

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XX

2-27-98

No.8

EASLICK'S DRAY



Easlick's Dray. Pierre Easlick, Joe McGuire, Alfred Berry.

What's a dray? This might well be a question, especially from the younger set. To me, it is certainly an archaic term. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines it as: "a vehicle used to haul goods; specifically a strong low cart or wagon without sides."

Indeed, our circa 1898 photo is correctly identified as a dray. In checking old Orleans County directories I find a number of draymen listed up through the early part of this century. In the 1911 directory under the business listing I found three draymen. However, by 1915 there is no listing for draymen and none thereafter.

Every village years ago that was located along a major transportation route had independent draymen. With goods being shipped on canal boats and the railroads, draymen found lots of work in hauling cargo from docks and freight houses to the final destination point. A hundred years ago this might have included furniture, stoves, monuments, agriculture equipment, etc.

The dray pictured is loaded with something which is covered with a canvas tied down by a rope. The owner of this business is Pierre Easlick in the middle. To the right and seated with him, is Joe McGuire and to the left in the back is Alfred Berry, an African American. Although taken one hundred years ago, the picture shows the multi-cultural diversity of our community.

Mr. Easlick's name first appears in the 1887-88 directory as a laborer. But in the 1894 directory he is listed as a cartman. Essentially this means the same as drayman. The 1903 directory in fact, lists him as a drayman. However, by 1911, he is noted as a bill poster and is listed for the same occupation in 1915.

The 1903 directory lists all three men as living in the same Albion neighborhood. Easlick was at 10 Temperance Street, with McGuire at 17 Temperance Street, while Berry was living at 20 Chamberlain Street. It is plain that Pierre Easlick needed help in loading and unloading whatever he was hauling on the day this picture was taken. He obviously used help who were readily available.

Mr. Easlick died on April 29, 1915 at the age of 68. He was born in Lyons, N.Y. and in his younger days was associated with a brother, Thomas Miaco, in the theatrical business with road shows. In 1870 he married Emma J. Rock of Albion and thereafter, made it his home. His obituary notes that he conducted a draying business in the village for a number of years and later in life devoted his full time to the bill posting business in the central part of Orleans County. He was one of eleven children and left a twin sister, Mrs. Gainham Ball of Medina. He was a member of the Albion Methodist Church.

As the directories and obit denote, Mr. Easlick was a bill poster in later life. This occupation certainly tells us how communication techniques have changed over the last eighty years or so. It's true, posters or bills (printed public notices) were much more widely used years ago to advertise events, elections, traveling shows, auctions, etc. Imagine making a living out of just going around tacking or pasting up posters (bills). This was such a common practice years ago that there were often small signs posted on board fences and blank walls stating POST NO BILLS. Evidently, there were some people who objected to the "eye sore" effect of such advertising.