

Bethinking of Old Orleans

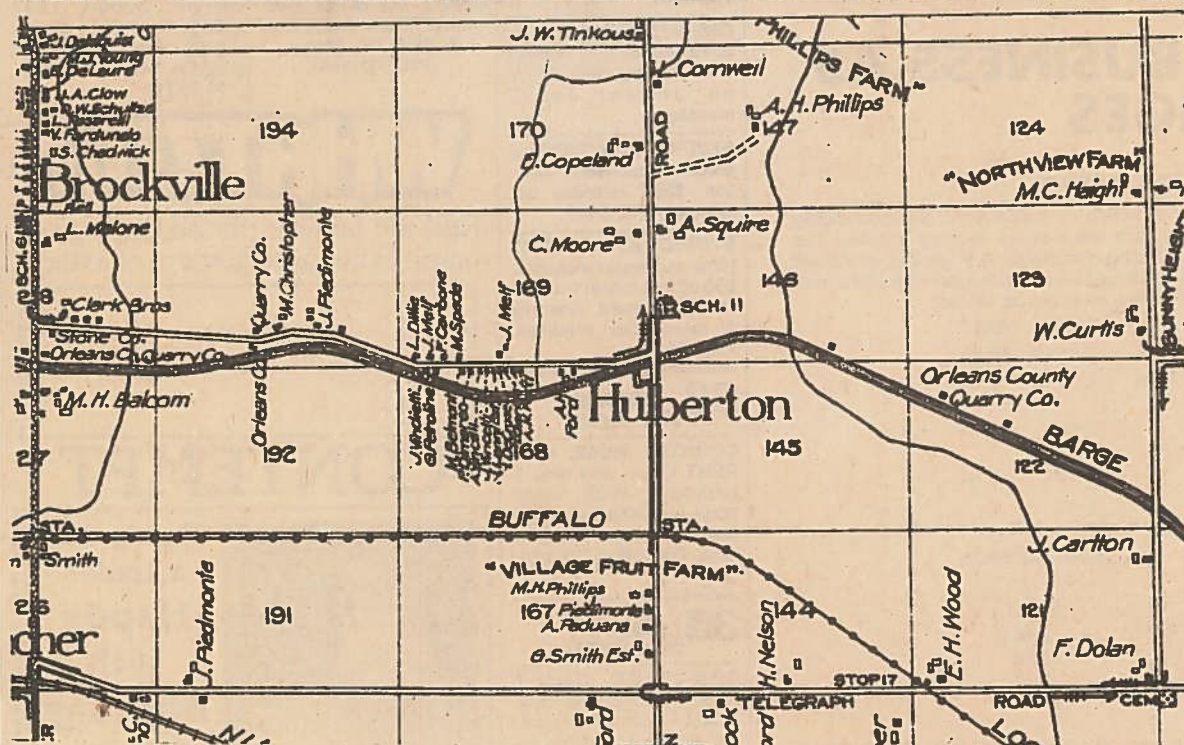
C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XVII

10-4-95

No. 40

STONE CUTTERS



This 1898 photo shows Italian stone cutters from Hulberton. Posed in a photographic studio under natural light probably from a skylight, we see five well dressed men and a boy. The men all appear to be holding cigars which they must have thought looked stylish and perhaps gave them an air of confidence.

From left to right they are: Michael Belmonte (1869-1919), John Melfi, Tom Vincelli who is seated on the wicker chair, Joe Melfi (1868-1962), James C. Vincelli (1885-1942), and Pasquale DeMarco (1871-1918).

Our man is from the 1913 Atlas of Orleans County and shows Hulberton where many of these people lived. We note west of Hulberton where quarries are located that there are many residences of Italian families. Such names as: Vindietti, Petrolino, Belmont, Dimareo, Vincelli, Lanni, Piedimonte, Christopher, DeCroze, Melfi, Carbone, Spade appear here. We can certainly deduce that this is an Italian community or neighborhood.

By 1904 we had forty-eight operative quarries in Orleans County producing Medina Sandstone products. Many of these quarries were in the Hulberton/Holley area of our county. It was during the late 19th century that many Italian immigrants came to our county to specifically work in the quarries. Many of them were indeed, skilled artisans. In Hulberton around the turn of the century, there was an organization known as Italian-American Quarry Workers - Social Union. Because of the great number of Italian families living in Hulberton, St. Roccas R.C. Church was established by Father Martinelle in 1905. In nearby Brockport St. Peters R.C. Church was opened in 1913.

The name Orleans County Quarry Company appears in three places on this 1913 map of the Hulberton area which indicates this was big business that employed many seasonal quarry workers. The largest product out of these quarries years ago were paving blocks. Hundreds of boat loads of this material were shipped out of here each season on the Erie Canal as well as on gondolas over the NYC RR. The dotted line which prominently shows on our map is however, the B L and R trolley line.

Many fine examples of architecture employing the use of sandstone remain in our area giving testimony to this once prominent industry. St. Rocco's Church in Hulberton is but one example showing Italian skill at its best.

We are indebted to Mr. Robert Garnham of Rochester for the donation of this wonderful photo of stone cutters. Mr. Garnham is the grandson of Michael Belmonte in the photo. Along with this, Mr. Garnham has also donated to the Cobblestone Museum, a large wooden box of stone cutters tools once belonging to Giuseppe Vincelli and his son James Vincelli who is the boy pictured. The tools are on display in the Cobblestone Museum at Childs as they relate to the Medina Sandstone trim found on so many cobblestone buildings.

On Saturday, October 14 from 2-4 I will be conducting a guided walking tour of Mt. Albion Cemetery beginning at the Chapel. Here we will see the use of Medina Sandstone for architectural purposes throughout the cemetery. However, there are only a handful of monuments using this material. Sandstone monuments are more readily found at the Catholic cemeteries, which makes sense considering the ethnic background of many of the stone cutters years ago.