

Bethinking of Old Orleans

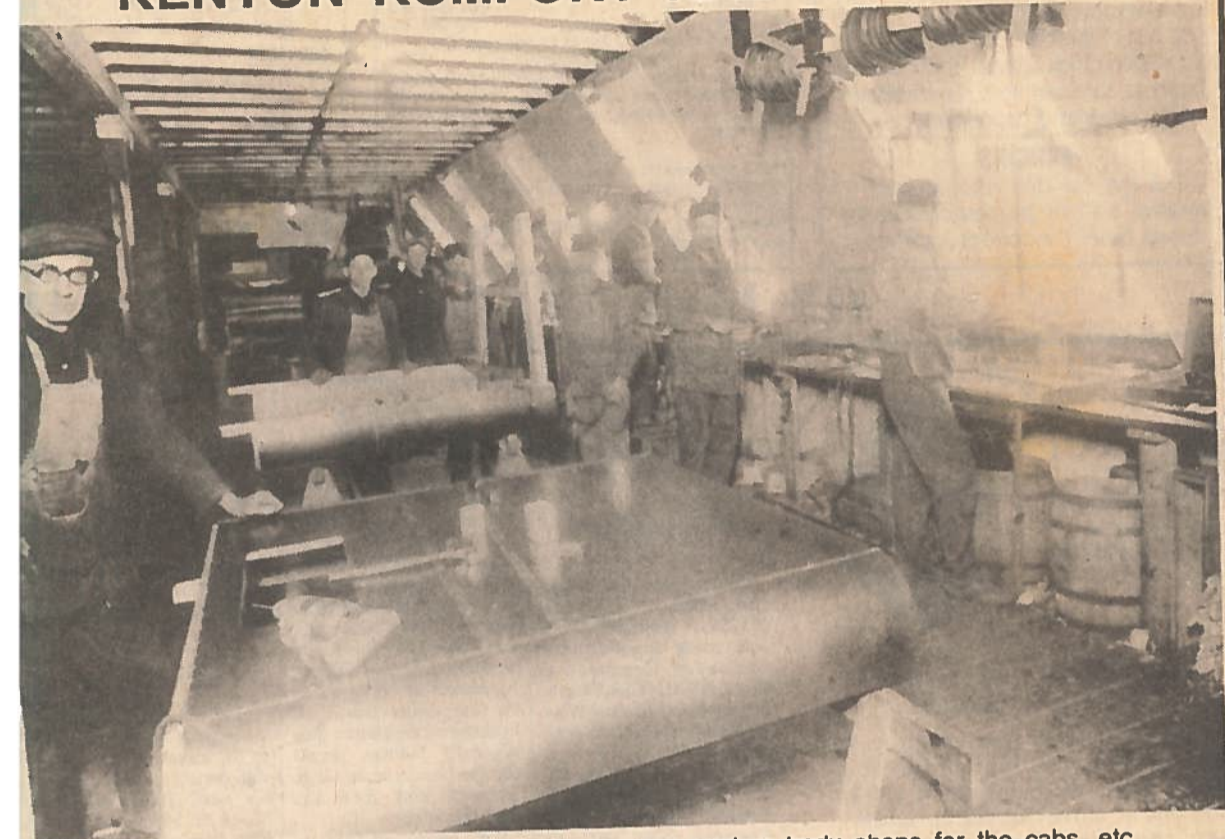
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KENYON KUMFORT KAB KOMPANY



This rare photo taken sometime in the late 1920's shows the interior of the Kenyon Kumfort Kab Kompany of Albion, which was located at the corner of Liberty Street and Beaver Alley in a former stone drivebarn. The workshop you see here was located on the second floor, hence the sloping walls and dormer windows.

I believe this business was established in the late teens or by 1920. The 1921 Orleans Directory lists: "Kenyon, William M. (Kenyon Mfg. Co.)" The 1926 Orleans Directory lists: "Kenyon Co. (Wm. M. Kenyon Co.)" From the letterhead of an early piece of stationery we find this info: Kenyon Manufacturing Co. Inc. The Miller Spring Wagon — custom made auto truck bodies — Wm. M. Kenyon, Pres., Geo. Whelan V.P., Ralph M. Holcomb, Secy., Geo. Irwin, Homer C. Brown. The 1926 Directory lists Ralph Holcomb as traveling salesman. This was indeed, for the Kenyon Co. People who remember him recall that he really built up the business to the point where it became known as the Kenyon Kumfort Kab Kompany.

As the name indicates, their main line of work was manufacturing truck cabs. They evidently had a contract with the Brockway Co. as they made cabs for Brockway chassis. If you study the photo, you can see the rear side of two cabs set up on sawhorses. The rear window in the one is quite clear. These were made of hardwood framing and covered with sheet metal. The first tops were cloth, but later, they went to metal. The Kenyon Kompany also made cabs for Mack Trucks and fire trucks. In the early days of truck manufacturing the chassis were farmed out to vari-

ous custom body shops for the cabs, etc.

The man standing to the far left in the photo, with the horn-rimmed glasses, is positively identified as my great uncle, Roy B. Wyman who died in 1937. Walter "Barney" Johnson, who worked there and lives in Attica, N.Y. thinks that one of the other men might be John Wells and another man, George Wigley. But it's entirely up to speculation, who any of the nine men might be in the background. It is recalled that Whitney Howes, Charles Cutts, Howard Bills, Everett "Fuzzy" Hobbs, Elden Craves, Roy Ford and Stanley Karloski all worked for this company and that Mike Nesbitt took his first job as a bookkeeper working in the office. Bill Covell remembers that this is where his father Ned Covell, died suddenly of heart failure in 1934. He also remembers that because of very hard times during the great depression, his father only brought home 50¢ a week for his earnings. The Kenyon Kumfort Kab Kompany suffered greatly because of this and finally folded in 1936. Walter Johnson says that local Attorney, Julius Kuck, had the job of closing out the business. Mr. Johnson also still has his final paycheck in the amount of 2¢ which he received when Kuck had completed the legal work.

Eventually, the old stone drivebarn which had housed the Kenyon Co. was used by Stephen Penasack where he manufactured diners for a short time during the 1940's.

In the early 1970's the building was torn down by the Landauer brothers and used for a parking lot and access to the "Back Room," a clothing department of their store at that time.