

Bethinking of Old Orleans

5-31-85

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



Vol. VII

THE BUSHNELL SEXTUPLETS

No. 22

On September 8, 1866 Jennia, age 29, wife of James L. Bushnell, age 45, gave birth to sextuplets in Chicago. All six children, three girls and three boys survived beyond infancy. They were delivered by a midwife named Priscilla Bancroft assisted by a Hannah Osborn. Mr. Bushnell was born in Phelps, N.Y. and was working at the time as a grain merchant in Chicago. Mrs. Bushnell was of French origin which thus influenced her naming the sextuplets as follows: Alberto, Layeburto, Norberto, Linca Lucy, Alinca and Alice. Linca died at age eight months and Layeburto died at age four years. The other four sextuplets lived into adulthood.

During the great Chicago fire of 1871 the Bushnells were burned out which followed the deaths of the two children. It was at that time when James and Jennia Bushnell and their four remaining children moved to Buffalo where Mr. Bushnell became a clothier. From Buffalo the family moved to Lockport where Mr. Bushnell was a grocer. It was there that Jennia Bushnell died when the children were eight years old. From Lockport James Bushnell moved to Medina where he worked for James Kearney. Finally in the early 1880's he moved to Albion where he became a bookkeeper for a quarry company.

Alice Bushnell was for many years a piano teacher in Albion, eventually marrying a James Hughes and moving to Flagstaff, Arizona. Norberto lived in Lockport and died there in 1934. Alberto worked as a handyman around Albion for many years and died in the County Home in 1942. Alinca married a man by the name of Parker and lived throughout her adult life in Silver Lake, N.Y. For many years she worked in the Perry Knitting Company. She was the last survivor of the sextuplets, dying in 1952.

The picture shown here is of Alberto Bushnell and Alinca Bushnell Parker. It was taken in 1940 when they were both interviewed on the radio program called "Ripley's Believe it or not." That was about the first time that the sextuplets gained any notoriety as their father and mother were "ashamed" of the multiple birth. The parents even kept it a secret from the children until the mother died. Mr. Bushnell was offered an opportunity to show off his children through a circus but declined the invitation vehemently.

In later life Mrs. Parker recalled that her mother gave birth to seventeen children including the sextuplets, all of which were multiple births. In order, they were: triplets, sextuplets, triplets and quintuplets. The only children which survived were the ones born in the sextuplet birth.