

Bethinking Of Old Orleans

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6-15-00 R&R in 1890

Rest and relaxation is the theme and sentiment of this photo from the summer of 1890. The picture was taken at Oak Orchard-On-The-Lake of the Signor-Wage cottage which was built in 1883. The man standing in front of the railing holding his hat was Judge Isaac Signor. The child sitting on the railing next to him is his daughter Beatrice Signor (Burrrows). The girl standing on the railing is the older daughter Dorothy Signor (Blake). The boy sitting on the railing at the corner is the son Charles Signor who was ten years old at the time. Both Isaac and Charles were lawyers and served at different points in time as Orleans County Judge.

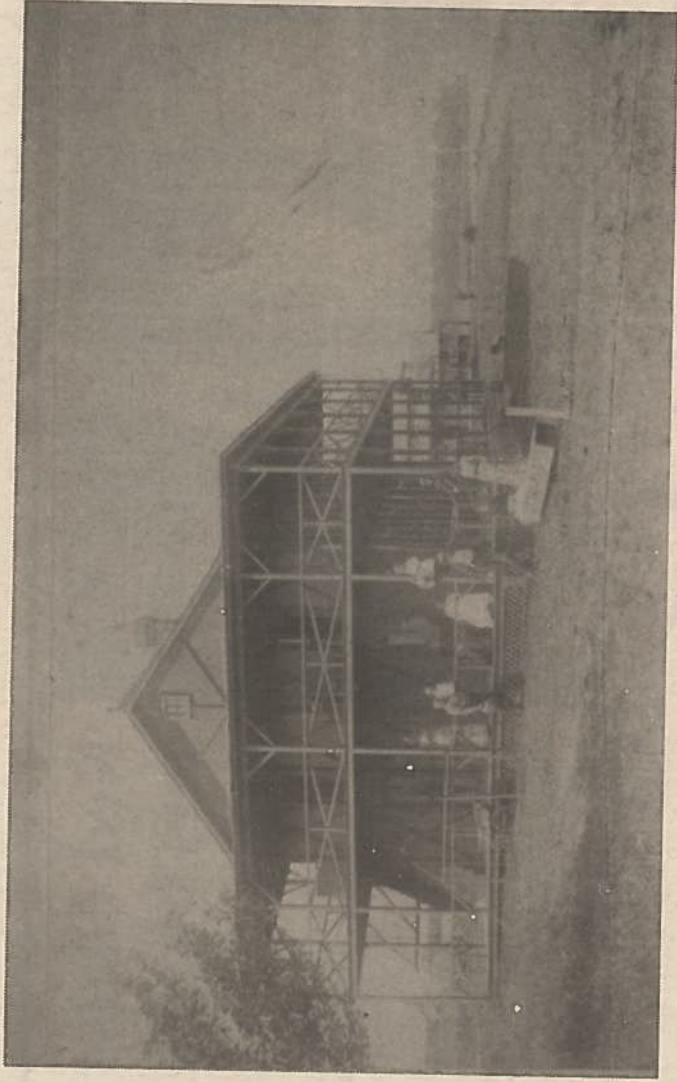
This was the first cottage built at Oak Orchard-On-The-Lake. Judge Signor was a law partner of Edwin Wage. The two families built the cottage as a summer retreat. The Signors had the west half, the Wage family the east half. There was no interior stairway to the second floor. Instead, there were two outside staircases off the back porch to each side upstairs. One shows to the left. To the

far right we can just catch a glimpse of the shore line of Lake Ontario.

By the last quarter of the 19th century people had time for rest and relaxation. Recreational architecture began to dot our shore line. Fifty years before this picture was taken it was still a matter of taking care of utilitarian needs. As times progressed and people became more prosperous, architecture ultimately reflected the improvements.

The Signor-Wage cottage was constructed in the Stick Style which emphasizes the framing and structural elements that gives a feeling of being airy. Balloon-type framing lent itself well to this form of architectural integrity in the Stick Style. The skeletal aspects of framing suggest a rustic quality as noted with the angular bracing and brackets. Matched boards or siding were nailed to the inter framework rather than on the outside. Surely the style is well named Stick for its appearance. It was most typically used in our region for resort architecture as it lent itself so well to seasonal dwellings.

Eventually the Lake Ontario shore line



eroded back the spacious lawn shown in the photo up to within inches of the cottage. As a result, it was torn down in the early 1950's.

Our photo certainly reflects a certain amount of social status and class which these people had attained. They were among a few who could afford a life style like this at the time. We must remember that in 1890 Orleans County's major occupation was farming with innumerable small farmssteads. It would have been unusual for anyone except people of white collar vocations to own such property as this one hundred ten years ago.