



## *Bethinking of Old Orleans*

Vol. XXV

By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County Historian

No. 47

### **Old Spencer Mill**

11/21/03

Today's photo, shot circa 1910, is identified on the back in old handwriting as "end view of Old Spencer Mill."

Other information subsequently added to the photo indicates "Spencer woodworking mill on Otter Creek at Waterport made neck yokes, whiffletrees, etc." A rubber stamp also includes the photographer's advertising, "W.C. Eaton, General and Commercial Photography. Farm Life, Buildings, Groups, Children, Stock, Post Cards, etc. Medina, NY, Route 10."

In the foreground we see water babbling over rocks in Otter Creek. Facing south to southwest, Eaton pointed his camera toward the old working mill in a thicket. Perhaps this picture was taken in late November.

The mill, a wooden building, stands on a basement made of field cobblestone. At the time the picture was taken, it appears the mill was abandoned.

The 1869 Orleans County Directory lists: "Spencer, Alanson, (Carlton) ... wood turner,

bridge builder, carpenter, millwright and farmer."

The 1887-88 Orleans County Directory also notes: "Spencer, Alanson, po Waterport, wood turner." Likewise, the 1894 directory states "Spencer, Alanson saw mill, Waterport." The A. Spencer mill is also indicated on the 1875 Orleans County Atlas.

Otter Creek, like many other creeks in the 1800s, provided waterpower for a variety of local business needs. The same water which had ground wheat into flour at Danolds Mill north of Eagle Harbor turned wood into whiffletrees at Waterport.

As the information indicates, Alanson Spencer was providing a variety of wooden products including bridge building — truly a necessary business when we depended upon the local manufacturers for all our needs.

Alan Spencer (1811-1901) and his wife, Sarah Spencer (1813-1877) are buried in the Waterport Cemetery just slightly upstream from where his mill was located.