Richard Dixon displays his recently published book, "This Is Algiers," which traces Algiers' history from 1718 to 1970. The book's cover photograph depicts the old Leonard Plantation, built in 1840. The author's wife, as a child, posed with her uncle in front of the family home—which was demolished in 1969 after having been set afire three or four times by vandals. The house was at Merrill and Patterson Streets.

**Down memory lane in Algiers**

by Jennifer Quale

NOSTALGIA currently reigns as the queen of sentiments. As a password, it's accepted universally. For this reason, Richard Dixon’s recently published book, "This Is Algiers," holds a good deal of appeal. Written in observance of the 100th anniversary of the annexation, on March 16, 1870, of Algiers to New Orleans, the book presents “a historical sketch of Algiers, its past, its present, and a few incidents in between.”

Native "Algerine" Dixon recalls some of the incidents about people, places and

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Inundated by floodwaters at the turn of the century was the Leonard Plantation which was in an area of Algiers once known as McClellanville. The mule's name was "Belle Dame."
... Algiers

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things peculiar to that West Bank section of the Crescent City: "I remember Henry Caffiero, who operated a coal and wood yard on Slidell and Nunez Streets. He also did a real big ice business. This was before electric refrigeration. "He had a big polly (parrot) that used to sing out when he saw a customer approaching. 'Mr. Henry,' it would say, 'I want some ice,' or maybe, 'Miss Celie (Mrs. Caffiero), I want a bucket of coal.' "Mr. Caffiero had a large flock of guinea hens - symbols of good luck. They used to perch, night and day, summer or winter, on his rooftop. They could predict the weather better than old Dr. Cline or Nash Roberts. They made a certain sound for rain; or maybe another one when a cold wave was on the way. They never missed!"

DIXON recalls an incident in 1920 when Eamon de Valera, who was later to become president of Ireland, visited Algiers and spoke at the Holy Name of Mary School.

"It was the same situation in Ireland then that's going on now. Valera came to the states for support," says Dixon. "I recited a poem and welcomed him. He gave me a holy picture, autographed, which I still have."

The author also points out the benevolence of the early politicians, whose custom was to frequently lease a mule and wagon from needy widows, in times before the modern sanitation department was organized. Widows who were left without support would usually borrow money with which to purchase a mule and two-wheel wagon. This apparatus became known as the "widow's cart."

The widow would hire a driver, then rent the whole shebang to the city government to pick up garbage.

"An annual inspection was held on each Labor Day. The drivers, mules and carts were 'spruced up' on this occasion, much to the pride of the widows and the edification of both the politicians and finally the public," writes Dixon.

Local color has been provided by various Algerines, many of whom rose to storybook success. One such man was Jules Bodenger, an immigrant who came to Algiers as a young man in the late 19th century.

"He went around fixing pots and pans, and then gutters," recalls Dixon. "He operated a plumbing and tinsmith shop. By the time he died, he was the biggest landowner and developer in Algiers."

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Kerosene heaters and coal burners, above, were once hot items at Du-vc's Hardware Store, 123 Morgan St. The old Duverje plantation, built in 1812, became the Algiers Court House in 1869 and was destroyed in the great Algiers fire of Oct. 20, 1895, top right. Austrian immigrant Jules Bodenger, right, rose to storybook success in the early 1900s.
Capt. Thomas Pickles, right, operated Algiers ferryboats for years. The "Thomas Pickles" was named in honor of the ferryboat pioneer.

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"Bodenger was at one time a pupil of William Wallace Lampton, a blind man who lived on Opelousas Avenue. He taught practically all the successful businessmen of the past generation in Algiers. Most of them were self-made—they came from relatively poor families, and were not able to attend school full-time. Lampton taught all the subjects and even gave lessons on his musical instruments. He had a classroom in his home; the kids could work and go to school as well. Lampton was a great baseball fan; he was amazing in history. And he could sit down and play the piano for hours.

"My uncle, Remy Charles, went to his one-man school. Now, he's executive vice president of a building-and-loan association and part owner of several hardware stores."

Dixon recalls his own high school days, during Prohibition, when he went into the printing business. He operated a shop at the rear of his parents' home on Slidell Avenue. Next door was an alley-

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"Joseph Huguet (left) who celebrated his 93rd birthday in 1970, said 'The River Road was almost like living in another world. There were the communities of McClellanville, Tunisburg, Aurora, Stanton, Point Beca and along the way many beautiful homes and plantations. It was a gracious way of living. And we were always concerned with the welfare of everyone. I remember on Sunday afternoons, we would get all dressed up and play croquet on the lawn... We served homemade cake and ice cream, besides ice-cold lemonade under the moss laden trees. There was always a breeze from the river... yes, the River Road was something special,'" writes Dixon.

DIXIE, December 5, 1971
way belonging to the Folly Theatre.

"Although we never made home brew, most families did," adds Dixon. "Some even went into bootlegging.

"The late Bill Whitmore played the organ in the Folly Theatre, in the pre-talkie days; during the evening he usually took a few minutes to smoke a cigarette and to get a little fresh air.

Since I did my printing mostly at night, and as the press went clackety-clack, Whitmore thought it might have been a bootlegging operation and that my press was a machine capping the bootleg liquor. He told me later that he came back every night to check on what he thought was the bootleg operation!

"During those days we printed death notices when somebody in the area died. You printed about 25 or 30 copies and usually got someone to tack the notices on utility poles around town. Late one Saturday night, I got an order and printed up some notices, But since I had made previous plans to attend a formal..."

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Algerine jazz musicians George Lewis, top left, and "Kid Thomas" Valentine, top right. Carnival King Alla IV, Edward O'Hara, and the late Commissioner Joseph P. Skelly, at left.
Hook and Ladder Company No. 6 was under the supervision of Capt. J. A. Babin, famous for his courageous actions during the Planters Oil Works.
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dance, I postponed, or rather forgot, to get someone to tack up the notices.
After the dance, without waiting to change clothes, I went around town myself with the notices and my dog. Meanwhile, it started to rain and there was lightning. At the corner of Pelican and Verret streets, as I reached up to tack a notice, it seemed a bolt of lightning struck the pole, and I hit the ground.
"I thought I was dead. But there it was, three or four o'clock in the morning and me lying in the street in talls. If there were any people passing by, they probably thought I was a drunk."
And a well-dressed one at that.

REMINISCING about the '30s was pleasant for Dixon. "The whole town turned out one day back then when the news was spread that the Blessed Virgin Mary had appeared in one of the side windows of the Second Good Hope Negro Baptist Church on Elmira Street. Many people came for days to witness the apparition (Dixon himself stood there for hours) ""

This particular church is no longer standing, a fact which points to the very purpose of Dixon's book. "My aim," explains Dixon, "is to get people to restore and preserve the value of Algiers."