Bethinking of Old Orleans

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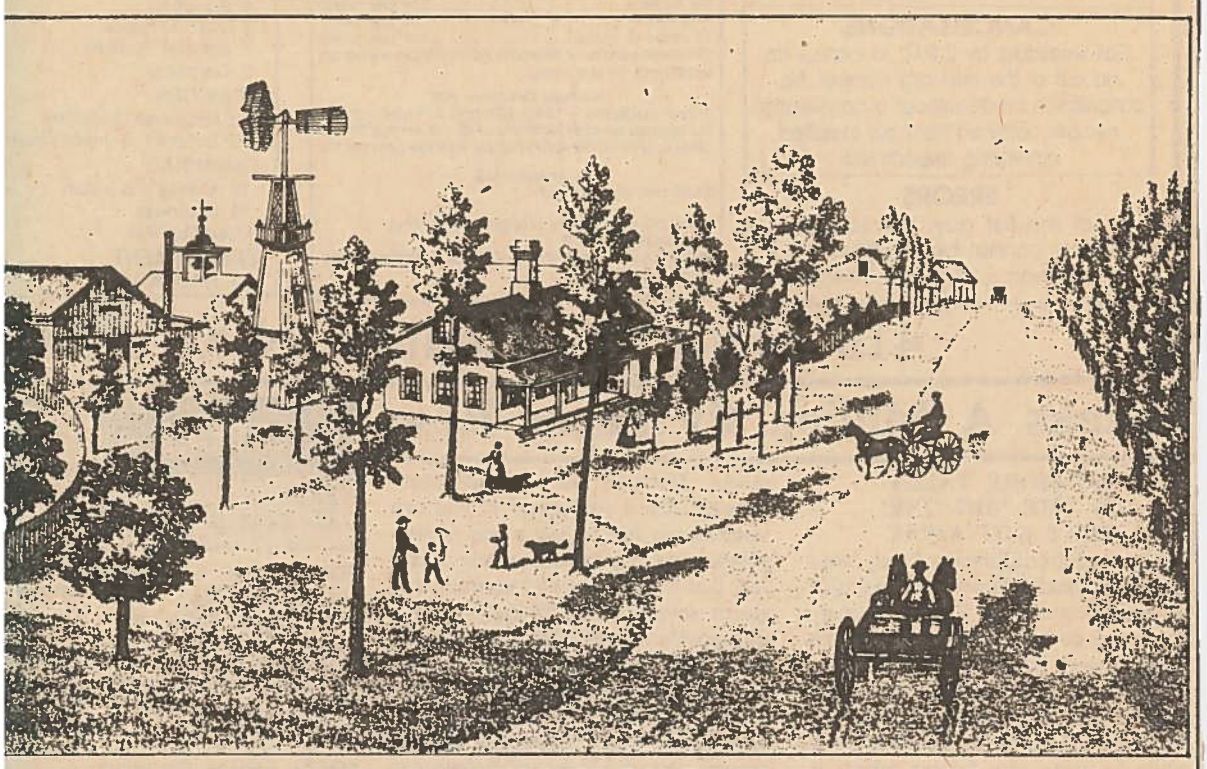
THE VANISHED WINDMILL



FARM RESIDENCE OF HOMER D.WALDO ESQ.BARRE TOWN, ORLEANS CO., N.Y.

THIS ILLUSTRATION shows a KENWOOD PUMPING WINDMILL, mounted on a 40-foot KENWOOD STEEL TOWER, connected to a pump, with a stock watering tank close to the base of the tower. A splendid outfit for stock watering purposes.

OUR WINDMILLS are built of steel practically indestructible; built to require little care, and with little care last forever; but the greatest amount of power for equal velocity of wind, and we believe the Kenwood Windmill will pump more water in a lighter wind than any other windmill made.

PLUS THESE FEATURES

- Improved Free Wheeling
- Easy-Turning Roller Bearings
- Oil Only Once in 5 Years
- Greater Sail Area

Long life roller bearings carry hardened steel shaft. Wheel always turns easily.

Heavy-duty semi-steel double gears run in bath of oil; means longer service.

Ball bearing turntable. Head turns smoothly, easily in lightest breeze.

BORROW THE TOOLS Erect the windmill yourself. We lend you block-and-tackle, rope and wrenches. Enclose deposit of $12.00 when ordering. We refund deposit when tools are returned PREPAID. Shipping weight, 65 pounds. 32 HM 7179—$12.00

Windmills, once a necessity in rural America and so prevelant on local farms have nearly all vanished. These towering landmarks were most comonly used for pumping well water although they were occasionally used for drive shafts. Our upper illustration, taken from the 1879 Illustrated Historical Album of Orleans County, shows the Waldo Farmstead at West Barre. Prominently featured in the landscape is a wooden tower and windmill. The lower portion of this tower which is enclosed, forms a pump or wellhouse.

The 1894-95 Montgomery Ward Catalogue has a windmill advertised, which closely resembles the one at Waldos. "This is a solid wood wheel with the proper lisk to secure strength maintained by iron rods. To put the mill out of motion the vane is swung around parallel with the wheel, which turns edge to the wind and remains firm and motionless. Price complete, except tower, 10 ft. mill $26.00. Will furnish complete tower for 10 ft. mill at 35 cents per foot." The standard tower height was 30 ft.

Our illustration to the lower left is more how I remember windmills to be in appearance. This picture from the 1902 Sears, Roebuck Catalogue shows a 40 foot steel tower with a windmill mounted on the top. Underneath is a well platform and pump connected to the drinking trough for livestock. There was usually a steel ladder to the top for oiling or greasing the gears. The 1902 catalogue states: "It has been found by experience that it requires, on an average, a wind of a velocity of four to five miles per hour to drive a steel windmill, and that the windmill will run, on an average, eight hours per day. The average velocity of wind in the United States is sixteen miles per hour for eight hours per day. From this it is quite evident that a windmill is a profitable investment because where a good windmill is properly erected, it becomes a faithful and reliable servant, upon which you can depend for an average of eight hours of steady work for every day in the year, requiring no feed, no fuel and but very little oil and attention."

The other illustrations taken from the 1941 Sears Roebuck Catalogue advertises a 6½ foot wheel for $29.90. A 24 ft. tower at that time could be purchased also for $29.90. Towers which went up to 40 feet, sold for $62.50.

Most towers which I remember were made of angle iron with four posts like the ones illustrated. However, I can remember a couple of iron towers that were three cornered.

Windmills were often used to pump up or fill large water tanks housed in barns. These tanks could look like big wooden vats or be made entirely of metal and were usually located in hay mows. Hay or straw was used to bank the tanks for insulation to keep the water from freezing in the winter. Once filled, you could have gravity-fed water into drinking troughs or even piped into the farm residence. One hundred years ago there would have been progressive farm families with gravity-fed sinks, tubs and even toilets in their homes with the power of a windmill behind it all. In checking the informational farm sketches in the 1913 atlas I find some interesting references to what I already described.

Under the Town of Albion - The Hallock Homestead, we find: "... two good wells with windmill pumping power and a brooklet through the farm, supply water for all purposes." Under Clarendon - Chestnut Stock Farm (Fred Bowen) there is this: "A good water supply is received from a well, spring in the pasture and a storage tank in the barn furnishes water for the house." Under the Town of Shelby - The Big Maple Tree Farm (Frank Bigford) we note: "A good supply of water is furnished by a well forty feet deep and is pumped to all buildings by windmill power."

I can think of one tower with a dilapitated windmill still in existence on Rt. 237 north of Holley and perhaps two or three other towers with no windmills. Once a common sight these have become vestiges of an era before electric power was prevelent in the rural areas.

It is my pleasure to dedicate this article to Stanley J. Dudek, Chief Administration Office for the Orleans County Legislature.