

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## ARCHITECTURE DESTROYED Part XIII

### Orleans County Jail (1903-1970)

Probably the most notable visual atrocity ever perpetrated upon the people of Orleans County was the demolition of the old county jail and the erection of an ugly replacement in the same place. The present jail (lower photo) was designed in 1970 by Bazemore and Grove of Niagara Falls who evidently lacked sensitivity and appreciation for the surrounding district with its historic architecture. Consequently, we are saddled with an incongruous monstrosity which was sold to us under the guise of being something beautiful.

In a recent message to his congregation at St. Joseph's Church, Father Richard L. Wetter of Albion made the following statements: "It is most certainly not true in all cases that 'old is beautiful', but there is something sad in seeing what was once our pride slip away from us in the name of 'progress'. On the other hand it is not beauty to allow ugliness to prevail in the name of beauty". Although Father Wetter was not specifically speaking about the jails shown here, his comments couldn't have been more appropriate.

The old county jail and sheriff's residence may not have been the most beautiful piece of architecture, but it did at least fit in. Being built of Medina Sandstone in 1903-04 it stood as a venerable monument to the Sandstone Quarry Industry and the skillful craftsmanship of long forgotten artisans. Costing a little over \$50,000 to build, it took the place of an older jail on the same site built in 1838. Prior to that time a log jail stood in the same area for about twelve years. I find this interesting, that during the past 157 years four jails have stood on the same location, the last two for an average of sixty-six years each. So maybe there's hope. It's also interesting that each time one has been razed it's been because the State mandated improvements. It's my prediction that many readers of this story will live long enough to see history repeat itself. Let's hope others can learn by our visual mistakes.

"Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope".

--Wilde

