

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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HISTORY REPEATS
A Parade

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On Sunday, June 1 at 2:00 P. M. THE Cobblestone Society will present a Farmers Parade from 104 Country Shop in Gaines, one mile along the historic Ridge Road to Childs leading up to the dedication of Farmers Hall. With research materials from Virginia Lattin Morrison let's go back 71 years in time when Gaines celebrated its Centennial with a mile-long parade witnessed by an estimated 6000-8000 people down that ancient Indian trail. All the rural school districts participated with floats so let's sit back and review that one segment of the parade provided by Gaines District No. 5, the Cobblestone School at Childs, known as Fairhaven in those days.

It is Thursday, Sept. 2, 1909 and we are there. "Fifth in the line of march came Fairhaven District. Its entire line was made up of about 103 people, sixty-seven horses and numerous carriages. Leading the line came three horsemen, the first of whom carried a novelty banner to brighten the line of his district. Directly following this came the district float drawn by four white horses. The harness of the horses was wound entirely with the national colors. The float also decked in the national colors was arranged to represent a school-room where twenty children at desks and a teacher were apparently busy with school work. After the float came three more horseback riders, the first carrying a large banner for Fairhaven district, while the other two were dressed to represent an Indian and Uncle Sam. Next was a wagon carrying an imaginary load of grain. This wagon was drawn by one mule and a horse and made the up-to-date farmer think of the rude way in which his father had obtained his ground grain. It also contained a banner which told the historic fact that the first post office was established in 1816 in school district No. 5 on the farm now owned by O. C. Knapp.

Numerous horseback riders came just after the wagon who in turn were followed by an immigrant wagon showing the way our grandfathers and grandmothers had made their way through the country a century ago. The next carriage was one used about 1840. It was a unique carriage, not only on its own account but because it carried the three oldest ladies in line. Then as if to break the monotony of our ancestors, came a donkey cart, with a clown driver, who by his antics pleased the children of the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century. Nor did the juvenile department stop here, for after him came ten Shetland ponies with small riders and a pony cart whose occupants were a Colonial lady, a child dressed as a miniature Goddess of Liberty, and one dressed as Uncle Sam.

In the rear of these came a typical Irishman driving a carriage who was cautiously watched by his ancient wife. The vehicle was of interest to many because of the fact that in it John Fiske was shot. Then followed clowns as horsemen and ladies in national colors. These preceded a wagon upon which two men were kept busy, with flails, which might thresh in a whole day what a grain thresher of the twentieth century could separate from straw in a couple hours. Another wagon of interest was one covered with posters, of various sizes and colors. The wagon itself was the grocery wagon in which Horace Halpin of Riches Corners was shot.

The national colors were prominent in the entire line but not more so than was the national flower near the rear, where the Ridge Road Club showed its colors. Here two little girls dressed in Colonial costume sewed and knitted as our grandmothers used to. The supervisor of the town who was from District No. 5 rode in a carriage of great historic value. This was made attractive by numerous flags.

As a fitting close came a horse and buggy so arranged that the horse pushed rather than drew the buggy while the driver directed his vehicle carefully through the crowd. This was followed by many mounted riders."

And that was from just one school district!

Pictured above is a float from the Five Corners Dist. No. 11. Draped artistically with yellow and white intertwined with green vines and golden glow and filled with twenty-five youngsters, it was drawn by a four-horse team driven by Messers Lettiss and Mahnke. In the background we see Joseph H. Vagg's original brick blacksmith shop at Childs which burned in 1921. The large tree in the far background was located in what is now the front lawn of Farmers Hall.