

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



## EARLY COUNTY HISTORY -- PART I

From an Orleans County Physical and Historical map published by William P. Munger in 1934 we find the following accounts of early beginnings here:

"In the dim past an Eskimo-like people lived in the Orleans county region. Many centuries before the time of Columbus, the Algonquin Indians came into western New York. They were in turn driven out by the Iroquois groups that had migrated from the south west. Some time during this period various earthworks or defenses were erected by one or the other of the warring peoples. The remains of one of these are found in the town of Shelby and consist of two embankments about 12 feet apart, surrounding about 3½ acres of land. Under the leadership of Hiawatha and Dekanawida, the Iroquois League of Five Nations was formed by the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas, of which the Senecas were the most western tribe. The Senecas conquered, or more properly speaking exterminated, the Kah-Khwas, Neutrals or Eries, as the people were variously called who lived east and south of the Niagara River. From that time the Senecas occupied Orleans county as a part of their territory.

From the time of the advent of the French missionaries on the Niagara River in 1626, Frenchmen and other Europeans were not uncommon in western New York. In 1669 LaSalle skirted the Lake Ontario shore of Orleans county. In 1678 French emissaries came over land from the Niagara country to see the Seneca chiefs who were located at their principal village, which was near the present site of Victor in Ontario county.

During numerous Indian, French, English and American colonial incursions, war parties and soldiers were frequently passing through Orleans county on a trail that closely followed our present Ridge Road.

Soon after the acknowledgment of the colonists independence by Great Britain, a dispute arose between Massachusetts and New York as to the title of the land in the western part of the present state of New York. In December, 1786, a convention of commissioners in session at Hartford, Connecticut, agreed that the sovereignty of the disputed region should remain with New York, and the ownership of the soil with Massachusetts. There was one exception, however, New York was to retain the ownership as well as the sovereignty of a strip a mile wide along the Niagara River. This was subject, however to the Indian proprietorship which had been recognized by the general government. A meridian was run from milestone 82 in the New York and Pennsylvania boundary line north through Seneca Lake and Sodus Bay. This meridian, which bounded the Massachusetts claim on the east, was called the pre-emption line."

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