-five years ago. When threshing took place this time of year, these huge golden yellow piles which were blown out of the threshing machine, appeared on our landscape. By the following spring they were usually pretty well used up, rotted down and weather-beaten. It took some careful maneuvering to blow a stack like this one because you didn't want it to tip over as some did. I remember when the threshing machine or separator came, it was rolled into one side of our barn so the blow pipe which was around 20" in diameter could stick out the opposite side to thus make the straw stack in the barnyard. The separator was powered from a large fly wheel and wide belt from a big tractor positioned a short distance from the barn.

But there is really more to this picture than the straw stack. This was the farmstead of Burnace W. Brace located in the Town of Albion. In the upper left we catch a glimpse of Gaines Basin Road while in the lower right we see County House Road. The camera man pointed his lens southwest. This is typical of what farms were like back when this picture was taken. We note here the

huge wooden gambrel roof barns which are also fast becoming a thing of the past. Incidentally, these barns had some sort of pattern asphalt shingles in contrasting colors which were eye catching. The Brace farm house is also quite clearly seen, along with a chicken coop and another out building. If you look very carefully you can also find the out house, another thing of the past. Along by this there appears a vegetable garden. In the distance and in the foreground, we notice orchards. In all, this picture depicts the kind of diversified farming we used to have in our area.

The 1913 New Century Atlas of Orleans County lists this place as "Sunnyside Farms." Here is what we find about it:

"Sunnyside Farms owned by B.W. Brace, address, Albion, R.F.D. No. 6 contains 102 acres in Lots 16 and 24, Township 14, Range 2, of the Holland Purchase, at the junction of Gaines Basin and County House Roads, and partly in the Town of Barre. Raising and dealing extensively in registered Cheviot sheep, Jersey cattle and Berkshire swine, is the prominent industry of the farm, although fruit culture and general soil products are factors in the farm's revenues. Water supplied by four never-failing wells. Building improvements consist of a residence, 24x50; tenant house, 18x30, with wing, 15x20; main barn, 34x84, with an "L" 26x36; secondary barn, 28x40; pig sty, 18x28; corn crib, 12x24 and silo. The farm's surface is undulating, its soil a heavy clay loam, with a natural drainage. Formerly known as the Paine Farm; the present owner came into possession through his father, in 1910; and has gained an enviable reputation in handling high grade cattle, sheep and swine."