

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## COOPER SHOP AT EAGLE HARBOR



The photo presented here was taken in the mid 1880's. It depicts the employees of Charles A. Bennett at his cooper shop which was located south of the canal at Eagle Harbor. Our map from the 1875 atlas shows C. Bennett & Co. under the word canal. Mr. Bennett is shown fourth from the left in the front row. Most of the men in the photo are holding cooper's tools. However, Mr. Bennett is holding a small book in which he appears to be writing something. Posing in this manner, it suggests he's the boss. The only other person identified, is Henry Fountain, the man to the far left. The young man seated in front, appears to be working on a shaving horse (vice) with a draw shave. He is perhaps fashioning a barrel hoop. Many of the men and boys (child labor) are wearing aprons. Almost every person in the photo, of which there are twenty, is wearing a collarless shirt. Notice the splinters and scraps of wood debris in the foreground.

would have been in their peak season now getting hundreds and hundreds of barrels ready for the huge apple harvest and subsequent shipment of the fruit. Apple barrels consisted of staves, hoops and heads. In the 19th century there were what was known and stave and heading mills to manufacture these parts. It is said that a good cooper could set up or assemble 100 barrels in a day. The barrel to the far left has obviously not been completed. The staves were soaked in water so they would bend more easily. Once set with the hoops in place the barrels were quickly dried out by heating them over a cooper's stove to help hold them in shape. The 1903 Orleans County Directory lists close to thirty coopers or barrel manufacturers.

With the tow motor or fork lift and pallet boxes along with changes in transportation, the need for barrels and the old time cooper was no longer a necessity. The 1930 Niagara Orleans Co. Directory only lists one cooper in this county, a Fred Wolfe at 99 E. Bank St. in Albion.

### EAGLE HARBOR

Scale 30 Rods to the Inch.

