

Bethinking of Olde Orleans: The Transit Line

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Transit Road is so called because it is a transit line which was run with a transit instrument in connection with astronomical observations. This is a superior device to the magnetic needle in the surveyor's compass as it would have too many variations for running a meridian line. The transit line is the only straight boundary line which cuts entirely across our county. It divides the towns of Kendall, Murray and Clarendon on the east from the towns of Carlton, Gaines, Albion and Barre on the west.

It is called the East Transit to distinguish it from a similarly surveyed meridian passing through Lockport, which is called

the West Transit.

The laying down of this line was a slow and laborious operation. It involved nothing less than felling a strip of timber three or four rods wide from the Pennsylvania line to Lake Ontario to give unobstructed range to the miniature telescope of the transit. This required, besides three surveyors, a considerable force of axe men.

On most of the line all hands camped where night over took them in the unbroken wilderness. All the summer

and autumn of 1797 was consumed in running the first eighty miles of the transit meridian, there being about thirteen miles remaining undone on the 22nd of November.

The surveyor in charge of this work was Joseph Ellicott. He was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1756. In 1770 the family removed to Maryland and founded Ellicott's Mills on the Patapsco River.

Joseph was taught surveying by his brother, Andrew, who was afterward Surveyor-General of the United States and professor

of mathematics at West Point. He assisted the latter in laying out the city of Washington. The remaining years of his business career were chiefly spent in the service of the Holland Land Company.

The photo accompanying this article shows the historic marker denoting the transit line. It is located in the Town of Murray on the southeast corner of the intersection of Transit Road and Ridge Road (104) and states the following:

THE TRANSIT LINE
This boulder marks the boundary line between **THE HOLLAND PURCHASE** and **THE CONNECTICUT TRACT** as established in 1798
Erected By **Orleans Chapter D.A.R.**
1927

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