

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## Cobblesstone Tour

Many of our readers will be familiar with the "The Tinkers Dam", which is located just north of the Village of Albion on the west side of Route 98. A decorative sign hangs out in front indicating that "The Tinkers Dam" is a shop which sells primitive antiques and Folk Art. This attractive cobblesstone home which was built in the 1830's is made of field stone. Anyone who passes by can not help but admire the setting before it, a quaint front yard with lots of pretty vegetation.

But this has not always been the case. Believe it or not, the accompanying photo shows "The Tinkers Dam" as it appeared forty years ago. Not a pretty sight! The picture is from the files of the Cobblesstone Resource Center at Childs. I think we can easily say this picture is worth a thousand words when compared to the beautiful home it is today. In fact, I deliberately picked out the photo which shows the residence in its worst dilapidated condition. I did this because nothing is more graphic than a knowledge of before and after. Wonderful transformations can occur with a little imagination and foresight. Ugliness can be turned into beauty through preservation and appropriate restoration. When we speak of preservation and restoration of old buildings, we are ultimately concerned with aesthetics which is what it's all about. Oscar Wilde wrote: "Aesthetics are higher than ethics, they belong to a more spiritual sphere. Even the development of a color sense in the individual is more important than knowing the difference between right and wrong." On the surface this is a bold and perhaps controversial statement. However, it tends to drive a point home by which we should be more aware. Aesthetics. The "Tinkers Dam" is a case in point where aesthetics have won. It's a case where beauty and charm through human guidance have defeated ugliness and ruin. Right over wrong!

I have deliberately not included an after shot. This, if you went on the Cobblesstone Tour of homes that was scheduled for Saturday, June 3, 1-5 P.M., you would have seen. Eight historic houses including the "Tinkers Dam", were on this self-guided tour which was all about aesthetics.

In 1982 Virginia Kildoo, her daughter Gretchen Sepik and her husband Walt Jakubowski moved to the cobblesstone house now known as the "Tinkers Dam". "Ginny" and Gretchen deal in folk art and primitives. Surely their knowledge of aesthetics has enhanced the visual quality of this landmark which also serves as living quarters for them.

It was however, the late Ben Weilhammer who rescued the house from ruin back in the early 50's. A fire in 1939 badly damaged the rear part of the house after which it stood vacant for over a decade. Fortunately it was saved. Otherwise a unique dwelling would have been lost. Several patterns of cobblesstone appear on the outer walls of the house. The south and front are small stones neatly laid in rows with a strip of herringbone pattern between the lintels over the second story windows. The north wall however, consists of larger stones laid in the depressed hexagonal design or dish pattern. No doubt these were all collected from the adjoining fields when this was built for a farm house over 150 years ago. And yes, the mason or masons who erected this house believed in the importance of aesthetics for they left behind a legacy we call cobblesstone.