he gentleman looked every bit the country doctor of a century ago as
he sat in his horse-drawn buggy, arranging the plaid blanket across
his lap and picking up the reins.

The white mare hitched to the black-and-red buggy tossed her
head a couple of times, then started off at a sedate walk as she felt
the flick of the reins against her back.

Dr. R.L. Savoy is a chiropractor, but he wasn't on his way to a
house call. He was enjoying a sunny afternoon with two of his
favorite things — his buggies and his horses.

He has two buggies — a doctor's buggy
and a family buggy — and six horses —
four mares and two foals. He collects buggies
and raises "buggy horses."

And what better place to collect buggies and
raise buggy horses than Church Point, whose citizens claim it as the Buggy
Capital of the World?

"Church Point is the hub of Southwest
Louisiana," Savoy said. "But all the major
roads run north and south or east and west. Old Highway 90 runs from Crowley
to Lafayette; Highway 190 runs from Bun-
ice to Opelousas; Highway 165 runs from
Lafayette to Opelousas; and Highway 13 runs between Crowley and Eunice.

"We're only a half-hour drive from seven county seats — Ville Platte in
Evangeline Parish, Opelousas in St. Land-
dry, Lafayette in Lafayette Parish, St.
Martinville in St. Martin Parish, New
Iberia in New Iberia Parish, Crowley in
Acadia Parish and Jennings in Jefferson
Davis — but we always had poor roads.

"Even though you had a good car, you
couldn't use it. It would have been torn
up," Savoy said.

"We were the last place to get good grav-
el roads. So buggies were our main means
of transportation, long after other areas
stopped using them."

Church Point resident Jean Murphy
said they used buggies to visit. I don't think people take the time to visit
with each other anymore.

"Can you imagine going to church or
going to get your groceries by buggy? It
was a time of peace and tranquility; that's
why they mean so much to me. They rep-
resent a time that was peaceful. People
were happier then than they are now, I
think.

"This is how my dad done his courting
in those days," Savoy said. "Buggies are a
part of our culture."

People relied on their buggies. When I was born, my grand-
parents couldn't come and see me — their first grandchild — because it was
too cold and the weather was too bad to
take the buggy out," Murphy said.

"I've always had horses since I was part of the dress code." 

Savoy breeds his mares with a friend's
white Tennessee Walker stallion. "I got a
bunch of white ones. Now I'm trying to get
a white horse with a black mane and tail.
They're very rare.

"It's a hit-and-miss deal to try to breed
that color," he said.

"When you say 'whoa,' you want your horse to stop still. You've only got so much
territory" along a parade route, Savoy
said. He and his horses and buggies partic-
ipate in quite a few parades.

The annual Buggy Festival is held the
first weekend in June and includes a pa-
rade. "We use any horse-drawn carriage
we can get ahold of."

"We're hoping to keep our title" of
Buggy Capital of the World "by getting a
buggy factory going in the future, but
there's not much demand for buggies
around here at the present time except for
parades," Savoy said.

The Savoys dressed in their parade
outfits and climbed into the buggy for a ride around the yard of their
19th-century house.

"How do I get in this buggy?" Bell
Savoy asked as she clutched her skirt in
one hand and prepared to climb in.

"Very carefully," Murphy replied.

"Come on, Daddy, we'll have to sit close for a little while," Bell Savoy said to her
husband as he climbed into the buggy be-
side her.

She carefully arranged the red plaid
blanket across their knees. "They always
used a blanket. I don't know why. Maybe
they were modest.

"The blanket was to keep the mud from
coming over the wheels," Savoy said. "It
was to keep them warm and neat. It was
part of the dress code."

Leroy Richard, another buggy fan who
lives down the road and around the corner
from the Savoys, rides around the area in
a homemade black buggy pulled by a black
Tennessee Walker.

"I tell you what, it takes a man with a lot
Can you imagine going to church or going to get your groceries by buggy? It was a time of peace and tranquility; that's why they mean so much to me. They represent a time that was peaceful. People were happier then than they are now, I think.

"I can drive?" Brad asked.
"No, no, not right now," Richard said, and, with a slap of the reins against the horse's rump, off they went, down the driveway and along the road at a brisk clip.
"See, that's a good buggy horse," Savoy said, referring to Shadow, the Tennessee Walker. Richard had dropped the reins and climbed down to inspect something about the wheel that didn't meet with his satisfaction.
"When you don't have the reins, he (horse) just freezes," Savoy said.
Richard, a retired welder, has trained buggy horses for years. "I still train them if anyone wants them, but there's not much demand anymore," he said.
"Know anyone who wants a buggy horse trained?"