



# Bethinking of Old Orleans

2-7-03

Vol. XXV By C.W. Lattin, Orleans County historian No. 6

## Ice Harvest

Our photo here was taken in January 1895. It shows the old Mill Pond off East State Street in Albion. At the time the building in the picture was an icehouse at the end of East Park Street, which was operated by the Shourds Brothers. In fact, George W. Shourds is the man pictured to the far left.

The man in the foreground is holding on to an ice plow, which would have been pulled by horse. This device was used to make grooves into the ice around 14 inches apart crossing the pond east and west. Once completed in this way these grooves were then crisscrossed north and south.

Once the pond of ice was marked out the men in the middle ground, shown here with ice saws, then cut out cakes of ice 14 inches square by whatever the thickness of the ice was at the time. Fourteen inches thick or more was the standard size. Another man in the picture is holding a pike pole for pulling in

cakes of ice once they were cut. The icehouse appears to be empty in our photo. By the time it was filled with ice packed in sawdust, the Shourds Brothers had a supply to last through the summer and fall. At least twice a week they delivered ice to customers in Albion when refrigeration was the icebox.

John W. and George W. Shourds also ran a coal yard at the foot of Platt Street off the Erie Canal. Their sheds were pictured in last week's column.

The harvesting of natural ice was a big business from the 1830s to the 1930s. With electric refrigeration the ice dealers were put out of business. Older people in the village will remember the Davis and Stevenson Ice Pond off West Avenue in Albion. The Mill Pond where the Shourds Brothers operated was the power source for a flour mill which was located at the canal where the West Branch of Sandy Creek flows under East State Street.