

HISTORICAL WALK

BY C. W. LATTIN 8-5-10
Orleans County historian

This Saturday, the Medina Canal Heritage Day will take place at the Medina Canal Basin. From noon until 6 p.m., various forms of entertainment and demonstrations will take place. This annual event has been put together to highlight the importance of our Erie Canal Heritage.

As part of this family-oriented day, I will be leading a walking tour sponsored by the Medina Sandstone Society. As part of this historical tour, we will visit the three sandstone churches in Medina, which include St. Mary's (1902), First Baptist (1872) and St. John's (1836). We will particularly look at the use of Medina Sandstone on this walking tour.

It was John Ryan who opened the first commercial quarry to obtain this stone in 1837. However, it was discovered as early as 1824 when the Erie Canal was first being dug through Medina, coming in contact with Oak Orchard Creek. Consequently, it was the canal that made it possible for the sandstone industry to flourish in the 19th century. Hundreds of boatloads of

Bethinking of Olde Orleans

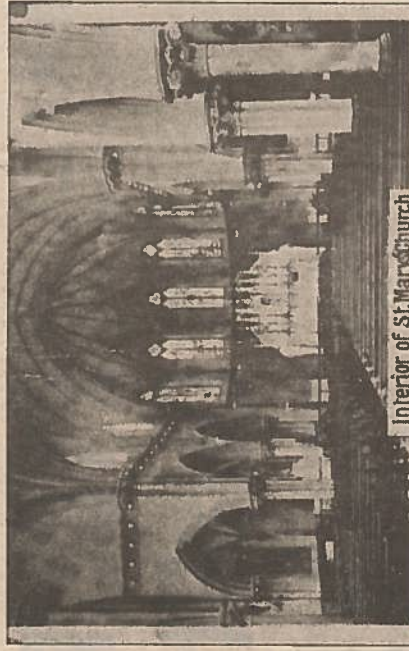
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stone were shipped from Orleans County each season. The primary use was surprisingly not for architecture, but for paving blocks in streets before the advent of blacktop.

Today, however, we are blessed with a number of historic landmarks where local sandstone was used for architectural purposes. The Village of Medina has a great many buildings showing various colors of stone representing different quarries.

Likewise, we can also find a number of Italianate-style buildings in sandstone. These buildings were built in the 1850s and 1860s, when that style was popular and when it was stylish to like Medina sandstone. By the early 20th century, labor costs and its use of Portland cement made it impractical to use sandstone for building purposes.

Our tour Saturday will point out architectural styles to see, church interiors along with stained



Interior of St. Mary's Church



St. Mary's Church, MEDINA, N.Y.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

glass and various symbols. The illustration shown here is taken from an early

20th century postcard showing both the interior and exterior of St. Mary's Church.