

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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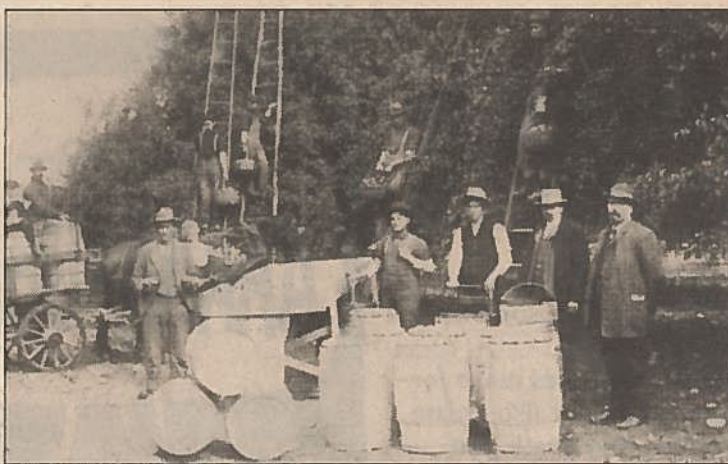
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'Tis the season for apples

Our photo is taken from the 1905 Souvenir Book of the Village of Albion. It shows a group of apple pickers, sorters, packers and haulers from a local fruit farm at the time.

Here is what the 1905 booklet had to say about fruit:

"The climate and soil of Orleans County are especially adapted to the growth of fruit, particularly apples. This industry has been largely developed. During the first half of the century, fruit growing, while not the chief occupation of the farmers, gradually increased and it became thoroughly established that herein lay a source of profit. About 1845, when the demand for winter apples in the new western states became active, the farmers of Orleans began grafting their trees with choice varieties and planting new orchards. From that time on, there has been a steady and rapid increase in the orchard acreage. The fruit has flourished exceedingly in most parts of the county, the climactic influence of the winds, which from the north, northwest and northeast, pass over open water before striking this territory, becoming thereby tempered, and raising the average of winter temperature, and at the same time serving as protection against late spring and early autumn and autumn



frosts. The atmosphere of the county is also comparatively dry and the rainfall light, while the cool autumn winds from the lake region retard the ripening of winter fruits, greatly enhancing the value of the apples. As a rule, farmers have found excellent market for their apples at remunerative prices.

For the past 10 years, there has been shipped from the county an average of about 525,000 barrels of merchantable apples each year, the average price being \$1.50 per barrel.

In addition to this there is a large quantity of the inferior fruit that is evaporated and shipped in packages of about 50 pounds each, and the poorest fruit is manufactured into cider in large quantities.

There now are several large vinegar factories in the county. The total receipts from the apple crop each year will average about \$1 million, although the crop varies largely from year to year."

The article above indicates a quantity of apples were evaporated (dried) and shipped. Indeed, there were many commercial dry houses in Orleans County back then. In fact, the 1903 Orleans County directory lists by name a total of 46 evaporators. Without electric refrigeration, the drying of fruit such as apples was a prominent means of preservation. This method was not only done of course commercially but also just for home use. The following is a poem taken from the Albionesis, a publication created by pupils of the Albion

High School in 1905. Perhaps this gives us a flavor of dried fruit:

Dried Apple Pies

I loathe! abhor! detest! despise!
Abominate dried apple pies;
I like good bread, I like good
meat
Or anything that's fit to eat;
But of all poor grub beneath the
skies,
The poorest is dried apple pies.
Give me the tooth-ache or sore
eyes
In preference to such kind of
pies.

The farmer takes his gnarliest
fruit,
'Tis wormy, bitter and hard to
boot;
They leave the hulls to make us
cough,
And don't take half the peelings
off;
Then on a dirty cord they're
strung,
And then from some chamber
window hung;
And there they serve a roost for
flies,
Until they are ready to make
pies.
Tread on my corns or tell me
lies,
But don't pass me dried apple
pies.