

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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CHURCH TOUR

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"The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose"
(Isaiah 35:1)

On October 19 from 2-5 in the afternoon the public is most cordially invited to tour the seven historic churches around the Court House Square in Albion. The tour which has been arranged by Orleans County Department of History in concurrence with the Village Historian is in celebration of Architectural Heritage Year in New York during 1986. The churches at the square represent various architectural styles, some of which were prevalent in the 19th century. They include Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, Norman Revival and Romanesque.

Shown here is the First Presbyterian Church of Albion which was erected in 1874. Built completely of Medina Sandstone, it ranks as one of the county's most outstanding landmarks. The 175 foot spire can be seen from miles around. The church was designed by A.J. Warren of Rochester who was at the time, a prominent regional architect. The spire at the Presbyterian Church surely ranks as his masterpiece as no other spire in stone ever seems so delicate and slender in its appearance.

Several legends surround the erection of this outstanding work of art in stone. One such legend being that Elezur Hart who gave \$50,000 towards the building of the church wanted the spire to be higher than that of the Baptist Church a couple of blocks away. Another legend which has come down to us about this Gothic work is that the mason who placed the stone finial on the very top of the spire then stood on his head on it and shouted "Hurrah for Grant." Supposedly many school children around Albion in 1874 got the chance to sit on the finial before it was hoisted up into place. It is anchored by a steel rod which is stabilized down in the spire in fifteen feet of masonry. Much symbolism is also in view as one looks at the facade of the Presbyterian Church. The spire of course, points heavenward. The three front entrances signify the Trinity. The Rose window in the gable also has its symbolism as the Rose was the ancient symbol of the Messianic promise. The quarterfoil designs in the gables of each entrance are symbolic of the four gospels. Although the church was built in the 19th century it certainly reflects Gothic architecture of the 12th and 13th centuries. Likewise, the interior is a promenade of Gothic arches repeating one another.

The First Presbyterian Church in Albion is only one extraordinary example of church architecture out of seven to be found there. The other churches at the Square include: St. Joseph's R.C. which is also a noteworthy example of Gothic architecture built of Medina Sandstone; the First Baptist Church with its unusual hexagonal steeple; the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church, testimony to the wealth of George M. Pullman; Christ Episcopal Church which exhibits a most beautiful interior; First Free Methodist Church, the oldest building in that denomination, and the United Methodist Church with its fabulous window of the Good Shepard.

Perhaps you've seen some of these interiors or are a regular attendee at one of them. Even so, October 19 will give you a chance to see and learn about that church with which you may be unfamiliar. Go there first. Patronize the church across the street, for this is an opportunity to appreciate art and architecture you don't usually see. Several of the churches expect to distribute handouts with basic information and facts about their building. Guides at each church will also be available to greet you and answer questions.