

BETHINKING OF OLDE ORLEANS

Vol. XXVIII, No. 13



The New City Hall in course of construction, Medina, N. Y.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MEDINA CITY HALL

Landmark building came about as a result of a fire

BY C.W. LATTIN

The photo shown here, taken from a vintage postcard, shows the Medina City Hall under construction in 1908. Appropriately built of Medina Sandstone, it remains one of the county's outstanding public buildings and truly a landmark.

Although the Medina Sandstone industry was a major part of the local economy in the later part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century, few public buildings were erected. By public buildings, I mean those paid for at taxpayers expense.

Those that remain from that grand era of quarry can be named on one hand. They are: The former Grammar School in Albion, the former Armory in Medina and the Medina City Hall. That's it. We've lost the old Orleans County Jail, which was torn down 35 years ago, the old Medina High School, which

was torn down following a fire in the 1960s, and the Medina Academy, which was torn down in the early 1920s.

The point here is that the Medina City Hall is unique and it is also a gem in its masonry form of construction. Buildings of this type were more costly to erect because of the hand tooling of the stone. No two blocks were alike or the same size. Hand work costs extra and taxpayers have never wanted to be gouged. Therefore, very few public buildings in our county were erected of sandstone.

We can boast of 10 historic Medina sandstone churches, four cemetery chapels and the Civil War Tower in Mt. Albion Cemetery as major works.

From the private sector a number of commercial buildings and business blocks and a few residences were built. These were most usually, but not entirely, erected by the more well to do people however.

The Medina City Hall came about as a result of a fire which totally destroyed an engine house at the southwest corner of Main Street and Park Avenue in 1907. In other words the fire department burned down.

It was described as "the old wooden ramshackle engine house."

Following this fire, the village trustees decided to rebuild combining the fire department with a village hall. The contractors were local men well known at their trade, Frank Mallison and Arthur Soucie. The corner stone on the northeast corner at ground floor level simply states "1908."

The building was completed in 1909. Within just a very short time the porch was added to the front entrance. Because that was an afterthought, it does not show in this older photo.

As it approaches its 100 anniversary, every effort made to enhance this asset for the greater community will be money well spent.