

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XIX

11-12-97

No. 46

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR



It's that time of year when the fragrant scent of apples makes the taste buds tingle. Indeed, apples have abounded in this region since early times. Matthew Dunham, Jr. is credited for having planted the first legitimate apple orchard in Orleans County. This was in the Town of Carlton and the year was 1809. With the right climatic conditions and superior soil, New York State apples from the Ontario Plain are the finest to be found anywhere.

This succulent fruit, over the generations, has served us humans pretty well in a variety of ways. From apple pie to candied, to hard cider and such entertainment as bobbing for apples, local fruit farmers can take a bow. Why, we can conclude that the apple had medicinal uses! "An apple a day keeps the doctor away".

Our photos are from the turn of the century and show the bustle of activity in harvesting and shipping of the fruit around one hundred years ago. One scene in an orchard depicts apple pickers and apple sorters. A sorting rack appears in the center. The reason being, that apples were packed up with choice ones placed on top of the barrels. The man to the far right in the picture, is using a barrel press for popping the head (cover) of the barrel into place. The man on the ladder is obviously wearing an apple picker's bag. A team of horses

and wagon are in the background awaiting the loading of the barrels of apples which have been packed to the extreme left.

The other photo shows the railway dock at the Knowlesville siding. Hundreds of barrels are stacked here for loading onto the cars. A Mr. Pringle is seated on the barrels to the right. A refrigerator car stands on the tracks behind him. Each end of such a R.R. car had a cooler where ice was packed to keep the cars cold in order to prevent perishable fruit from spoiling in transit. These coolers were filled from the top or roof of the car. More cars to the left are on a siding.

This picture, looking east, was taken just east of the present Agway Store at Knowlesville. Back at this time, over 525,000 barrels of apples were shipped yearly, mostly in this manner out of Orleans County.

The 1903 Orleans County Directory lists thirty-two Barrel Manufacturers or Coopers within this county. In time, with changing methods of shipping, the cooperage business met its demise. Remember Johnny Applesseed,
All ye who love the apple;
He served his kind by word and deed,
In God's grand greenwood chapel.

--William Henry Venable