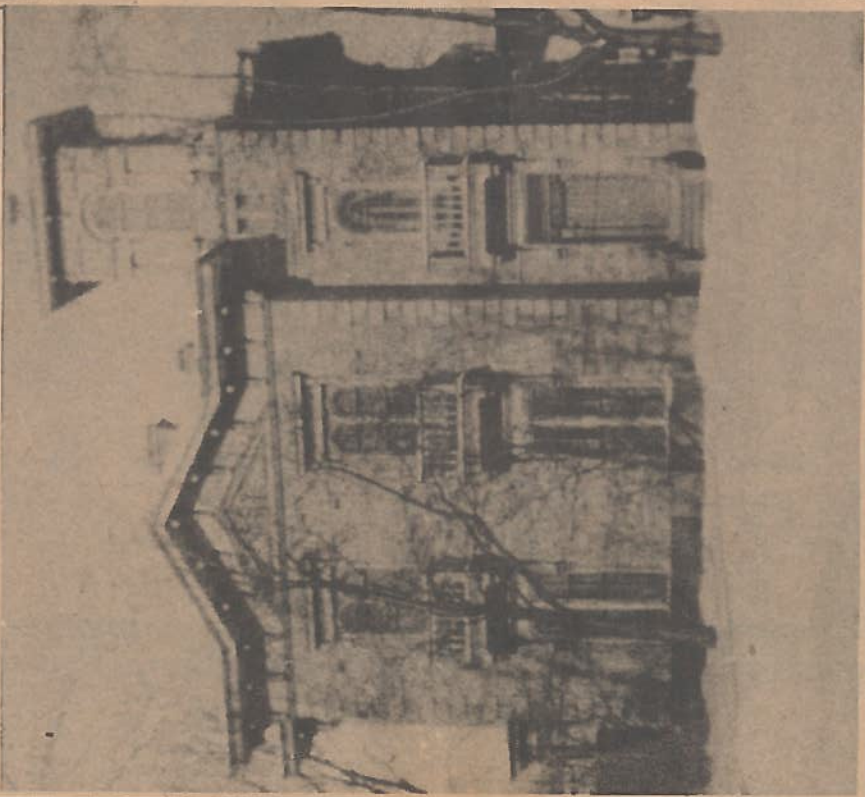


Bethinking of Old Orleans

9-18-85

C.W.Lattin County Historian



Architectural Heritage

Medina
Luther - Balcerzak Residence

Vol. VII
No. 38

Perhaps the most extraordinary residence ever built of Medina Sandstone in Orleans County is the Luther-Balcerzak home at 304 West Center Street in Medina. This photo dating back to the early 1900's shows the house as it appeared, in pure form, before the addition of a large veranda. Buildings in this style were essentially built during the 1850's through the 1870's. Residential architecture of this type frequently emits the feeling of romanticism which emulates the villas found in the Italian countryside along the Mediterranean Sea. Italian villas have a monumental character which is generally achieved through massive proportions. Towers which are usually set back from the main facade give a strong vertical feeling to these structures. Wide overhangs supported by large brackets contribute to the typical decorative features. Very low-pitched roofs are also normal. One of the most distinctive features of these buildings are the arched windows sometimes found in double combinations. Decorative balconies supported on brackets from second story windows form focal points. Any wood trimmings on masonry buildings were painted to blend with other natural materials.

Indeed, the Luther-Balcerzak residence is a quintessential example of the Italianate style in Western New York. The beautifully cut and tooled Medina Sandstone of its exterior walls suggests that this home must have been the envy of many of Medina's nabobs during the third quarter of the 19th Century. During this period American architects and builders sought a style which was cheerful, yet less classical in style than Greek and Roman forms.