

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## PEOPLE WITH VISION

On Sunday, July 9 the John G. Peters Harness shop was dedicated at the Cobblestone Museum complex. Shown here at the podium is the Rev. Ilda Kuester of the Gaines Congregational Church giving the dedication statement. Seated at the far left is William Nestle, president of the Cobblestone Society and C.W. Lattin, museum director who gave the following historical preface entitled "People With Vision."

"We are here today because of the past but we are also here because of the future. And these two go hand in hand because of many people with vision. The Cobblestone Society Museum was organized in 1960 by people with vision for the future. Interest in the preservation of the cobblestone church and other cobblestone landmarks spurred these people to organize themselves. In 1960 however, none of these founders ever dreamed of a complex located here on Route 98. Fifteen years would pass by before the conception of such an effort would ever occur. If one person is to get credit for the establishment of this development here on 98, it should be Nellie Vagg, lady with vision. For in 1975 through a bequest in her will, the museum inherited her husband's blacksmith shop, its contents and some surrounding property. Yes, she wanted a living memorial to her late husband, Joe Vagg, but she also had vision to recognize the potential this property had for the future.

In February 1977 I asked Mr. Erling Maine if he would donate to the museum, an abandoned building he owned on East Center Street in Media. He allowed as how he would. A man of vision. Through a title 6 CETA grant we were able to move here because Nellie Vagg had already given us the land. It was during the mid 1960s that Harold and Howard Hill had given the museum their father's printing apparatus. They had vision to recognize its value to future generations, hence the Hill Print Shop.

In 1978 we heard of the pending destruction of the old Kendall Town Hall. We asked the Kendall Town Board if instead, they would donate what is now Farmers' Hall to the museum. It goes without saying the Kendall Board had vision. But where to put it? At that point Mrs. Neva Murray was approached and asked if she would give enough land on which to place the building so it might be located near the Blacksmith and Print Shops. She had vision and simply replied "Why, of course I will."

In the mid 1960s another person with vision donated the contents of his father's harness shop. That man is Fred Peters. To me, these artifacts needed a more suitable surrounding than a show case. For over ten years I quietly pursued with several owners, this little building in Gaines which was located near the Chatterbox Restaurant. The last owner was Rose M. Wells who also is a person with vision. Over some time I had several conversations with her about the feasibility of acquiring the building, but she just wouldn't say yes. One day in March 1987 I went to the Chatterbox for lunch. As soon as I entered Rose said "When are



you coming for the building?" I couldn't believe my ears. I said, "You are kidding." She replied "No I'm not and the sooner you can get it out of here, the better." Well, to make the rest of the story a short one, we got it out of there. Moving such a structure takes vision too and Lyman Rice of Rice Homes, Inc. had the vision to donate his services. Ironically the building now partly stands on land once given by Nellie Vagg and partly on land given by Neva Murray. Just see what you can get by simply asking for it if you have vision.

And finally, when we announced that this building would become the John G. Peters Harness Shop it so inspired the entire Peters Family with a vision, that they helped restore it through their financial contributions. By holding this ceremony today and releasing an illustrated booklet on the building and John G. Peters, the Cobblestone Society recognizes with grateful appreciation all of the visionaries it has taken to create this setting and the Harness Shop Museum."

Following the presentation of the building by President Nestle to William Vick, chairman of the Orleans County Legislature who accepted it on behalf of the people, it was dedicated by Rev. Kuester. Her statement follows:

"Today, July 9, 1989 we dedicate the John G. Peters harness shop.

May the history we see in this building and the contents live on so that every time we see it or use it we may be reminded of the rich heritage of our past.

May we pass on to our children and our children's children the significance of the Cobblestone Museum Complex so that their wisdom may be enhanced and their lives be made richer."