

Bethinking of Old Orleans

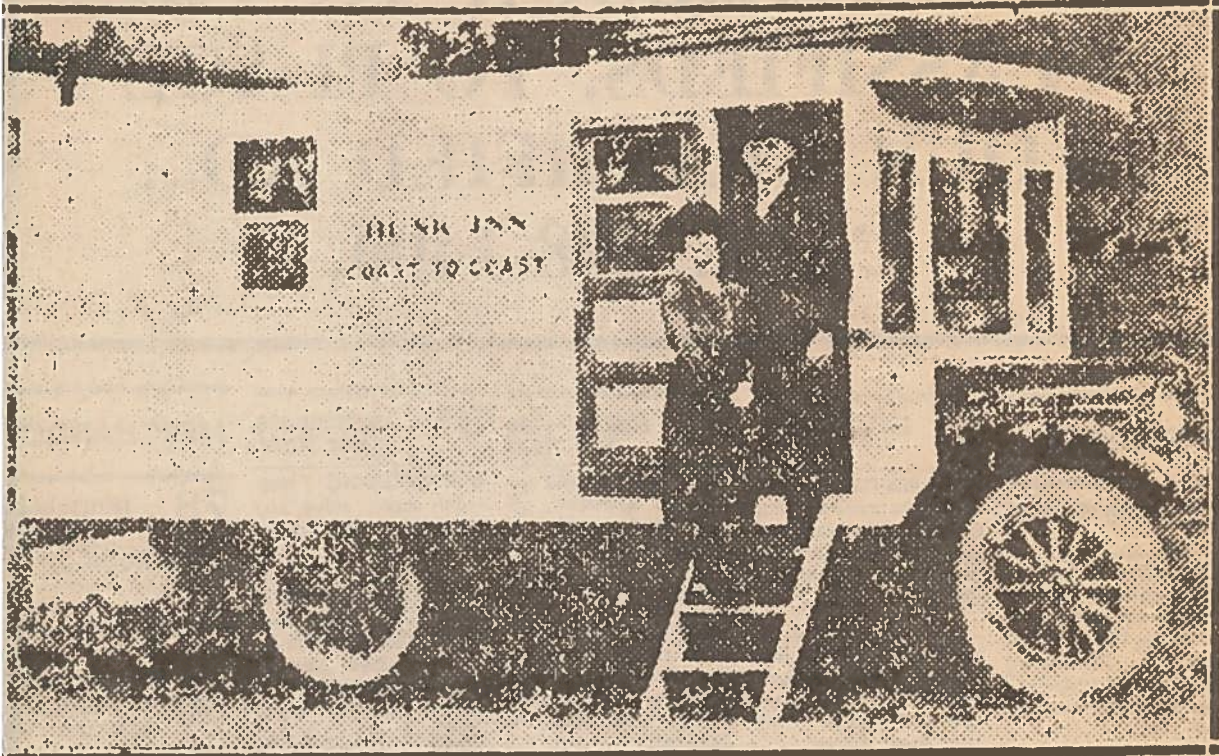
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ON WHEELS



Recently, in looking over some old newspaper clippings, I came across the following excerpt dated Nov. 23, 1922 and entitled Trip By Automobile:

"Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Reed and family of Kent will spend the winter in Florida this year. They will make the trip by automobile. For the purpose, Mr. Reed purchased a Ford truck chassis and Dwight Smalley of this village has built a small house on it, similar to those which are used by many making this trip. Inside are bunks for sleeping purposes, a wash basin and oil stove, making it very handy for cooking meals and sleeping; at the same time it is a very economical way to travel in these days when hotel rates are so high." — Holley Standard.

Although I don't have a picture of the Reed's motor home, I found another clipping of a "House on Wheels" which was built on a truck chassis and owned by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Buck of Geneva in 1920. Early mobile homes of this nature were custom built by local carpenters such as Dwight Smalley, who lived on Geddes Street in Holley at the time. Compared to the motor homes of today these early attempts were pretty rustic and somewhat innovative. But none the less, the idea caught on and Americans took to the road for all sorts of vacations.

The motor home now, seventy years later, is considered "...a very economical way to travel in

these days when hotel rates are so high." The Ralph Reeds of Kent were surely pioneers of sorts. Their desire for convenience and economical travel led manufacturers to design some very outstanding motor homes. The idea of comfort in travel was certainly upon first and foremost by George M. Pullman. When the automobile began to replace rail travel it was only natural that some of Pullman's ideas were assimilated for the great open highways.

I've heard that Dr. Ben Howes, the old veterinarian from Carlton Station was also concerned about comfort while he was driving. Back in the 1920's he substituted a fancy wicker chair for the conventional driver's seat that came with his car.

Along with these early mobile homes I wonder how many people remember the mobile bandstand that used to be used in Albion. It sat on a wagon chassis with four hard rubber tires with wooden wheel spokes. When not in use, two sections folded up into an A frame that made a housing under which the music stands and chairs could be stored. When in use however, it was drawn out of storage and placed in front of the Court House for concerts. The two sections of the platform were opened down for flooring and the furniture arranged accordingly. I last saw it over twenty-five years ago. It had been discarded, but still retained its original dark brown muddy color.