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# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## WATERPORT'S OLD HIGH BRIDGE

Shown here looking west is the old high steel arch bridge once located at the end of Main Street in Waterport. It was at least the second bridge across Oak Orchard Creek at this general site. The first bridge was located at the bottom of the valley pictured here and was only accessible by two steep approaches at each end. These inclines made it difficult for horses to pull heavy loads from one side to the other.

About 1898 the steel arch bridge was begun to stretch the span from north to south keeping it all on the level. Having an arch of 355 feet, it was 548 feet long, 68 feet above the water and was built at a cost of \$14,000. On July 7, 1900 it was formally dedicated as the longest and finest steel arch bridge in the state. On that occasion two steam engine-drawn threshing machines were driven onto the bridge, one from each end to demonstrate its durability. Music was provided by the Citizens' Band of Albion and a magnificent display of fireworks was shot off from the center of the bridge at evening. However, all was not rosey with this bridge as it vibrated in high winds and quivered when vehicles of any sort drove over it. The picture suggests this through its seeming delicacy and fine construction.

At any rate it only lasted until 1920 when the Albion Power Co., the white building in the picture next to the dam was done away with. A. L. Sweet of Medina in 1918-1919 constructed the power plant and dam downstream farther. This in turn created a reservoir three miles long which was named Lake Alice in honor of A. L. Sweet's granddaughter. This development necessitated a new and higher bridge to be made upon concrete piles which opened in the Fall of 1920. Following this, a wrecker named Jake Foreman, using an acetylene torch cut the steel span and the bridge fell into the creek. In the Spring before the area was actually flooded to make Lake Alice, he cut it apart and it sold for junk. In 1965-66 the present Waterport bridge was enlarged using the same 1918-1919 piers.