

Bethinking of Old Orleans

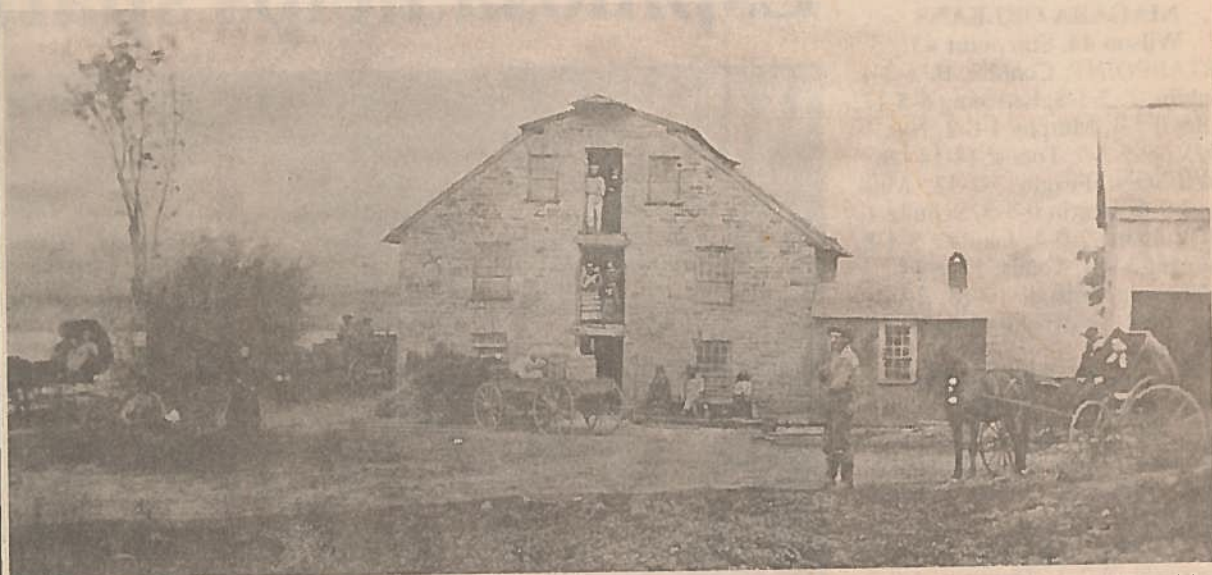
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BALCOM'S MILLS



On Rt. 387 once known as the Fancher-Brockville Road in the Town of Murray there is a little place which was called Balcom's Mills. This would have been located just about one half mile north of Brockville. In 1834 Abner Balcom and Hiel Brockway erected a stone grist and flour mill here on the west branch of Sandy Creek. In 1836 a John Caswell erected a saw mill here as well. But it was always known as Balcom's Mills. Incidentally, Brockville took its name from Hiel Brockway. Both Mrs. Brockway and the Balcom Family were among the early settlers in Murray.

Our photo which accompanies this article was perhaps taken in the 1870's. The stone flower mill shows prominently in the center. Directly in front of it there appears to be a wagon loaded with sacks and two barrels. Another horse-drawn wagon appears to the side of the mill. Along with these there are a couple of carriages and several people spread throughout this scene which gives a feeling of activity. Note the two women standing in the second floor doorway of the mill.

To drive through this area today you would never know that anything like this ever existed there as the old mill is long gone.

In the Pioneer History Of Orleans County by Arad Thomas, we find this information: "Abner Balcom was born in Richfield, Otsego County, N.Y., September 15, 1796, and brought up in Hopewell, Ontario County.

In the fall of 1812, in company with his older brother, Horace, and two other men, he chopped over twenty-two acres on lot one hundred and ninety-two which Horace had purchased, and on which he settled in the spring of 1816, and where he died. This was the first clearing in Murray, and this line between the Ridge and Clarendon.

Mr. Abner Balcom first settled in the Town of Ridgeway, on the farm now or lately owned by Grosvenor Daniels, to whom he sold it and removed to Murray before the canal was made.

In company with Mr. Hiel Brockway, he built the dam and mills on the west branch of Sandy Creek on lot one hundred and ninety-five near which he has ever since resided.

These mills, a sawmill and gristmill, are known as "Balcom's Mills," and in them Mr. Balcom has always retained an interest.

"Mr. Balcom has always been much respected among his fellow townsmen. He has held all the town offices except clerk. He served as Supervisor of Murray 1847-48. He is an influential and consistent member of the Transit Baptist Church, in which he has been deacon.

"His son, Francis Balcom, was among the volunteers who went into the Union Army in the first years of the great rebellion, and was killed in battle while gallantly fighting to save the country which the instructions of his father and the instincts of his own nature had taught him to love."