

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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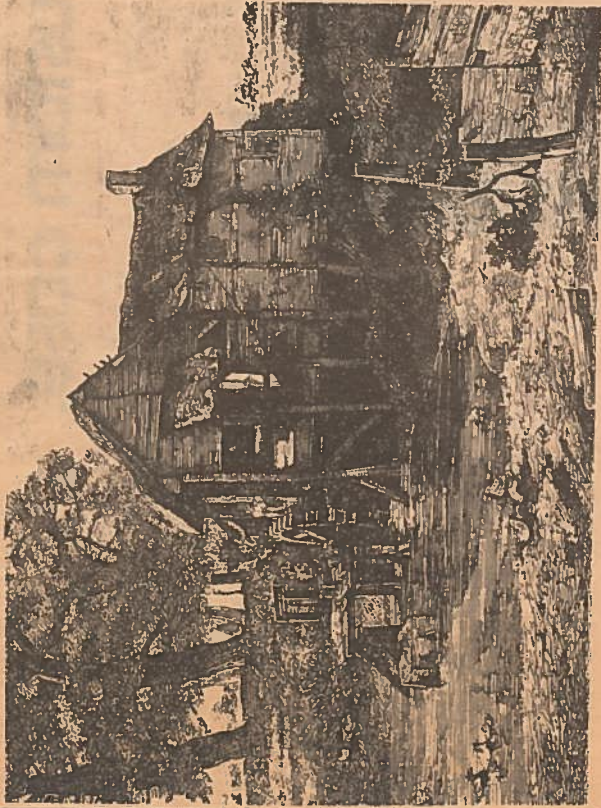


Fig. 36.

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The Town of Ridgeway was so named because of the Ridge Road crossing through it from east to west. It was set off from the Town of Batavia, Genesee County, N.Y. on June 8, 1812. At that time it encompassed over two-thirds of Orleans. At later intervals Gaines, Albion, Barre, Carleton, Shelby and Yates were created out of Ridgeway. In 1813 before Ridgeway was subdivided into other townships, there were 173 taxable inhabitants with 30,556 acres assessed to them. Also in 1813 the town raised \$250.00 for roads and bridges. A bounty of \$5.00 was paid the same year for every wolf taken in the township.

Joseph Ellicott was the principal surveyor of the Holland Land Company and later its land agent. He was particularly attracted to the Shelby area because of the waterfalls on Oak Orchard Creek. He visualized these falls as a source of water power for mills which would bring settlers to the area, around which a village could grow. By an Act of the State Legislature, Shelby was formed as a township on March 6, 1818 and was named in honor of Governor Isaac Shelby of Kentucky, a Revolutionary soldier. In 1812 Joseph Ellicott built the first sawmill in Shelby and during the following year under the supervision of his nephew Col. Andrew Ellicott, he built the first grist mill. It was in this grist mill that the first town meetings were held. During a dry season, sometimes farmers had to wait several days or weeks for enough water to be in the creek for running the mill.

When Elijah Bacon was a boy during the early part of the 19th Century, his father sent him on horseback from near Five Corners in Gaines to Waterport to mill. Since he was not able to get his small grist ground until afternoon, he thought he would ride on to Oak Orchard Harbor as there had just been a road cut through. Boy-like, he stayed longer than he should have and the dense woods known as "the black-north" made it quite dark on his return trip to the mill. When he heard wolves howl on his trail, he took to Oak Orchard Creek and rode his horse in the middle of the stream with the wolves accompanying him along the bank until he got to Waterport. There he got his grist and having a better road, reached home shortly where he found his parents much worried about him.

In 1810, Eldridge Farwell was looking for a horse which belonged to his brother. He followed the horse tracks from the Ridge Road in Murray, south and west along the banks of Sandy Creek's eastern branch until he came to the falls in what now is Clarendon. It's not known whether or not he ever found the horse, but he did find a home. The following year, in 1811, he purchased ten lots consisting of 200 acres from the Connecticut Tract which took in the present hamlet of Clarendon. He named this place Clarendon after his wife's home town of Clarendin, Vermont but for many years it was simply known as Farwell's Mills, because of the prominence of its founder Eldredge Farwell.