

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## “GOSSIP”

Careful now, don't jump to conclusions about what you think you see. Before you tell someone what you saw, look again. Because what you thought you saw and what you really see are two entirely different things. This 1905 print which was owned by a local family is one of the most extraordinary and deceptive pictures you'll ever see. It is simply entitled “Gossip”. Well named and befitting of the subjects portrayed, I might add. Standing in a doorway, dressed in early 20th century costumes, these ladies with typical oversized millinery of the times, are engaged in what appears to be gossip.

The following receipt for Gossip appeared in a local paper over one hundred years ago. These ladies would appear to be putting this to use.

“Take a grain of falsehood, a handful of run about, the same quantity of nimble tongue, a sprig of the herb Backbite, a teaspoonful of ‘Don't you tell it’, six drachms of Malice, add a few drops Envy. Stir well together and simmer half an hour. Add a little Discontent and Jealousy. Then strain through a bag of Misconstruction, cork it up in a bottle of Malevolence and hang it upon a skein of street yarn. Shake it occasionally for a few days and it will be fit for use. Let a few drops be taken before walking out and the desired result will follow”.

Is it any wonder this picture looks like the Devil? As I read and study more about history, I've come to the conclusion that times and people never change. Space changes, but times and people never change. Who ever wrote the Gossip Receipt and the artist who created this print were both making comments on their observances of people. If indeed, it were possible to raise our ancestors from the dead, they might be surprised at some of the changes in space but as to the times and people, I think not. Nay, rather I've heard the likes of any number of our forebearers over morning cups of coffee spinning street yarns. For instance, just ask anyone with a nimble tongue about the time Cher Bonp supposedly bought a house in Medina.