

# Bethinking of 5-12-86 Old Orleans

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## Faithful Restoration

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Many architectural treasures have met their doom simply through neglect and improper upkeep. In some cases where repair work has been done, it has been carried out in such a way that it literally destroyed the integrity of the building. Not so however, at the Chapter House of the Orleans DAR pictured here. The women of this organization are to be commended for the restoration undertaken of their front porch which serves as a model for others.

The left column, once solid, was just a shell with a large nest of carpenter ants living in it. The Ionic capital on the right column was almost completely rotted away and no longer supported the roof. The resting on the roof had also suffered some breakage from a falling tree branch. The cheapest solution for many people would have been to remove the porch and thus sacrifice not only a magnificent entrance but the architectural integrity of this mid 1840's structure. This was never considered, but where do you find craftsmen who can reliably reproduce such architectural elements? After casting about for some time, the Landmark Society of Western New York located in Rochester, was able to recommend a person to do the work. Mr. Edward Marris of Architectural Woodwork, 28 Washburn Park in Rochester, was hired. He first took innumerable pictures, showing the damage and existing decorations. He then compiled an impact statement in great detail of the damage and work necessary for restoration. He began his work in the spring of 1985 and had the wood carving done and columns replaced by August 1985. When finished, he sent a note stating "You should know that everything that was recarved or turned was a faithful reproduction of the original components, hence this job is a true historical restoration." Indeed, you get what you pay for. The next time you travel along North Main Street in Albion pay particular note to this extraordinary porch and know that it has been preserved in its original intent for future generations.

Greek Revival architecture in particular, dominated our Orleans County landscape during the second quarter of the 19th century. Such structures impress one with a quality of classical grandeur through elegant proportions and symmetry. It was a style which was popular because in a new nation at the time, it symbolized strength, permanence and seemingly gave us a heritage which we did not have.

The DAR Chapter House was built by Orson Tousley and subsequently owned and used as a residence by the Church Family. In 1929 when it was almost ninety years old, Emma Reed Webster gave it to the Orleans Chapter DAR for their home and museum. During these last fifty-seven years the structure has become recognized as one of the superb examples of the Greek Revival Style in our nation. In the mid 1960's the structure was placed on the Historic American Buildings Survey which brought to it national recognition.