

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## VOL. III

### COUNTY CLERK AND SURROGATE OFFICE

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Beginning in 1827 the county records were housed in the basement of the first Court House. On March 25, 1836 the Board of Supervisors were authorized by the State Legislature to raise \$2,000 for erecting a County Clerk's office. This was done and that building was situated just west of the present Court House. It was a small one-story brick structure which faced the north and was used until 1883. Shortly thereafter it was razed.

On December 6, 1880 a committee of the Board of Supervisors made the following report: "Upon examination of the County Clerk's office we are convinced that the interests of the county demand the erection a fireproof building to insure the protection of the valuable records of this county, the destruction of which would be an irreparable loss."

A committee on September 19, 1881 reported that the Phipps Seminary property which was immediately south of, and adjacent to the Court House could be bought. At the time, the Village of Albion would have agreed to pay \$3,000 to use part of that land for a schoolhouse but the Supervisors rejected the idea. It was finally purchased in its entirety on October 8, 1881 for \$10,000.

It was resolved on February 20, 1882 by the Supervisors to build a two-story fireproof building for a County Clerk and Surrogate's office. In March of that year Supervisors Bidleman, McCargo and Hallock were made a building committee with full power to contract the work and employ a competent person to superintend erection of the building. By resolution dated June 15, 1882 the county was to borrow up to \$20,000 at the best terms for the required structure. On December 14, 1882 the building committee reported the sale of \$20,000 of bonds at \$20.365. The expenditure of \$17,840 was reported by the committee on April 18, 1883. The Masons were paid \$2.50 per day, other laborers \$1.50 per day and the entire painting of the exterior trim was done for \$170.00. On the 21st of April the Board of Supervisors issued another \$5,000 in bonds to complete the building and grounds. When the Board met December 14, 1883 they authorized the County Clerk to occupy the first floor of the new building on and after December 17, 1883. In 1958 an annex was completed which is attached to the rear of the building.

It is believed that Harvey and Charles Ellis of Rochester, N.Y., two notable architects of the day were engaged to design the building. In stylistic terms it is 'Eastlake' which is based upon a rectilinear approach to design made popular in the third quarter of the 19th Century by the English architect, Charles Eastlake. Notable artistic features include a superb handling of decorative brick work with lime stone trim, the variety of shapes and assorted sizes of windows with colored panes, the roof's castiron cresting and the broken skyline created by the mansard tower make the building anything but boring to look at. All the interior woodwork is solid walnut in the Eastlake Style. Originally all the windows were outfitted with inside shutters of solid cherry. The ceilings are of vaulted brick, the floors marble, the stairs castiron, the rafters metal and the shingles slate. The building, needless to say, is totally fireproof.

