

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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RT. 18 OAK ORCHARD RIVER BRIDGE



It was sixty years ago on August 18, 1937 that the dedication of the Rt. 18 bridge over Oak Orchard River took place. The event was one of grand celebration leaving an impact on children and adults alike, for the rest of their lives.

The official opening of this bridge started off with a parade marshalled by Edward Archbald which led to the ribbon-cutting by Marcia Forder and Ralph Brown. Supervisor Ray Mann of Carlton was Master of Ceremonies with such dignitaries present as General John S. Thompson, Assemblyman from Medina and Colonel A.W. Brandt, Commissioner of Highways, Albany, N.Y. Following the Dedication program other events of the day proceeded as follows: 3:00 p.m. a Hill Climb, Land and Water Sports, 6:00 p.m. a cafeteria supper by Ladies Aid Society of Carlton Baptist Church, 6:30 p.m. Concert by Sheret Post Band; 8:00 p.m. Entertainment ending with dancing on the bridge from 9:00 to 12 p.m. with music from Eddie Malin's Band. Perhaps one of the most memorable circumstances of the day was when the horse Dr. Howes was riding died in the parade.

You may wonder what is so special about this bridge which is now closed for renovation. At the time it was built it was the largest single span in western NY stretching 400 feet across Oak Orchard River. It even changed the name of the small Carlton Hamlet it is in. Formerly known as Two Bridges, the name was changed to simply The Bridges. This little hamlet at the juncture of Marsh Creek and Oak Orchard River had at one time two wooden bridges which were later replaced with iron bridges in 1910 and 1922.

With the building of Rt. 18 or the Roosevelt Highway in the mid 1930's it was necessary to cross the Oak Orchard River with a third and more suitable bridge for heavy traffic. The job of construction was first given to the Erie Construction Co. which was unable to complete the project due to problems with quicksand where footers were to be erected. When the company failed, the project was taken over by William J. Gallagher of Medina. It is said that pilings were driven into the riverbed ninety feet and that they still didn't hit anything substantial.

Out photos with the article were taken in 1936. One shows the bridge under construction before both steel archs were complete. This is looking east and shows the Arthur Jary barn in the distance on Rt. 98.

The other photo taken from the roof of the Ward Bamber residence, looks up Oak Orchard River in a southerly direction. In the distance in the Rt. 18 bridge. In the lower left, the 1922 bridge which crosses Marsh Creek and to the far right, the 1910 bridge which also crossed Oak Orchard River. In the foreground is a drive barn which was attached to Bambers store. This was later torn down and is now parking lot space for Narby's Superette. The white building centered in the picture was once known as the Eagle Hotel. This currently part of Harry's boat livery.

The east approach to the Rt. 18 bridge, you will notice, is barren of any buildings. This space is now occupied by Captain's Cove Resort, a Marina and Motel. The house which is now on that property, was moved there by Wallace Forder after Rt. 18 and the bridge had been constructed.