



7-9-09 CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MEDINA SANDSTONE

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Just north of the lift bridge on Route 63 at Ryan Street in Medina is an historic marker about sandstone. On one side it states: "Medina Sandstone used for paving blocks, walks, curbs and in architecture. It was shipped on the Erie Canal in the 1800s and early 1900s. On the other side it states: "John Ryan, the first to establish a stone quarry business here in 1837 naming his product Medina Sandstone."

The accompanying photo taken in 1885 shows the first quarry, which was behind 142 North Gravel Road (Route 63). In the center of the photo wearing the derby

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Bethinking of Olde Orleans

hat is Joseph Stork, foreman of the quarry. Owners of the quarry were John Ryan, then Howell & Chase, then Joseph Stork, then A.L. Swett. John Ryan, also a stone mason, lived from 1801 to 1896.

Although sandstone was discovered when the canal was dug through Medina in 1824 by Oak Orchard Creek, it was John Ryan who made the first attempt to commercialize it in 1837.

During the second half of the 19th century, the sandstone industry took off, so to speak. Many of its quarries were, however, located more toward the eastern half of Orleans County. By 1904, there were 48 operating quarries employing over 1,200 men in the county that season.

Fortuitously, most of the quarries were located along the Erie Canal and the New York Central Railroad for easy shipping of its various sandstone products.

NOTICE: A guided tour of Otter Creek Cemetery, which is located on Route 104 just east of Allen's Bridge Road in the Town of Gaines, will be held at 7 p.m. July 16.