

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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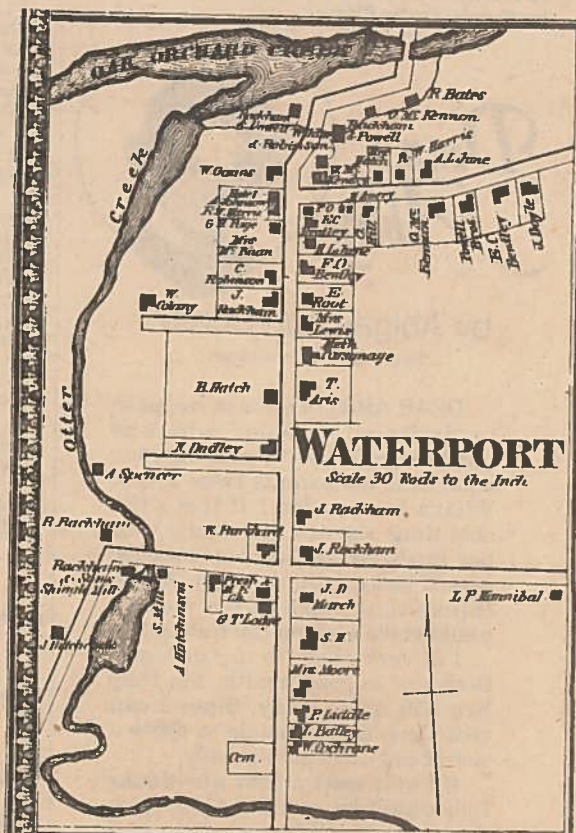
WATERPORT CIRCA 1880



With the water now being somewhat lowered in Lake Alice at Waterport for construction work on the Power Plant, I thought it would be of interest to look at what this area looked like before being turned into a reservoir. The present Waterport dam created by the A.L. Swett Electric Light & Power Co. was completed in August 1920. At that time this area was flooded to create Lake Alice which backs upstream four and a half miles. This project was commenced in 1917 by Albert Swett of Medina who had, over some time, purchased over fifty parcels of property lying along Oak Orchard River. As a result, a new concrete bridge was built across the reservoir at Waterport at a cost of \$70,000. This took the place of a steel arch bridge which had been built in 1900 (Vol XVII No. 29).

Our photo accompanying this story was taken around 1880 and shows a panoramic view of Waterport even before the steel arch bridge was built. Likewise, the map of Waterport from the 1875 Atlas shows the road the way it used to angle down across Oak Orchard Creek (River). The photo shows the mill pond in the foreground and what must have been the Rackham and Powell saw mill. That is the nondescript building in the center. Across the street we see a large complex of buildings, one with a cupola, which are noted on the map as Rackham & Powell. A mill race for power to these buildings shows both on the map and in the photo. Note the small bridge in front of the large building which crosses over the mill race. Up the street, the dark colored building is the Waterport Foundry which the map denotes as Wilder and Robinson. (Vol. XVII No. 12).

By the late 1880's the saw mill was replaced with a newer building, by the Albion Power Company, which then used the mill pond for generating the first electric power in this area. The white building with a flat roof is still there and once served as the Brigden



Memorial Shop. Another building also with a flat roof, is now located north of it and was once used by the Fire Company. Several houses and other buildings which show in the photo, no longer exist.