



Bethinking of Old Orleans

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George Christman's Blacksmith Shop

The 1911 Orleans County Directory lists George Christman as a general blacksmith located on East Bank Street near Platt in the village of Albion. My guess is that this picture of the interior of his shop was taken around that time. I believe he is the man on the right, although neither one is identified in the photo.

The 1911 directory lists a total of 23 blacksmith shops in the county at that time; there are only seven garages listed. As a comparison, just 10 years later in 1921, we find 18 garages and only seven blacksmith shops. I have a feeling there were more than these but they were just not listed.

The blacksmith shop of long ago was the forerunner of the modern-day service garage. As the automobile replaced the horse, a different sort of service was required. Looking at our photo, we can assume that Mr. Christman ran a full service blacksmith shop, being able to fix a variety

of parts and taking care of customers' needs.

At the left, a horse stands by perhaps waiting for a new set of horse shoes. Moving to the right, a drill press hangs on the wall and appears to have been hand-powered. Next we see an array of hammers and mallets hanging in a rack, in front of which stands a harness-maker's vice. This tells us that Christman was able to repair harnesses. In the corner is a round oak stove for heating purposes.

Toward the center, Christman is seen working on a carriage wheel at his anvil. Blacksmiths also were usually adept as wheelwrights. After all, the blacksmith was the one who made or fixed the iron tires used on these wooden wheels. In the far back right corner is the forge used for heating metal. Notice all the horse shoes hanging off the joists in the ceiling.