

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## HINDSBURG - A GHOST TOWN



If it were not for the name Hindsburg Road no one today would have an inkling that there was ever a community by that name, let alone that it was once a thriving hamlet on the Erie Canal.

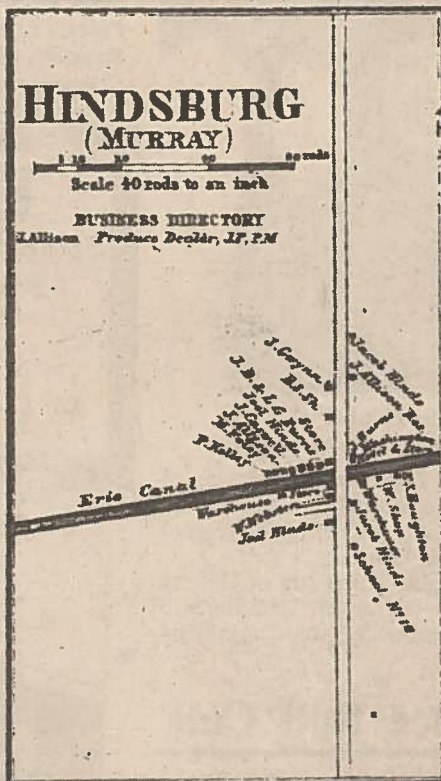
"The Erie Canal, called in contempt, "Clinton's Ditch" by all its opponents, was the wizard's wand that transformed the howling wilderness into fruitful farms while villages, towns and cities sprang up as if by magic."

Hindsburg was a little hamlet which sprang up in the western part of Murray. It was situated on land which was first settled by Jacob Luttenton, who built the first house. In 1829 he sold his land to Jacob Hinds who immediately started to develop a "village". Mr. Hinds built the first warehouse in 1830 and a tavern in 1835. Then in connection with his brother Joel, they built the first store (brick) for selling dry goods and groceries. This opened for trade in 1836. In 1832 with considerable activity taking place here, the Hinds brothers and their neighbors in a public meeting resolved to call their place on the Erie Canal Hindsburg.

It was the place where people from Kendall came to embark upon the canal for transportation. Likewise, people traveling on the canal seeking points north, got off packets at Hindsburg. From here abundant crops of grain, apples and other produce were shipped. With many passengers on those early canal days, Hindsburg business was lively.

By the mid-19th century there were a dozen houses and a number of people found employment in the business activities which the canal boats brought to the community.

Our map from the 1860 Niagara-Orleans County map shows Hindsburg at its peak. The Business Directory shows J. Allison Produce Dealer, JP, PM. For many years Jobez Allison an early settler, was a Justice of the Peace and Supervisor of the Town of Murray. He was also Post Master from 1840-1861. The map includes the names of J.D. and L.G. Burns. The 1869 Orleans County Directory lists Lewis G. Burns as running a grocery and meat market. The directory also notes John Gwynne as being a blacksmith there which we see on the map. Jacob Hinds is likewise in the 1869 directory listed as a farmer. The other names on the map do not appear in the directory. The Pioneer History of Orleans County which was published in 1871 notes "...For some time Hindsburg has not increased in trade or population." The post office was discontinued in 1907 and there was a slow decline in canal oriented structures from the



mid-19th century on.

Little is left of what appears on the 1860 map. Just note the businesses there: two stores, the Washington Hotel and store, two warehouses, one wagon shop, one blacksmith and a school.

Our photo here at Hindsburg was taken on February 7, 1913 during the past period of enlargement to the canal. Looking east with the tow path on the north (left) we see an embankment under construction at the time. The darker building is the brick store which was built by Jacob and Joel Hinds in 1835. The house to the left could be that of Joel Hinds noted on the 1860 map. In the distance we see under construction, the north approach to what was to be the Hindsburg Road bridge over the canal.

As a child in the 1950's, I can remember the old brick store standing in mute disrepair as a reminder of when business must have hummed along the docks of Hindsburg. With demographic changes and decline in canal trade Hindsburg became a ghost town.