

# Rethinking of Old Orleans

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## ELLICOTT'S MILL

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Our picture, taken ninety years ago, shows Ellicott's Mill which was located east of Eagle Harbor on the Erie Canal. A lane off the Albion-Eagle Harbor Road just west of Otter Creek led back to this large structure with a high gambrel roof. The mill stood on a high stone cellar foundation immediately adjacent to the canal bank. Note the horse to the extreme left which is standing on the canal bank.

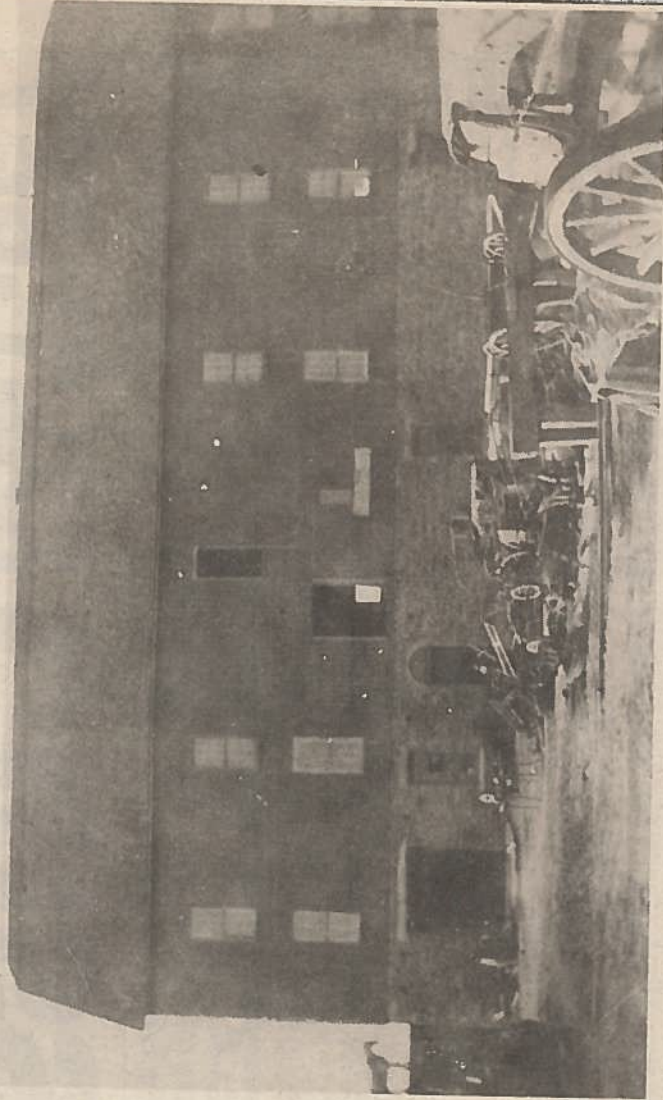
Landmarks of Orleans County states: "In 1845 Collins & Beach built a flour mill on the bank of the canal, one fourth of a mile east of the village (Eagle Harbor). It was carried on by different firms until 1867 when it burned. Another was built on the same site, but this was destroyed by fire two years later. In 1890 Frank Ellicott erected on the site a churn and washing machine factory."

The 1894 Orleans County Directory lists Frank Ellicott as a churn manufacturer at Eagle Harbor. In the 1903 Orleans Directory he is again listed at Eagle Harbor as running a grist, saw and planing mill. It's noted also

that he was a manufacturer of churns as well as being an apiarist with 40 colonies of bees. Among the artifacts at the Cobblestone Museum's Farmers Hall is an old wooden churn which was made at Frank Ellicott's Mill. It is known as a cradle churn as it rocks back and forth in a cast iron track under human power. Essentially it is a rectangular box on rockers with a wooden lid. Inside, there are two wooden grills for the cream to slosh through for thickening it into butter.

I believe our photo of this mill was taken in 1910 after it has been appropriated by New York State when the canal was widened and made deeper. What appears to be a heap of junk in the foreground are items which must have been moved out of the structure so it could be razed. I can clearly see in this pile a gasoline engine or two and a blacksmith's forge. Certainly this equipment would have been used in manufacturing purposes at such a factory.

How much more self-sufficient were all our communities years ago. There were



innumerable small businesses like this where local people were employed. Being situated on the canal, Mr. Ellicott also had a direct means for shipping his products out of the area. It's interesting that he was also and

apiarist. Living in such a large fruit-growing region, farmers of course, needed bees for pollination. This was no doubt, a side line income for him, yet a valuable service for fruit growers especially apple producers.