

Bethinking of Old Orleans

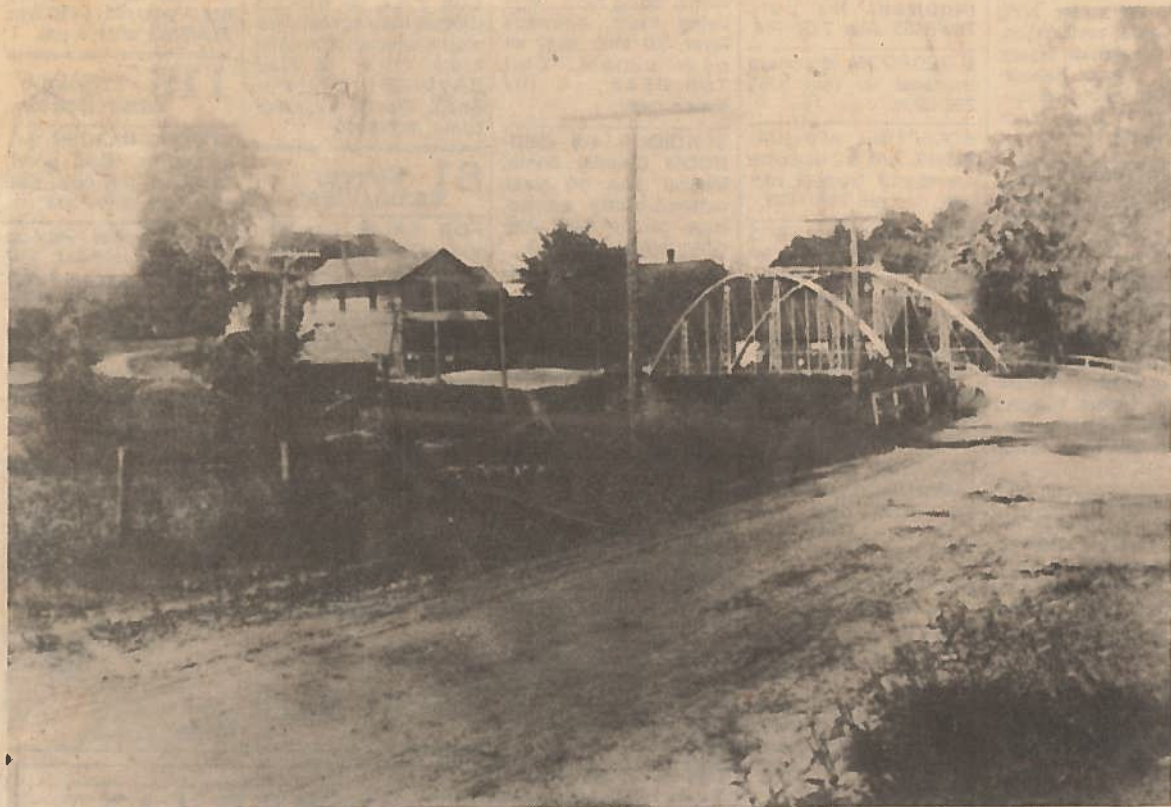
C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XVII

9-13-95

No. 36

MEMORIES OF KUCKVILLE



For the commemoration of the opening of the new "Prestressed concrete box beam bridge" at Kuckville, a 103-foot span, it is appropriate to share in this forum a narrative written in 1982 by Leroy B. Wilson (born: November 20, 1917). In these memories Mr. Wilson describes the geography of Kuckville during his teen years, when the present Route #18, Roosevelt Highway, was built through the hamlet.

Wilson's memories are especially keen as his father, the late George H. Wilson, was Carlton Supervisor at the time of the construction of the new highway and the "Parker truss type bridge" spanning Johnsons Creek. This "Parker" bridge lasted from the early 1930's until the second week in February of 1995.

Wilson wrote: "I remember when Route #18 went through Kuckville. Prior to that the road came into the hamlet from the west which is now known as Church Street, continued on to the east across the old "Bowstring arch type" iron bridge (stone abutments still standing), with the Kuck estate on the left and Joe Nicholson's house on the right sitting in the middle of what is now Route #18 (or the east side approach to the present bridge)." That house was moved from that position, turned 90-degrees, and was placed at the site of Lamay's present store. "Part of this store is Joe Nicholson's old house. Joe was a beekeeper. His hives set along the creek bank where the bridge abutment now stands.

Before the early 1930's, Kuckville remained much the same as it did years previous with John Cann's store setting next to the church on the northwest corner of the road. To the south of John Cann's store set the coopershop that would be placed in these present times right in the middle of the road heading south to Route #18. To the west of the coopershop was a large building that stored barrels made at the coopershop and to the west of that building set Howard Miller's garage which set next to his house--which is now owned by the Jack Szykowski family. To the east of the coopershop was a store owned by George Miles and was operated by Mr. Miles. George Miles finally closed the store and it set idle for sometime. Then Howard Miller cut out the front of the store, which faced the north, and put in two double doors, strengthened the floor, and started a Kuckville Fire Department, which housed a Model T Ford fire truck. This red truck was the pride of Kuckville and was used

many times to put out fires in the neighborhood. All of this happened in the late 1920's, but I do not know the exact dates. In 1926, Lakeside-On-The-Bluff caught fire and several cottages burned. The Kuckville Fire Department was called into action but for some reason the Model T would not start and it remained in the firehouse as the Albion Fire Company responded.

At what year the Kuckville Fire Department disbanded, I do not know, but I do remember the building being torn down, along with the coopershop, to make way for the present road connecting Kuckville to Route #18 which went through in the early 1930's. The building just to the west of the coopershop remained intact for sometime, being right next to the new road. At a much later date this building, along with Howard Miller's garage, was torn down.

When the Firehall was torn down the truck was moved to Howard Miller's garage and kept there for a while. When the company disbanded the truck was disposed of, but I do not know what happened to it. It seems to me that Howard Miller dismantled it and used the chassis for something, but this is only an assumption.

Kuckville then depended on the Albion Fire Company until the Carlton Fire Company was formed.

The Wilson brothers (George B. and Roy), in the 1940's, furnished the Carlton Fire Company a Reo Truck chassis to use for a tank truck carrying water for the pumper."

My appreciation to James H. Keeler, of Keeler Construction Company, Inc., for sharing technical information.

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From the files of the Orleans County Dept. of History, we find the photo shown here, which depicts the "Bowstring Arch Type Bridge" Mr. Wilson speaks of. Although the "Parker Bridge" was put in during the early 1930's, the old Bowstring Bridge of the 1880's was not removed until the mid 1950's. It simply stood idle and in disuse for two decades.

Our photo also shows John Cann's store and the bell tower of the Kuckville Methodist Church in the distance.

C.W.L.