

The year of no summer — 1816

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Guest Writer

As we look forward to warmer weather, flowers, gardens, and backyard picnics, readers might want to consider another historic period of bad weather, the "cold summer of 1816." The War of 1812 was finally over and hardy pioneer families were making their way into the unbroken wilderness we now call Orleans County.

After a long winter, the settlers were busily planting corn between the

Bethinking of Olde Orleans

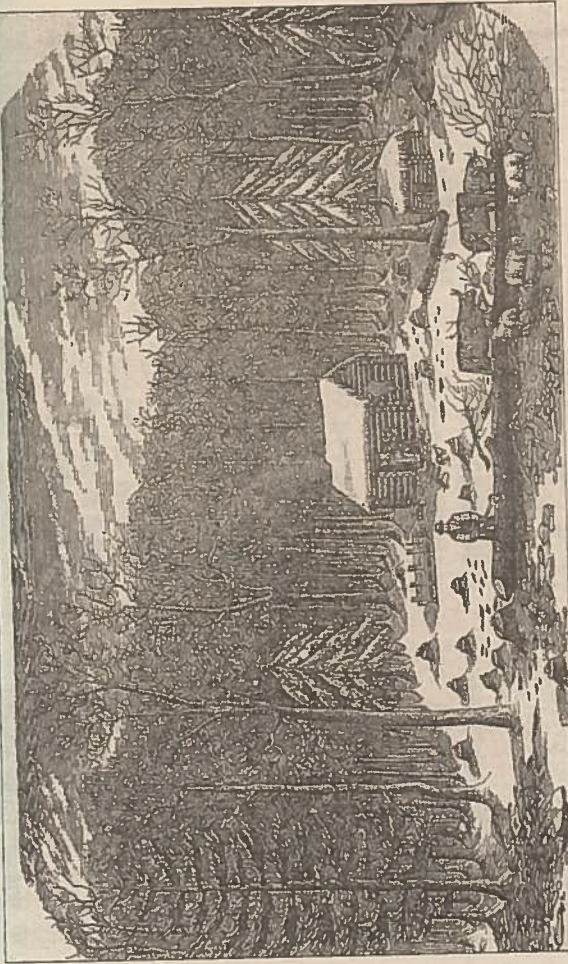
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stumps of the clearings they had made around their log cabins. Wheat had been planted the previous fall and it too was ready to leap sunward as warmer weather approached.

However, Mother Nature had other plans. A June frost killed the corn. In fact there was a hard

frost every month of that growing season and it snowed each month except for July and August. The wheat crop was seriously hampered well below what would have been expected. Cattle starved to death. Many pioneer families had only potatoes, butter and milk to consume for weeks on end. The scarcity of food forced some to travel by oxen on bad roads 30 or 40 miles to some of the older settlements, where prices were very high due to the shortages, and bring back food for their neighbors.

Compared to the



hardships of those times, we are fortunate indeed to live in relative comfort

and plenty. While we cannot predict what kind of summer we will have,

we certainly hope it will be warmer than the cold summer of 1816.