

# Erie Canal feeder

9-13-12

When the Erie Canal was constructed, a supply of water was needed to fill and keep the required level in this section (60 mile level from Lockport to Rochester). As the flow of Oak Orchard Creek was insufficient, a dam was built across Tonawanda Creek near the Indian Reservation and a waterway dug connecting the two creeks, thereby turning the surplus water of Tonawanda into the Oak Orchard. A dam was also built across Oak Orchard Creek just south of Maple Ridge Road at Medina forming a reservoir known as the Big Pond.

Many years ago ice was harvested on that pond. From the Big Pond a raceway was dug along the west side of Shelby Street (now Main) to a point in the vicinity of the present Village Hall where it turned east under Main Street. It then split, one branch turning north to discharge into the canal, the other continuing east across Church and Orient Streets. This raceway was used to help power the Starr Mill (see map) after which it joined a lower race which eventually ran into the canal.

To turn these raceway waters into the canal a slip or branch was dug from the Erie south, crossing East Center Street to the raceway where gates

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were located which controlled the retention or discharge of water into the canal when required. This branch canal was of sufficient capacity to float loaded boats of the size then in use.

After the completion of the Barge Canal, the State did away with the canal feeder from the Tonawanda Creek and gradually the raceway through Medina was filled, leveled and disappeared.

Feeder Road in the Town of Shelby through the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge ran along the feeder from the swamp to the canal. Our map shown here from the 1875 Niagara Orleans Atlas shows the feeder and raceways in Medina mentioned above.

The map includes Main Street on the west to Oak Orchard River on the east, likewise Starr Street on the south to East Center Street on the north. It is amazing the amount of open water ways that used to exist in this one block area.

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