

12-8-81

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



VOLI

MEDINA SANDSTONE

No. 46

Shown here are a group of quarrymen around eighty years ago loading stone to be hauled from a local Medina Sandstone quarry. The Medina Sandstone industry was of major importance to Orleans County at that time. It was first quarried by John Ryan near Medina in 1837, hence it became known as Medina Sandstone. However, many of the quarries were located in the Albion and Hulberton areas of the county, along the Erie Canal and N.Y. Central railroad which provided ready transportation of Medina Sandstone to far off cities such as Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Detroit, New York and Buffalo. Threefourths of the stone buildings in Buffalo are Medina Sandstone which was quarried locally. One of the most notable examples of fine Medina Sandstone work is the western or Million Dollar staircase in the Capitol at Albany. A single piece of stone was quarried for use in the Capitol which measured 12" thick, 12' wide and 30' long. In Albion, the Presbyterian, Universalist and St. Joseph's churches are Medina Sandstone. In Holley St. Mary's, St. Paul's, the First Baptist and in nearby Hulberton, St. Rocco's are Medina Sandstone churches. In Medina St. John's, St. Mary's and the First Baptist are also made of locally quarried Medina Sandstone. The stone trim used on most of the cobblestone buildings in the area is Medina Sandstone. The use of this stone for building purposes is practically endless. Aside from architectural creations, it was also commonly used for curbing and paving blocks in village and city streets.

By the turn of the Century, the demand for this building material was so great that orders could not be filled. In the years 1903 and 1904, 1200 men were employed annually with an average pay roll of \$3000 per day for work in the 48 operative quarries. Medina Sandstone quarrying ranked as the second leading industry in Orleans County during those years, preceded only by agriculture. Government research on this material shows that it stands a crushing test of 22,000 lbs. to the square inch and stands a temperature that will melt copper without injury. However, as time moved on, the cheapness and availability of Portland Cement eventually put the quarries out of business, leaving only one which is partially worked in Orleans County today.