
Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

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“OLD RECONNOITER”

From an Albion newspaper clipping dating back to the early 1920's we find an anecdote under the title “Reconnoitered the Fence”. This amusing tale is once again presented in full for your pleasure.

“Our older residents will remember a man known as “Old Reconnoiter” who lived years ago in the house now owned by John Williams on East State Street. How he came by that name will interest our younger people. He was a farmer and was accustomed to indulge in large words without regard to their meaning. One day he told his hired man to go out into a field and “reconnoiter the rail fence”. The man went but was puzzled to know what to do. A traveler was hailed and told the orders and his advice sought as to what was best to do. “Don't you know what reconnoiter means?” asked the traveler. “Well, your boss wants you to take down that fence, pile up the rails in a heap and burn them.” This the hired man proceeded to do. When the farmer discovered how his orders had been followed he raved and used some bigger words still; but the incident got out and he was ever after known as “Old Reconnoiter.”

The farmer's actual name has long been forgotten, yet there is a moral to this story which is: when giving directions don't try to show off your superiority by speaking in terms above the level of your listener.

In the weeks ahead this column will include stories about the following: Dye Hose Co. - Wm. B. Dye, Wm. V. N. Barlow-architect, the Court House, County Clerk's Office, County House, Jail, Hon. E. K. Hart, Dr. W. O. Burbank, Chauncey Olcott-actor, Dr. J. A. Hartman-dentist, Lillian Achilles-librarian, and many other interesting people. places and events which have shaped and given character to our local heritage. If you think you have an anecdote, topic or suitable picture with enough information to be published here, contact the County Historian. All original materials will be returned. However, there is no guarantee that your information will be printed.