

TOWNSHIP OF CLARENDON

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The following is from an article published in February 1935 out of the Albion Midlander.

"Like several villages in Orleans County, Clarendon originated because of the water power to be obtained on this site.

"Milling privileges were an important factor in determining the location of pioneer communities, so when Eldredge Farwell, then living on the Ridge Road, came upon the waterfalls at this point, while searching for a horse that had strayed away, he immediately saw its possibilities and purchased 200 acres where Clarendon village now stands.

"In 1811 he built his house, the first in the township, and proceeded to build a sawmill and a gristmill.

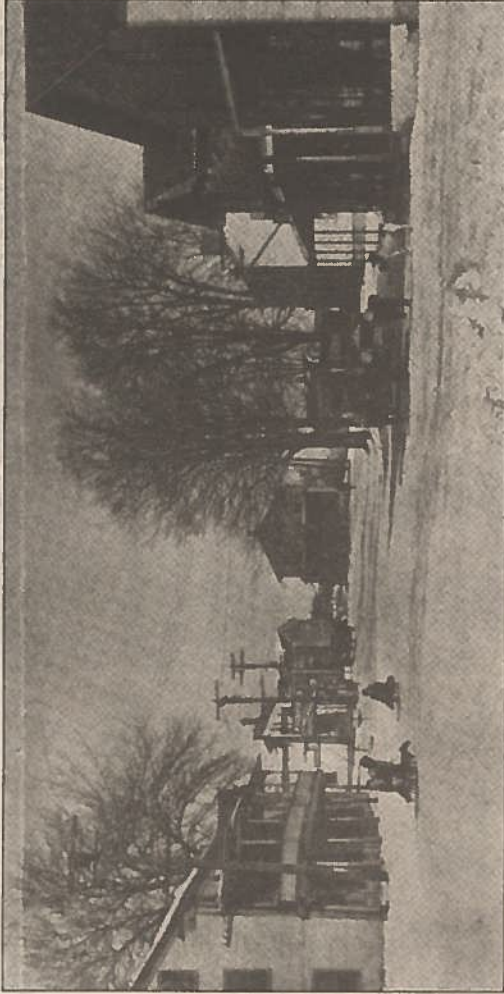
"The basic businesses of a self-sustaining community followed shortly after and this hamlet became known as Farwell's Mills. Up until the opening of the Erie Canal,

however, the main industry was connected with lumbering off the virgin forests.

"An interesting bit of early Clarendon history is to be found in the century old record book of the Town of Clarendon. This large volume, said to be the oldest of its kind in the state, is preserved with the official documents of Town Clerk Floyd M. Gillis. Its musty pages contain the names of officers and records of the township of Clarendon since 1821.

"One of the most quaint entries to be found in this book is the record of earmarked cattle. Before fences were built on the farms surrounding Clarendon, cattle were earmarked by their owners and the particular symbol recorded opposite the name of the owner. Thus we find notations such as 'Abner Hopkins, a square cross on left ear and a hole through the right'.

"Clarendon was on the line of one of the earliest surveys for the Erie Canal. Had the



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canal gone through at this point, the hills and bluffs roundabout would have necessitated a system of locks and might have made Clarendon the same metropolis that Lockport is today.

"The rock formation of the Clarendon country made this route too costly to construct so the less direct route to the north was adopted.

Clarendon had to be content with the benefits which came with the completion of the canal.

"Goods could be exchanged more advantageously, however, and Clarendon farmers found an opportunity to ship to the mills of Rochester and to seaboard, their so-called Genesee wheat.

"The village became a well-known stopping place for teamsters on their way to and from canal shipping points with the result that the taverns and stores did a thriving business.

"When the railroads were

built on either side of Clarendon in 1851 the growth of the village was definitely limited. It could never become a metropolis. Still, business was good in the milling and tanning trades, more modern sawmills and gristmills were erected and did a good business.

"As the timber was removed, water power gradually diminished and in 1857 a steam engine was added for use in times of low water.

"About 1873 the mercantile

affairs of Clarendon were given a decided impetus by the advent of two young men possessed of a surprising amount of ambition as well as vision. These young men, Ogden S. Miller and Walter T. Petengill, purchased and remodeled the mills, added machinery for cider and vinegar manufacture, and erected an extensive evaporator which employed over eighty men and women.

"A short time later a planting mill was added to the sawmill and the proprietors purchased large tracts of timber in Tonawanda Swamp. For many years these men carried on a successful business in the various lines of endeavor, and were without doubt largely responsible for the high degree of prosperity which Clarendon enjoyed at the time."

The picture from 1935 shows its business section looking north in the hamlet of Clarendon along the Holley Byron road.