

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

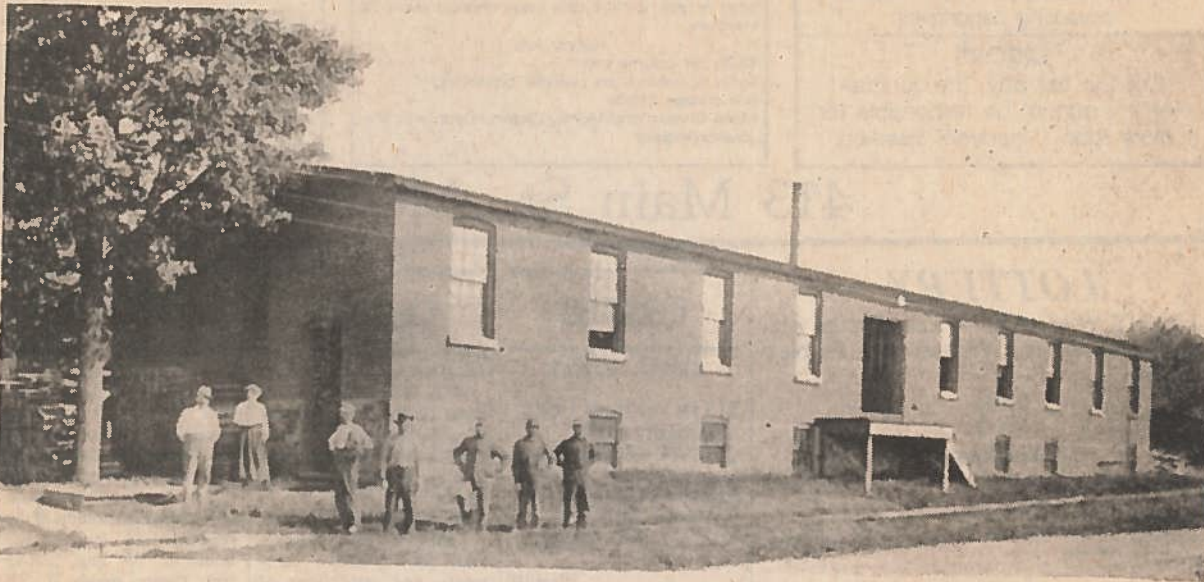
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**C.M. MALLORY WORKS**  
Manufacturer of Wood Specialties



Our photo this week is taken from A Souvenir of the Village of Albion published in 1905. It shows the building at the southeast corner of West Avenue and West Academy Street when it was the woodworking factory of Charles M. Mallory. I'm inclined to think that the gentleman to the far left is Mr. Mallory. Next in line, is a woman who was probably the bookkeeper of the business. The other five are no doubt, employees in the mill room itself.

Mr. Mallory started in business in 1889 manufacturing the Victor Carpet Stretcher (note illustration), making a quarter of a million stretchers the first year. His business grew rapidly and he found it necessary to greatly increase the capacity of his manufacturing plant. In 1891 he erected the factory building shown here giving him a floor space of 20,000 feet.

Over the past year or so, three different people have asked me to identify the Victor Carpet Stretcher. In all three cases the pole-like handle was missing. The flat part of the tool however, states "The Victor" and that it was made by Mallory and patented in 1889. We must remember that one hundred years ago people commonly had ingrain woven carpet and brussels carpeting which were tacked down around the edges of a room. It was customary to take up such carpet for cleaning once a year. Hence, Mallory also made carpet beaters for cleaning. This was when the

pulled-up carpet was hung outside on a line and an individual literally beat the dust and dirt out of it. When it came time to re-install the carpet it helped to have a tool to pull or stretch the carpet up next to the baseboard so it could be tacked down again. The illustrated carpet stretcher worked by poking the spike into the floor and placing the first portion with

innumerable prongs on the carpet. You then could place your foot on the flat part and pull the lever toward the wall to stretch out any wrinkles in the carpet.

In the 1890's the Victor was described in a local paper as follows: "This stretcher fills a great want in every household, as it saves untold labor and annoyance, besides making it possible to lay a carpet in a manner that cannot be done in any other way, and the increasing demand proves conclusively that the public appreciates the article."

Aside from his carpet stretchers and carpet beaters, the Mallory firm also made furniture specialties including center tables, jardiner stands, folding chairs, easels, cases, store fixtures, screen doors, windows, doors and frames, interior woodwork such as picture moldings, plate rails, cabinets and shutters.

The 1903 Orleans County Directory advertises Charles M. Mallory, wood novelty manufacturer, Victor carpet stretcher, best carpet beaters, sash, doors, blinds, moulding, veranda columns and spindles, ladders, etc., turning, planting, matching and all kinds of job work.

The Mallory firm is listed in the 1926 directory but I'm uncertain just when this business closed, but believe it was in the mid 1930's. Today the old Mallory building, after years of neglect by previous owners, is the newly renovated home of Colonna's Electric, Inc. It now houses several offices, two of which are equipped with drafting tables. There are three bays for drive-in and plans are being made for a store in the future. Colonnas have been moved into their new facility just since February 1st.