piece of canvas and of course a little paint. The pretty little Bogue Falaya we entered next and found it more charming than the other.

Arriving at "Old Landin," I looked around for my friends whom I failed to see and was about to ascend the stage of that very agreeable and accommodating gentleman, A. Frederick, when I heard a musical voice call my name; it was none other than the sprightly Josie. We three, Josie, Carrie and I started for Covington in a buggy drawn by the pride of the Noble Emile, Duck.

Amy McManus would, in a few years time, marry the man she referred to as "Noble." Emile Frederick, who was known as "Boss" by just about everyone else in Covington. His sister Josie, mentioned in Amy's letter, has her own connection with Covington and the shipping trade that lived on for many years.

Josie Frederick married Capt. Henry Weaver in 1889. Weaver was master of the schooner Two Sons, which for years had made weekly trips between Covington and New Orleans. Russell Barnes reported in 2000 for the St. Tammany Historical Society's publication Millennial Gazette that in 1891, Weaver had a new schooner built and named it the Josie Weaver after his bride. The schooner was the first of three ships named Josie Weaver to land at Covington. Barnes notes that she would have carried on a typical trip, as well as what other ships would have carried traveling the Covington to New Orleans route:

During the 1890s, the Josie Weaver sailed exclusively between Covington and New Orleans, carrying cargos of sand, cotton, tar, resin, turpentine and clay to New Orleans. On one trip to New Orleans in November 1899, she carried 52 bales of cotton, 126 barrels of resin, 26 barrels of turpentine, 250 barrels of sand and 25 barrels of clay. On her return voyages to Covington, she carried anything that could be loaded onto a schooner.

The schooner Josie Weaver was lost at the turn of the century. Weaver replaced her with a larger sailing ship of the same name. In 1908, he invested in building a much larger steamship he named simply Josie. The steamship carried both passengers and freight, and Barnes states she plied the waters from Columbia Street to the New Basin in New Orleans into the 1920s.

Excursion ships fed a blossoming tourist trade as hordes of New Orleanians fied the specters of yellow fever, malaria and cholera outbreaks that often plagued the city in the summertime. Ellis states that there were six such ships operating in 1879, including the Camelia (later the New Camellia) the Abita, Alice, Georgia Muny, Heroine and Henry Wright, which ferried passengers to the supposedly more healthy "ozone" atmosphere and pure water that Covington and St. Tammany Parish offered.

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Among her freight carrying contemporaries were the lake veterans F.M. Pippo, the Rosa A., owned by Jones & Pickett of Covington; the J.R. O'Rourke owned by L.P. Delcroix; and the St. Bartolomeo. Each of these schooners carried the same kinds of cargos as the Josie Weaver. Likewise, they charged much the same freight rates, 30 cents per bale of cotton, 15 cents per dry barrel and 10 cents per sack of produce.

The Ozone Belt
One of Covington’s most valuable commodities could not be packed up and shipped to the southshore—ozone.

What is ozone? Chemically, it’s an unstable form of oxygen, with three atoms (O3) rather than the normal two. The extra atom of oxygen becomes free to combine with other substances, and its presence in higher-than-normal concentrations was thought to produce cleaner and healthier air.

Common wisdom of the day was that yellow fever didn’t stand a chance in Covington and that cases of tuberculosis were cured within a few months time. When yellow fever epidemics struck New Orleans, many other destinations were quarantined against people leaving the city, fearing they would bring the disease with them. Covington welcomed the refugees, trusting the ozone to prevent any outbreaks.

In fact, the United States government made it official in 1891. Judge Ellis relates that after examining the area’s population and discovering the low percentage of deaths reported relative to the population as stated in the 1890 census, the census commissioner declared Covington the "most healthy place in the United States."

Ellis goes on to report that during a yellow fever outbreak in 1897, a physician responded to a statement in a Chicago paper that Atlanta was the only Southern city not quarantined. Her letter
Covington

Above: Emile "Boss" was reprinted in the Farmer. She relayed the Frederick and Maurice news that Covington had voted not to issue a quarantine and talked of the ozone:

Frederick and Maurice dealerships at Boston and New Hampshire streets in the 1930s. A right: The second St. Tammany Parish courthouse served the parish until 1999.

Below: The Covington depot.

Covington is situated in a high, dry, piney region, being surrounded by a belt of long-leaf pine extending 150 miles to the north and east and between forty and fifty miles to the west. The air is filled with the balsamic odor. There is a constant liberation of ozone and no germ disease of any kind has ever gained foothold there. The city has been known as a city of refuge so near at hand, and so that the tuberculous northerner may know that within twenty-four hours and with small expense he may find a climate where the tubercule bacillus cannot thrive.

This was all good news for the railroads, which latched onto these pronouncements and began feverishly selling excursions to Covington. Travelers could take a steamer to Mandeville and board the train to Covington or Abita Springs, or take a boat to one of the landings in Covington, where they would be met by a wagon to carry their luggage while they strolled to their hotel. Mulberry Grove and the Claiborne Cottages were popular resorts. In 1907, the Southern Hotel opened. The grand 34,000-square-foot, mission-style building became a landmark on Boston Street.

In conjunction with Covington's 175th anniversary in 1988, the Times-Picayune ran a special section in which writer Keith Snow reported that when travelers from New Orleans got off at the Mandeville pier an electric trolley would take them to the front door of the Southern Hotel. He said the hotel "boasted caged monkeys and alligators, and a tropical garden with an artisan fountain, where tourists could sample Covington's famous air and water without leaving their hotel."

The Southern Hotel was intended to be a first-class resort to rival those on the East Coast and for a time, it succeeded. As Snow observed, with the advent of the automobile and vacation preferences shifting toward swimming and suntans rather than ozone air and mineral water, its star faded away and it ceased operating as a hotel in the 1960s.

In March 1982, the Greater Covington Chamber of Commerce published a charming interview with Covington natives Pauline Fuhrmann (mother of Pat Clanton) and Phillip Burns, who had both turned 90 earlier that year. They reminisced about life in Covington in the early 20th century and said the Southern Hotel not only attracted visitors from afar, it was also a gathering place for locals. The post office was located in the Southern Hotel, which then ride the boat over to New Orleans and come right back. There was a big wooden walkway on the beach in Mandeville so people could walk right out on it into the boats."

Covington also enjoyed its share of more casual establishments that provided refreshments and rest—the inns, saloons and a few fine boarding houses. The Sellor family opened a saloon on Columbia Street and also rented rooms. It was advertised as an "oyster saloon" and later, the Seller Hotel. Emile "Boss" Frederick had a saloon that was destroyed along with most of the block bounded by Boston, Columbia, Florida and Rutland streets in a disastrous 1906 fire.

The Covington Fire Department posing at the corner of Boston and Columbia streets.
While Covington's turn-of-the-century boom arose partly out of the improved transportation, it was also a result of the efforts of the more industrious "come heres" of the time, many of whose names remain familiar ones in the community today. These families established their own businesses, from growing agricultural products and processing lumber to brickmaking and banking, and were active in other important aspects of the life of the community. Although the nature of their businesses may have evolved over the years, "old timer" families such as these whose stories we tell briefly here provided a strong foundation and a stable continuity that has served Covington well.

The Alexius family

Gabriel "Gib" Parker's brickyard property on the Abita River went through other owners before being sold to Guido C. Alexius in 1887. Guido and his descendants became important members of the community, including current Covington city council member Lee Alexius. Alexius expanded the brickyard's operations and also farmed cotton and rice at various times, as well as raising livestock. The area became known as "Alexiusville." An ad Guido placed in the Farmer read:

"Abita River Brick and Tile Works. G.C. Alexius, Prop. Manufacturer and Wholesale Dealer in all kinds of lake brick, clay and sand. Alexiusville, Covington P.O., La."

The land was sold off in pieces over the years, with the largest parcel, 861 acres, sold to the Tulane University Primate Center in 1963.

The Poole family

Covingtonians of recent vintage associate the Poole family name with lumber products. Although the Pooles have been a part of Covington's commercial scene since the late 1800s, they were not one of the many families who sought their fortune cutting St. Tammany pine at that time.

The Poole Brothers Livery and Stable was located on New Hampshire Street, in the spot next to the ex-let entrance that the St. Tammany Farmer's office now occupies. Like a car rental business today, travelers departing the nearby train station could procure their local transportation at Poole Brothers, which also served as the local undertaker's location.

The Poole family

It became Wallace Poole Livery and Sale Stable in 1909 after Wallace bought out other family members. Wallace was very active in the Covington community, having been elected mayor and alderman.

His son, Weldon Wallace Poole, founded Poole Lumber Company in 1945. The latest generation of the Poole family continues supplying St. Tammany with the materials to build the future.

The Warner family

The great pine forests surrounding Covington have provided well for its residents, supplying cool breezes, shade and the very ozone air that made Covington an in-demand resort town. Pine trees also provided the timber for building homes and boats. The shipping industry also relied on products made from pine sap, like tar and turpentine, whose manufacture was an important industry for Covington.

Mackie Pine Products was located where the St. Tammany Justice Center stands today. A 1921 advertisement presented the company as "Manufacturers of steam distilled turpentine from "Come Heres" to "Old Timers"

Harry Warner's father, John H. Warner, worked for Mackie Pine Products and owned its successor, Delta Pine Products. Harry worked for Delta for a time but the lack of virgin pine spelled the end of the business when he was 22 years old. While the pine products industry may have faded, Warner's entrepreneurial spirit went on. His companies, P&W Industries, P&W Concrete and Parish Concrete have provided economic growth and many jobs for the region.

The original Poole family home built by Wallace Maury Poole on New Hampshire Street on the Bogue Falaya River.
Warnor's father was very active in community service, and Warner has followed his father's example. He was a founder of the St. Tammany Parish Hospital Foundation and is active in many organizations, including the Covington Food Bank.

The Blossman family

The railroads and the town's healthy reputation brought the Blossman family to Covington. Richard Sampson Blossman was a bookkeeper for the Great Southern Lumber Company who had been sent to the northshore to audit the company sawmill. Family lore says he noticed the rusty gates of the cemetery in town. Contrasting that with the yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans at that time, he noted that, "No one's died here in a long time," and moved his wife and parents to the northshore.

Known as Fred, Richard's son Alfred Blossman Sr., left school after the fifth grade to work as a paper boy, meeting the arriving trains from New Orleans twice a day. Fred parlayed his entrepreneurial spirit into a variety of business ventures over his lifetime, and his family members and descendants have left their mark all over the Covington area as lawyers, politicians, bankers and in real estate development.

The Smith family

Walk up the wooden steps at H. J. Smith & Sons Hardware on Columbia Street in Covington and meet the latest generation of Smiths to work in the business, which began in 1875. In the museum next to the hardware store, which is the original store building founded by Henry James Smith, J. Louis "Red" Smith will show you receipts from 1910 for wagon wheels and farm implements delivered by schooners that docked at the foot of Columbia Street.

While offering dry goods "at the lowest cash prices," H. J. Smith also traded in cotton. Farmers would haul their crop to Covington, where the Smiths would weigh the bales and barter with the farmer for groceries, equipment and other supplies. They would then store the bales and wait for the commodity's price to rise before hauling the bales to the landing for shipment to the city.

The Planche family

Katie Planche Friedrichs was a descendant of one of the French-born immigrants who came to find success in Covington. She recalled that her grandfather left New Orleans for the northshore during the Civil War. "The family spoke Parisian French," she said. "As a child, I can remember my parents and aunts abruptly switching to English when I entered the room."

Her father, Maurice P. Planche, and his partner, "Boss" E. J. Frederick, opened the first icehouse in Covington in the early 1900s and owned the first Ford automobile dealership as well. Friedrichs lived on land on the Bogue Falaya River settled by her father, who was quite the entrepreneur, operating the water weirs and the electric company. He also brought a French baker to Covington. "Papa named his place Mill Bank Farm, after the sawmill on the river," Kit Friedrichs-Baumann, along with her husband and son, now steward the family legacy on the Bogue Falaya.

The Core family and St. Tammany Parish Hospital

In 1968, during Covington's 175th anniversary, Norma Core recalled that the family of her husband, Archie Core, had been in the area since before 1800. The Schultzes, her mother's family, came from Germany in the 1850s, and her father's, the Depreists, came after the Civil War.

Norma, who passed away in 1992, was one of the driving forces behind the Women's Progressive Union of Covington's eight-year effort to establish St. Tammany Parish Hospital. It opened on Dec. 1, 1954, as a 50-bed general hospital but has grown...
The St. Tammany Farmer newspaper was founded in 1874. Carol Jahncke researched back issues of the St. Tammany Farmer and compiled the book, Mr. Kentzel's Covington. Kentzel was an early publisher of the paper, and Jahncke's book tells how the editor would rally town folk behind projects he deemed important—a railroad, school, town hall, fire company and, especially, good roads and bridges.

Today, The St. Tammany Farmer is the official journal for St. Tammany Parish and publishes public notices required by various governmental agencies. It is published under the guidance of Karen Courtney, the third generation of the Goodwyn family, which has owned the paper since 1928.

The Farmer's office stands at the site of the former Poole Brothers' Livery Stable on New Hampshire Street. The retail merchants

If you say “shopping in Covington” to any long-time resident, it might bring up memories of a host of places not named “Walmart.”

There was Norman Haik’s store, last located at the corner of Boston and Columbia, that clothed generations of the city’s men, women and children; Frank Patecek and Ellis Haik, of another branch of the Haiks, were in the mercantile business as well. Right down Columbia Street, in what is now the St. Tammany Art Association Art House, was Nicholas Toye, a long time before that, it was Bernard Barrere’s dry goods store. Down Columbia and across the street, the Champagne family ran Champagne Grocery from 1919 until the late 1970s. Of course, there was always H.J. Smith and Sons. The stalwart store and museum embodies the history of the retail trade in Covington.

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