

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## EARLY SETTLEMENT

As far as Orleans County was concerned, it was almost an unbroken wilderness down to the beginning of the 19th century.

A writer who passed through Western New York in 1792 left us these words: "After I reached the Genesee River, curiosity led me to Niagara, ninety miles - not one house or white man the whole way. The only direction I had was an Indian path, which sometimes was doubtful. At eight o'clock in the evening I reached an Indian town called Tonnoiraunte. It contains many hundreds who live in very tolerable houses which they make of timber and cover with bark ... the next day I pursued my journey nine miles of which lay through a very deep swamp. With some difficulty I got through and about sundown arrived at the Fort of Niagara."

C. Turner in his Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase writes that only two or three log cabins and one framed hut were at Buffalo and three cabins at Lewiston. These were all the improvement in this area at the close of 1799. The sales of land for the Holland Land Co. for all of western N.Y. in 1801 was 40. However, by 1809 sales had picked up to 1,160 for that year.

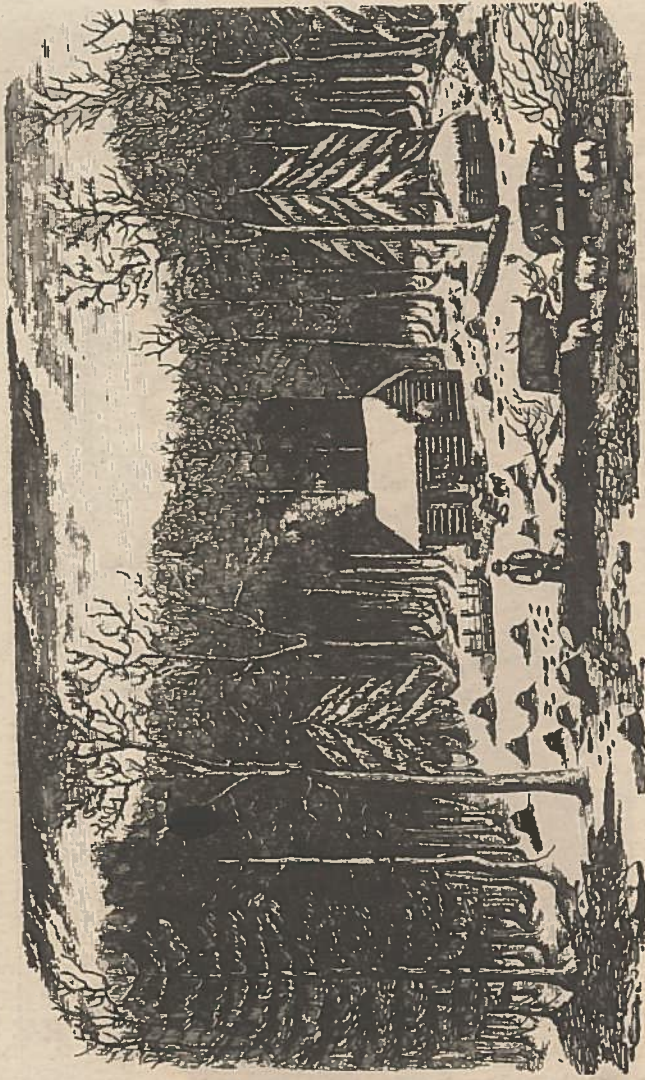
In 1803 Joseph Ellicott, surveyor and agent for the company, laid out a village at the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek which he named Manilla. Now known as Point Breeze, he hoped that a harbor might be established

there for lake transportation. In the spring of 1803 James Walsworth settled there as the first pioneer of Orleans County. He was the first settler on the lake shore between Braddock's Bay and Fort Niagara.

West of Oak Orchard on the Ridge, the earliest settlers were Ezra Barnes, Israel Douglas, Seymour Murdock and Eli Moore. George Houseman settled in what is now Lyndonville in 1809 and a Mrs. Gilbert in Gaines. Alendar Coon came to Shelby in 1810. The first clearing in what is now the Village of Albion was made in 1811.

The first settlers in the county were chiefly natives of New England who possessed a sense of Puritan energy, thrift and economy. They came, sometimes by single families or two or more families in company. They secured their land, built their primitive log houses and cooperated with their neighbors in clearing away sections of the forest. Hardships were normal, money very scarce and markets a great distance. To get grain ground, settlers were obliged to carry it to Genesee Falls until mills were built in the county. Sickiness, especially fever and ague were prevalent and doctors were miles away.

However, buying land came on easy terms from the Holland Land Co. which inspired many young men with pioneer thoughts and independence to conquer this wilderness we



now call home. By the early 1820's there were enough settlers here to demand their own county as the swamp land to the south made it difficult to get to the Genesee County seat in Batavia. By the Act of the N.Y.S. Legislature in November 1824 and amended on April 15, 1825, Orleans County was born.

### 175 Years - Anniversary

To note this birthday for our county, a special historical program will take place at the Orleans County Court House on Saturday, April 15. Beginning at 1:30 p.m. a cake will

be cut and dignitaries will speak. Starting at 2:00 p.m. several local historians will present brief historical accounts of the early years of development. Topics will touch upon the Erie Canal, Albion's first settler, how Albion got to be the county seat, Pioneer Women and early Black History. Terry Heary will at various intervals, provide fiddle or banjo music and the afternoon will conclude with a performance of the Community Mass Choir ending at 4:00 p.m. The public is most cordially invited to attend this celebration which is open free to all.