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Bethinking of Olde Orleans

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Clements Bean Planter

Shown here around 130 years ago is Henry Clement of the Town of Carlton with his bean planter. Mr. Clement invented and made the first bean planter in Orleans County. He owned and operated a small water powered sawmill on Marsh Creek near the Bills Road bridge. Here he sawed logs into boards, made shingles, headings and staves. The latter two products were used by local coopers for assembling the thousands of barrels each season for the shipment of apples.

Pea beans were an important and major farm product years ago. Recognizing the value of time and significance of more acreage, Henry Clement with his inventive mind and woodworking ability, set out to improve one phase of agriculture. His bean planters were made mostly of wood with the exception of iron bracing and an iron axle. The planters were pulled by two horses while the driver walked behind steering the planter into the earth. A marking device was attached which left an impression in the earth to follow for the next trip across the field. Two seed boxes were attached to the bean planter frame so that two rows could be planted at once. As the bean planter was pulled a ratchet mechanism allowed a few beans to be sown into the ground in evenly spaced intervals. Henry Clement manufactured three different models of similarly designed bean planters. One of these

models is on display in Farmers Hall at the Cobblestone Museum Complex in Childs. Also displayed at Farmers Hall are several other bean related machines including a bean puller used in harvesting, a bean polisher used in cleaning beans after they were threshed and a bean picker used for sorting out beans (beans with imperfections) which were sometimes cooked and used for feeding swine.

When pea beans were widely raised there were many beaneries in the county which processed them. Once the beans were ready for harvesting, they were pulled with the pods on the vines. Then they were stacked in small piles and allowed to dry. They were drawn to the barn where a bean thresher was used to separate the pods and beans from the vines. Sometimes, if a threshing machine was not available, the beans were piled on the barn floor and threshed by driving horses over them in a circular fashion thus stomping the beans from the vines. If this process was used, the beans were then winnowed from the undesirable remains. Threshing beans was always considered the most dirty, dusty job a farmer had to do.

Pea beans were a household staple of food and once soaked to soften, could be used for delicious baked bean dishes.

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