

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XII

11-13-90

No. 45

HINDSBURG MEMORIES

The photo this week is compliments of Gerome and Rosemary Wilson, owners of Archer Lumber Co. in Albion. It shows the residence of the Ballou family in the Town of Murray at Hindsburg in the 1890's. Actually it is a rather typical photograph of a farmstead of that of time period. In this picture with the house and carriage barn in the background you will see six people, a dog and a horse. Nowadays we'd group all the people together. But one hundred years ago they were frequently posed some distance from each other in this kind of exterior shot.

As to the people in the picture, we see James Lewis Ballou sitting in the swing behind the hitching post. His wife, Eliza Balcom Ballou is seated in the chair on the far right. Their nephew Gordon Charles Ballou is holding the horse. Gordon's father, Merritt Ballou died when Gordon was nine years old so he was sent to live with his aunt and uncle. The woman standing on the porch, the person in the buggy and the boy with dog at left are unidentified.

In his youth Gordon Ballou drove a team of horses hauling quarry stone for his uncle who also owned with James Baldwin (Don Nesbitt's grandfather) the Ballou-Baldwin Hindsburg Grocery Store which was a brick building located next to the tow path at Hindsburg.

As one studies a photo like this one sees more and more detail. You can't help but wonder what the occasion was, if any. All the people appear dressed up for this picture. Did they dress up to get their picture taken or was it a balmy, lazy Sunday afternoon one summer long ago? I would judge that this picture was taken by a professional photographer who was going around taking such pictures as this. Except for the swing, the other chairs have been bought outside as they are not lawn furniture. The lawn obviously has not been mowed with a mower recently or if ever. This perhaps suggests they may have used a scythe. Notice the lack of shrubbery next to the house. It wasn't until



the 1920's that people felt they needed a fringe of greenery around their homes. Often basement foundations were decorative stone because cellar walls were meant to show. Although this is a black and white picture, we can tell color variations.

It appears that the hitching post has been painted white. This in contrast to the house suggests it might be grey. The window blinds are obviously a darker color, probably green, as is the screen door. The siding is board and batten and although the trees cover up the upper portion of the house, we know it is Gothic Revival in style.

We can tell that the window shades are decorated with a stenciled border and that the side walk is made of flag stone. I could go on and on, but as you see, a picture is worth a thousand words. Even a photo of this simplistic nature has a lot of information in it about the time period, from a mode of transportation to the style of Mrs. Ballou's hat.

Local people will remember Gordon and Nina Ballou and their daughter Betty Ballou. They were descended from the renowned and famous Universalist preacher Rev. Hosea Ballou who wrote a radical book in 1805 entitled Treatise on Atonement whereby he rejected the theories of endless punishment in Hell, the Trinity and the miracles. By contrast, he saw humankind as potentially good and God as infinite love.

The Ballou house still stands on Hindburg Road south of the canal and is now owned by the Bryce Family. Hindsburg was a canal settlement so named for the Hinds Family who lived there many years ago. Besides the Ballou-Baldwin Grocery, there was another grocery and produce business on the south side of the canal. Also a century ago Hindsburg had a blacksmith shop, hotel and stone quarry business. Today all that is left are a few residences. As traffic shifted to the railroad the canal trade dropped off making places such as Hindsburg and its once busy scene nothing more than a memory.