

Bethinking of Old Orleans

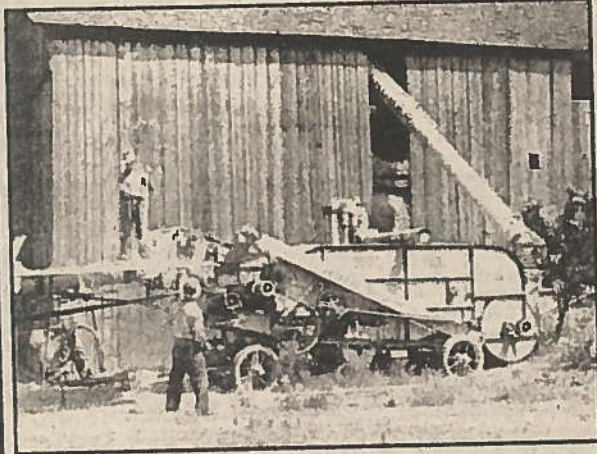
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THRESHING



Our two photos here represent the threshing rig which was once owned by Fred Canham of Eagle Harbor. The 1930 Niagara-Orleans Directory lists: "Canham, Fred grain thresher res. Eagle Harbor Rd." The photos were taken by Fred Holt around 1940 when this equipment was fairly new. Mr. Canham who is pictured next to the large Huber tractor, purchased this equipment in the late 1930's.

The tractor was the power source which ran a large, wide, long, belt to the threshing machine. Several men appear with the threshing machine or separator. One man up on a platform, is using a fork to feed the apparatus. Below him, are two men with bushel baskets. One man is carrying off a full bushel of grain while the other appears to be returning with an empty basket. The straw is being blown into the barn through a hole where the siding has been removed. The straw would later have been used for bedding in the barn stable.

In later years this operation was taken over by Howard Bigger, Mr. Canham's son-in-law.

As a boy growing up in the late 1940's and 1950's, I can fondly remember how exciting it was when Howard Bigger pulled into our yard with his big green tractor and thresher. My Dad and Frank Long would trade off labor with each other on threshing day. I remember Frank and John Long coming to help when we were threshing and then my Dad would go over to Longs when Bigger was there. A number of hands were required to pitch bundles of wheat into the thresher and then carry the wheat to the

grainery bins. In our situation the threshing machine was pulled into the barn with the large pipe sticking out a barn door which blew the straw into a straw stack. You could regulate the end of the blow pipe by ropes to make the straw go where you wanted it. You had to be careful so as not to have the straw stack tip over.

Behind the scene there was the women's work of fixing a big dinner for all the men who had come to help. I can remember my mother crowding a whole bunch of men into our small dining room for such occasions. This was a big job for her to feed these hot and hungry workers. In some cases, a threshing crew would come to a farmstead in the wee hours of the morning and expect breakfast before going to work. I remember my mother grumbling about such a caper as that. At any rate, my memories and these photos go back to a transitional period of time in agriculture. At the same time Mr. Canham was using this apparatus there were also other farmers using combines. A combine simply did in one operation what amounted to several operations if you did it Mr. Canham's way. With the latter method a self binder was first used to cut the grain and tie it into bundles. The bundles then had to be drawn into the barn and stacked out of the rain. Then when the separator came, you did the threshing as we see going on in the photo.

My Dad and Frank Long were among the last to use horse power. They had the older type of farm equipment such as self binders and preferred to use them. With Mr. Bigger's death in 1958, we saw the end of an illustrious era of farming fade from the scene which had for so long been a tradition of neighborly gestures.