

Russia, Ohio Barn *Shelby County*

French Immigration: In the early 1800s, emigrants from Alsace, Lorraine, and other regions of France settled in southwestern Shelby County, Ohio. They founded close-knit communities such as Russia, Frenchtown, and Versailles, carrying with them their language, traditions, and Catholic faith.

The Name “Russia”: According to local tradition, the village of Russia was named to commemorate a campaign during the Napoleonic Wars. French-speaking Swiss soldiers who had served under Napoleon Bonaparte in Russia brought the memory of that experience with them to America.

A Farming Community: From its beginnings, Russia, Ohio, has been firmly rooted in agriculture. Throughout the 19th century, the farms around Russia were highly diversified: Wheat, corn, oats, rye, and barley were staple crops. Corn was especially abundant, and Ohio soon became a leading corn-producing state. Nearly every farmstead had orchards of apple, peach, and pear trees, providing fruit for both fresh use and preservation. Shorthorn cattle were particularly popular in the 1880s, valued as a dual-purpose breed for both milk and beef. Hogs were raised for meat, which was salted, smoked, and stored as ham and bacon. The Poland China hog breed developed in Ohio in the early 1800’s was widely favored for both meat and lard. Merino and Southdown sheep were common, raised primarily for their wool, which was shorn each spring. Poultry rounded out the farm economy, supplying both eggs and meat for families. This balanced, self-sustaining style of farming helped the early settlers survive, thrive, and build a legacy of agricultural strength that continues to define Russia, Ohio, today.



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