

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## STORY OF A FLAGMEN'S SHANTY

It's now been around thirty years since the railroad has employed flagmen to be at busy crossings to warn pedestrians and vehicular traffic of oncoming trains. The flagmen's job simply consisted of standing in the middle of the street near the railroad tracks with a round black and white S T O P sign. When there were no trains coming by the flagman waited near the crossing in a flagmen's shanty which was maintained by the railroad. These shantys were normally hexagonal and measured around eight feet across. There was usually a place to hang the stop sign outside near the door when it was not in use. Inside, each shanty had a very small coal burning stove and bench with a seat which lifted up for a coal bin underneath. Flagmen at busy crossings were employed by the railroad in three eight hour shifts daily before automatic signal systems were installed.

The flagman in the accompanying photo is Mike Colonna (1898-1962) holding his stop sign at the Main Street crossing in Albion during the early 1950's, which was just prior to the elimination of that warning system. This view looking south from the railroad tracks shows Main Street in the days before commercialization. The flagmen's shanty was located on the southwest corner of that crossing.

The flagmen's shanty pictured here was the one located at the Clinton Street crossing in Albion. Around thirty years ago when the railroad disposed of these structures, Mike

Colonna made arrangements for Fred and Angeline Epke to acquire it. It was then moved to their home at the corner of West Academy Street and Allen Road where it served as a tool house. Recently, Miss Marie Costello, a sister of Mrs. Angeline Epke who is now deceased, gave the Flagmen's Shanty to the Cobblestone Museum at Childs in memory of her.

Now located in back of the Cobblestone Church, it has been restored to the old New York Central regulation color scheme which is dark green trim with a pale green siding. Miss Costello remembers that Flagman Colburn at Albion's Hamilton Street crossing used to let her and her sisters step inside the shanty to get warm while awaiting a train to pass on their way to school during the winter.