

Clarendon Lime

5-23-14

The advertisement displayed here from the 1903 Orleans County Directory is one of the last vestiges of local lime production. Aside from a very few dilapidated lime kilns in the southern portion of Orleans County, this once important industry has totally vanished.

In "History of Clarendon" by David Sturges Copeland, published in 1888, we find two paragraphs on Clarendon Lime:

"Rising above the hill, to the north of Albion Street, is a puff of smoke that moves as the wind may take it. Out of the Murphy lime-kiln it comes, the fire-bricks at first placed there by Ira Phillips before the rebellion. Who can tell the tons of lime-rock this open-mouthed furnace has taken in since that day? Who can figure up the cords of wood it has yearly consumed? And still the burning goes on, increasing with building and population, and shortly another kiln will be needed."

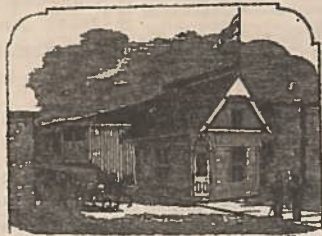
"According to Michael Murphy, his lime-kiln, up to December, 1888, sold 22,000 bushels of lime, and the fires are still burning, and will all winter, if the season permits. For one year this is an excellent showing, and some idea can be formed of the value of this product when we figure the price of twenty cents at the kiln and twenty-five cents a bushel when delivered; and this requires teams daily to supply the demand, which is increasing yearly, demonstrating that Clarendon has a mine of wealth in lime."

With the advent of Portland Cement in the late 19th Century, the old lime kilns met their demise. Lime Kiln Road in Barre once had several working lime kilns on it, hence the name.

Incidentally, the world kiln may be pronounced "kil" without the sound of the N.

These were stone structures generally around 12 feet square and perhaps 20

Lime and Masons' Materials.



Planing and Flour Mills.

JOHN MURPHY

Manufacturer and Dealer in

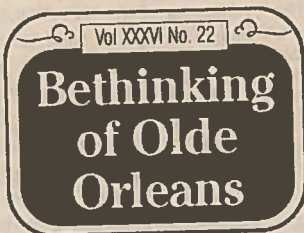
Lumber, Lath, Shingles, Coal and Wood.

HOLLEY, N. Y.

Manufacturer of the Celebrated Clarendon Lime

All orders addressed to Holley, N. Y. will receive prompt attention.

All kinds of Flour—Buckwheat, Wheat and Graham. Cash Paid for all kinds of Grain.



to prevent damage to the interior of the stone walls. Frequently these kilns were built into the side of a hill or with an earth ramp.

The Murphy Kiln at Clarendon was built into a hill. This gave oxen and horses an incline to draw wagon loads of stone up to the top for charging the kiln. The kilns were open at the top with a small opening at the base. Large hunks of stone were first stacked over cord wood, in a vaulted or keystone formation, in the bottom of the kiln. All the rest of the lime stone to be burned (smaller pieces) was placed into the kiln from the top. The vaulted stones held everything up in place so wood could be constantly stoked under this into the kiln by a man called a "tender."

Once the fire was ignited, the kilns burned up to as many as 10 cords of wood over a 24-hour period. Needless to say, the tender was a busy man. Once fired, the kiln produced tremendous heat — nearly 2000 degrees — causing the lime stone sticking up out of the top to become glowing red hot. This was the sign the firing was complete. Two or three days later, men could then remove the cooled, burned stone. It was then

came out of the kiln in rock form. For some purposes it was then crushed.

Quick lime had various uses. Slaked (dissolved) it was used as the bonding agent with sand to make mortar. In liquid form it became white wash. Gas works used lime sludge to purify manufactured gas so it would burn brighter. Quick lime cones were used in foot lights' over gas jets on stages in theaters to enhance the light, hence the term "lime light." Farmers mixed it with manure for fertilizer on fields. And yes, every outhouse had a bucket of quick lime in it years ago. Here it was used as a cleansing agent, which kept the smell down.

What is really interesting is that there are incidental references to lime in the Old Testament suggesting it has been around for a long time.

"The people shall be as in lime kilns, as thorns cut down that are set on fire." Isaiah 33:12

Thus says the Lord: "Because of three transgressions of Moab, yes of four, I will not revoke it; because he burned the bones of the King of Edom to lime." Amos 2:1

"Then the king ordered Hilkiah the high priest and the vice-priest and the wardens to bring out of the temple of the Eternal all the Vessels made for Baal and Astarte and the star-worship; these he burned outside Jerusalem in the lime-kiln of Kidron..." 2 Kings 23:4

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