

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XVII

4-19-95

No. 16

## EARLY DEALERSHIP



Cars may come and go, but dealerships stay about the same. Our photo here was taken probably sometime between 1911-1913 on North Main Street in Albion. In essence, we are looking at an early Ford dealership which was located on the west side of the street near the corner of Orchard Street which shows at the far right in the photo. Left of center we note a large sign that simply states: "Ford Cars." Another nearby sign states "Albion Garage." Lined up in front are sixteen Model-T Fords not at all unlike how a present day dealership would display it's current stock. Looking more carefully, we can also see innumerable people either standing by the cars or seated inside of them. It also appears that all the cars have plates on them which are mounted immediately under the windshields.

I wonder if the picture wasn't taken for some sort of promotional venture for Fords. Because of the licenses it would almost seem that these were new cars recently sold to various individuals who came back for a group photo. I also think it is doubtful that such an early local dealership would have had

this many cars in stock. Back when this picture was taken people most frequently went to a local dealer and ordered what they wanted which was then later shipped out to them. At any rate, if this is a staged photo, it gives us a glimpse of the past that looks familiar.

The rest of the signage in the picture, although difficult to read, is very interesting for about in the center we note a double sign with "J.P. Besenfelder Harness Horse Goods and Carriage Trimming" Indeed, this was a transitional period of time when the picture was taken, to have both a car sales and horse equipment businesses right next to each other. The other double sign in the gable of the building is: "Harris Best General Store." This was operated by Robert W. Harris in the building which now serves as the Lake Country Pennysaver. The Albion Garage in the picture, an addition to that building, is no longer there. Also, the large wooden buildings to the far left have also been removed and Burgio's Garage now occupies that space. In the lower right corner of our photo we note a drinking trough for horses.