Bethinking of Old Orleans

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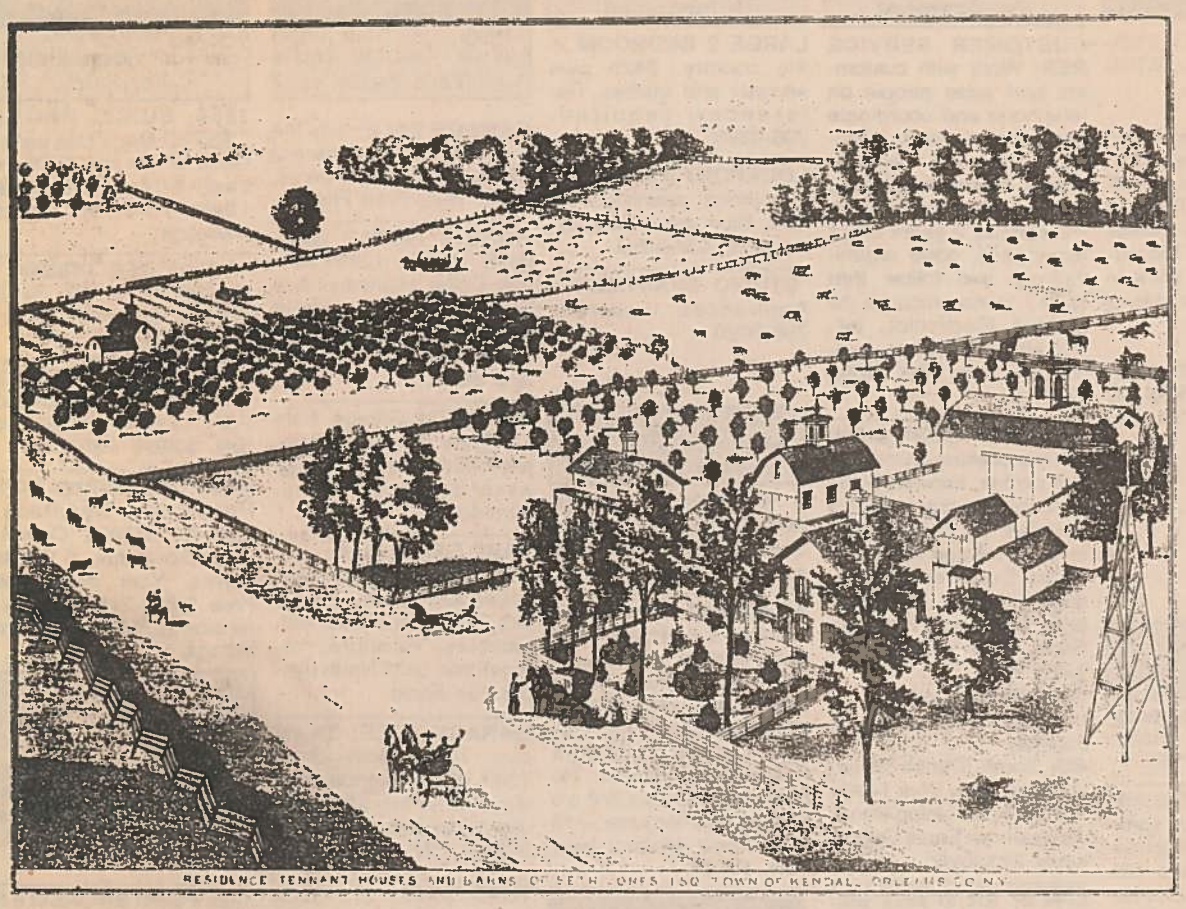
SETH JONES FARMSTEAD



RESIDENCE TENANT HOUSES AND BARNS OF SETH JONES ESQ TOWN OF KENDALL ORLEANS CO NY

In my search for different kinds of houses, I noted this illustration (lithograph) from the Historical Album of Orleans County, N.Y. 1879. The caption on the picture states: "Residence, tenant houses and barns of Seth Jones Esq., Town of Kendall, Orleans Co., N.Y." What a wonderful panaramic scene of Center Road in the northwest part of Kendall. This birdseye view is looking to the south west. It was the term tenant house which first caught my eye however. But indeed, there are more that tenant houses here. Behind the main residence there is a little building which is a scale house. In fact, it says "scale" on the house. Nearby is an outhouse and behind that I believe there is a chicken or hen house. Note also the wind mill which appears to the extreme right in the photo. This indicates they may have had gravity fed water from a holding tank in the barn for running water to the house and also livestock purposes.

Another thing of interest in the picture is the fencing. In a recent column Vol. XIX No. 22, I mention that there were literally fences of all kinds everywhere years ago. Here, the front yard is surrounded with a board fence. In the lower left hand corner of the picture we see a rail fence. And throughout the illustration there are fences surrounding all the fields and orchards. Note the number of cows in one pasture and horses in another. There also appears to be a man on horseback with a dog driving some cattle down the road.

In the distance we can see hay harvest under way in a field. A one-horse dump rake is being operated by a man while two others are loading a hay wagon where the hay has been put into haycocks. A couple of neat orchards also appear in this scene of activity. Surely it presents a feeling of industrialism and the successful farming and prosperity of Seth Jones. Both farms pictured here belonged to Mr. Jones, hence the caption "Tenant Houses." A term perhaps not so frequently used as in the 19th century when there were so many more farms and farmers. A tenant house or houses were necessary back then to provide homes for hired men and their families who worked for the farmer. Having a residence to live in on the farm and work site was certainly one of the benefits a hired man used to get.

I can't help but notice the number of barns in the picture. There are at least four, perhaps two carriage or horse barns and two for other livestock. Like ourhouses, scale houses and hen houses, these big old wooden structures are fast disappearing from our landscape. The scene here tells it all. With the number of animals and loose hay these big old gambrel roofed barns were a necessity and pride of a prospering 19th century farmer like Seth Jones who would have kept them in "tip-top" shape.

Seth Jones was born April 30, 1832 in Kendall on the farm his father David Jones settled on in 1814. In 1860 Seth married Sylvia A. Shelly of Gaines. Seth's mother was Cynthia Whitney, Daughter of Major General Bascom Whitney. The Jones-Whitney monument at Mt. Albion east of the Tower, which depicts a life-sized figural relief image of Hope, is a family memorial. It is a testimony to their status in life. Likwise, a statement of further status and old-time wealth is the Jones Mausoleum (Charnel House) at Mt. Albion south of the Lily pond. It seems that Seth Jones had two brothers who went into business with one another manufacturing mouse traps back in the 1870's. They were Claudius, the oldest brother and David L. the youngest brother. The pair did remarkably well in the sale of their traps which were manufactured in Erie, Pa., so well in fact, that soon people started to say "Build a better mouse trap and the world will beat a path to your door". It is David L. Jones who is buried in the mausoleum at Mt. Albion. These Jones brothers and other siblings were all born on Center Road on the original parcel of land their father settled, which is the farm to the far left in the picture.