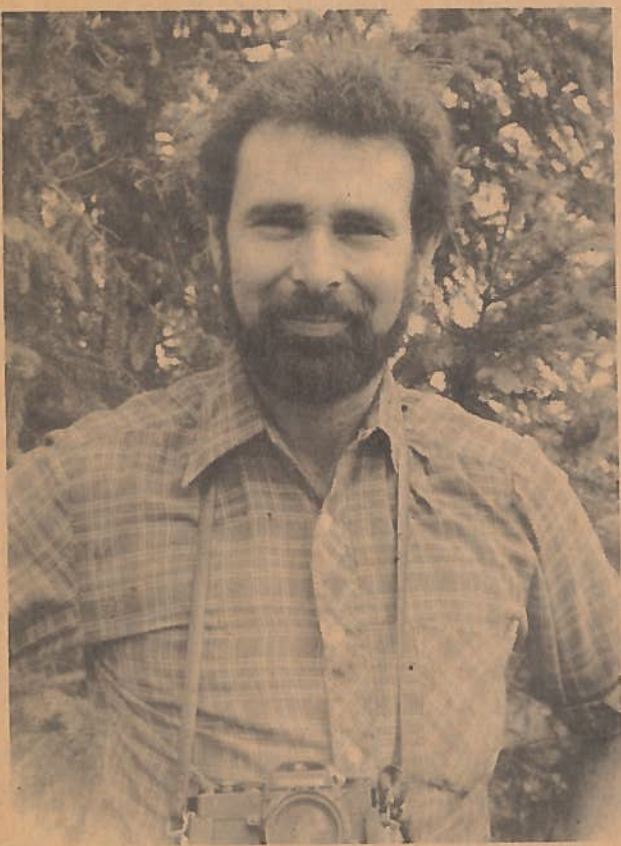


# Bethinking of Old Orleans

8-17-83

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



Vol. V

No. 33

INTRODUCING  
ROBERT GATES, FOLKLORIST

## Medina Sandstone Quarrying

Recently the Orleans County Council on the Arts has received a special grant from the New York State Council on the Arts through its Folk Arts Division to study the science, traditions and folklore of the once booming Medina Sandstone Quarry Industry in the county. Part of the grant will finance the salary of Robert Gates a professional folklorist who will commence living in the county on August 23 for six weeks while doing his research. The Orleans County Department of History in cooperation with the local Arts Council has initiated this project which it hopes will produce a wealth of information on the subject.

In the year 1904 there were 48 operative quarries in Orleans County which employed 1200 men annually. Around this same time, many Polish and Italian immigrants settled in Orleans County because of the quarry industry. Medina Sandstone was shipped far and wide for building purposes as well as being used at home for noteworthy landmarks. But over the years this second largest industry the county ever had, has faded into oblivion. It's unfortunate such a study was not undertaken when more of the "old timers" were still with us who could elaborate on their skills, experiences and ways of life. However, before it gets any later we will attempt to document and preserve legends and information relating to the people and the quarries they worked in.

Robert Gates who will delve into this subject comes to us very highly recommended as a folklorist. He will start out by interviewing people who have had some direct or indirect connection with the quarries, documenting what they say. He is also a photographer who has the ability to copy old photographs on the spot. Towards the end of his stay with us he and the county historian will compile an illustrated booklet on his findings which will be published by the Orleans County Council on the Arts. It is hoped this historical publication will be off the press by December 1983.

Anyone having stories, information or photographs involving the Medina Sandstone Quarries or people who worked there should contact the county historian at 589-9510. In turn, Robert Gates will follow this up. His experience is varried as a professional. He has a B.A. (1972) in Psychology and minors in Physics and History from the University of Cincinnati as well as a M.B. (1983) in Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University at Bowling Green. He received special training at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington in 1981 and the Newberry Library in Chicago during 1979. He has also had several assistantships and internships. For the past several weeks Robert has been employed on a special research project in Schuyler County, N.Y.

Any cooperation or any kindness anyone can show him while he is with us in Orleans County will be most appreciated towards the preservation of folklore in relationship to this fascinating aspect of our local history - Medina Sandstone.