

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XVI

8-30-94

No. 34

"A VOICE FROM THE PAST"



Recently I was given a copy of The Friendly Carrier, a monthly newsletter from the Orleans County Office For The Aging, which goes to over 2200 subscribers. In it was a most interesting article compiled by Karen Colton under the heading "A Voice From the Past — Lena Britt's Memories." It was mentioned that "Mrs. Britt still lives in her own home in Ridgeway, that she is 92 years young and has been a Medina area resident all her life." I felt that what Mrs. Britt had to say was well worth repeating here in this column so others could also learn of days gone by. Here is what she had to say:

"I was born in Knowlesville at the Ostrander tenant farmhouse, the daughter of James and Phoebe Dyball. My father was a tenant farmer and my mother was an accomplished seamstress. She sewed for lots of people, even making their wedding outfits. Of course, what this meant for us children was lots of dishes and housework.

"After school I would have to sew a whole ball of rags before I could play. The pieces were 1" to 1½" in width and would vary in length. I had to fold them over and sew the sides in when this was done a whole bundle was taken to the weaver to be tightly woven on a loom into yard squares. These squares were sewn together to make rag rugs which is what we had in the dining room. We always had an ingrain (boughten) rug in the living room.

"About twice a year we would go to Medina to shop. My mother made our outer clothes but we still had to go for undergarments and shoes. We got our underclothes at Landauer's Store which was located where JCPenney's was recently. The first floor had all yard goods and underwear. The second floor sold dresses and coats and the third floor contained carpets and window shades. We bought our shoes at John Chapman's shoe store or Slack's shoe store. As a special bi-annual treat we would all receive a penny. We always spent it on penny ice cream cones which were about 3½ "

high. I remember dropping mine once which broke my heart but my mother reached deep into her pocketbook and gave me another penny so I could replace it.

"The only vacation we ever took was the annual trip to the Orleans County Fair in Albion. Mr. Ostrander would let us take the "democrat" (2 seater surrey). My mother would pack up a picnic lunch which we would leave in the drive barn (livery) and get it out to eat later. One year the drive barn attendants ate all of our cupcakes while we were on the fairgrounds! We all loved the parade which was really only live stock marching by with their owners. These were the animals to be judged later. In the afternoon there were horse races which was very exciting! We all watched from the grandstand. After this we went home. Speaking of vacations, my 10-year-old great-grandson is actually going to another country soon for his vacation. Sure tells you how times have changed. It's amazing, truly amazing!"

Our photo here shows the Landauer Brothers Store in Medina around the time Mrs. Britt remembers it as a child. Note the reflections in the windows showing the buildings on the west side of Main Street in Medina, including Bent's Block. The 1903 Orleans County Directory lists Landauer Bros. (Samuel, Jesse and Louis) dry goods, carpets, cloaks, wallpaper at 445 Main St. These same brothers also had a store located on Main Street in Albion in the store front which is now Shay's Shamrock. This store was known as Upper Landauers in order to signify a difference between the other Landauer Dry Goods Store just down the street which was operated by Jacob Landauer and H. Morris Strouse known as Lower Landauers. Just imagine all these dry goods stores and others like them at the same time. It suggests people did a lot more sewing years ago as Mrs. Britt recollects and as she says "Sure tells you how times have changed."