

Royston, Leo



Wood Carver

Mr. Leo Royston was born in 1900, in Natchitoches, Louisiana. After his retirement from Exxon Oil Company, Mr. Royston became an excellent whittler.

Crafts and folk arts are generally passed from one generation down to the next. Stories are told to the young by their parents, and skills are taught to the younger generation to improve their lives. With Leo Royston, the sequence of events got turned around a little. Leo's son, Kenneth Royston, taught Leo how to carve puzzles out of wood.

Mr. Royston whittled chains, pulleys, wagons, intricate handguns, hammers, and ball in chain. One of his specialties was a long wooden chain that he carved from a single piece of wood. He completed one that contains 72 links. He also specialized in mind teasers and puzzles. He carved these pieces out of basswood and when asked what it takes to carve these items, he joked, "You need plenty of patience and band-aids."

Back in the days before Power Rangers and Sega Genesis, children had only the toys that were made by family members or other individuals. Many of the puzzles and toys that Leo Royston made were toys that had been around for generations. Leo and Kenneth were trying to ensure that these toys remained around for a few more generations.

Mr. Leo Royston was a regular at many festivals throughout the state including the NSU Folk Festival, Natchitoches, Louisiana. Although Mr. Leo Royston passed away in August 2000, his son Kenneth continues to carve wood from his home in Houma, Louisiana.

