

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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COVERED BRIDGE AT KENYONVILLE



"MEMORIES OF KENYONVILLE" is the title of the painting pictured above. It was painted about 1950 by Mrs. Chester (Ina) Shelley (1888-1966) in the "Grandma Moses - primitive style." The present owner, Mrs. Roy (Guinevere) Drake of Lakeide, says she understood that Mrs. Shelley painted it one-half century after the turn of this century to capture what she remembered of the bridge and the rustic community of her youth.

The painting is being used to compliment the story told by Wirt B. Quale (1859-1953), a lifelong resident of Kenyonville, on his memories of the long gone covered bridge. This style bridge was one of two such structures in the Town of Carlton and they were the only covered bridges in Orleans County. Mr. Quale told his story to Mrs. Shelley at an undetermined decade in our distant past and he transcribed his words.

Somehow at an also undetermined date this story was acquired by Helen Mathes, Town of Carlton Historian. It was then passed along to the Carlton Historian through an informational exchange at one of the recent gatherings of the Orleans County Municipal Historians who meet every other month.

(Appreciation is extended to Dr. James Orr, of Albion, who photographed the painting.)

"COVERED BRIDGE AT KENYONVILLE"

by Wirt B. Quale

The first time I went through this bridge (not down into the water), but just like walking through a room, was in 1882 and the last time was in 1911. That was the time I wrecked it, by taking it down piece by piece. This bridge had been condemned for two or three years, but not because it was decayed as it was made of white pine and protected by a roof and matched pine sides. It had carried traffic over "Old Oak Orchard's Rippling Stream" for fifty or sixty years, it was 110 feet long, and rested on three stone abutments. Directly underneath, water poured over a ten foot high dam into the rock, and in going through it at night it was like entering a tunnel. This together with the roar of water passing over the dam made it a pretty

spookish place to pass through with a pretty girl at your side in those good old horse and buggy days.

There are a lot of things and happenings that I could tell you about this old bridge, but my father always cautioned me "not to tell everything I knew." So, I'll tell you of one circumstance there one night. It was raining this night and I guess nearly all the young fellows were out with their pretty maids. The bridge was narrow and very dark inside, and the horses and buggies came in from both ends of the bridge and packed it full, wheels locked and the whole bunch had to stay there till the break of day. The poor things! It was an awful bunch to untangle in the morning.

Grandfather Stowell (1801-1897) in pioneer days moved his household goods from Eagle Harbor over this crossing on a brush bridge. Then there was built a higher bridge of timbers, after this one came the covered bridge, still higher, and now the steel bridge 16 feet higher than the covered bridge. The upper structure of this covered bridge was moved to Alabama, Genesee County, and is now on the Rowley Mill Property.

The elevating of the new bridge and roadway was made necessary by the impounding of the waters of the Oak Orchard Creek by the 90-foot high dam below Waterport (our suburb), creating what is now known as Carlton Lake. This lake has been stocked with the best kinds of fish for several years, and it is reported that enormous catches of huge fish have been taken from it, if the stories of the average fisherman are to be relied upon. Many pleasure boats are on its surface and cottages on its banks.

A basic importance of this story is from Mr. Quale's recollections the present bridge at Kenyonville, built in 1911 of the two-span-warren-pony-truss-style is the fourth such structure at that crossing, not the second as thought by many in our current generation.

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