

Bethinking of

Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian



Vol. IX

8-21-87

No. 33

Color And The Historic Court House District

"White is a color which we think should never be used except upon buildings a good deal surrounded by trees, so as to prevent its glare, we would make it a fawn or drab color before using it."

**A.J. Downing From The Architecture
of Country Houses 1850**

The inspiration for this article comes because of the recent painting of the exterior trim on the First Baptist Church in Albion. The rare photographic view of the Albion Baptist Church shown with the article was taken before 1896 when you could see the Baptist Church from the corner of Main and West Park Streets. When William P.L. Stafford, a disgruntled Baptist sold his property to the Catholics, he stipulated that they build their church as near the street as possible, knowing it would block out the view of the Baptist Church from Main Street. Aside from this historical tidbit, I'd like you to observe the Baptist Church more carefully in this picture. Although it is a black and white photo it is easy to see that there is no white wooden trim on the church.

Here I would compliment the Baptists for their recent paint job, most especially the choice of the original dark reddish color for such an historic building. For the past twenty years or so the trim has been painted white which was totally inappropriate and out of character. The church was never designed with the intent of having white trim as white it stands out too much. Wood trimmings on masonry buildings of the 1860 vintage such as the Baptist Church were always painted to blend with either the brick or stone work. After all, that wood trim was actually emulating stone and to further trick the eye it was intended to be painted the color of stone or brick. Not only has the Baptist Church been painted correctly, but also the trim on the Baptist Parsonage located across the street. The new buff-cream color looks much better with the yellow brick and is certainly more authentic than the bright yellow from the last paint job.

Another example of this in the Historic Court House District is the First Presbyterian Church (1874) which also, after several years of having a glaring inappropriate color on wood trim especially around the entrances, was finally painted a couple of years ago, dark brown like the original color scheme. This makes the wood trim look like stone as it was intended on a 19th century Gothic building.

The former Presbyterian Manse, now the private residence of Harlette and Phil Greaser is also getting appropriate colored paint on its window jambs, sash and other trim. In the Queen Anne style it has a multitude of various style windows. But when painted brownish and redish colors, the windows all seem to blend into the total design of this brick and stone house. What a hodgepodge in appearance it was several years ago when the trim was all painted white. The architect for the house never intended that it have white trim.

A similar example of this is the brick Second Empire style house at 134 East State Street owned by Joe Martillotta. Old photos show it with dark colored trim. But for many years it was painted white. Here again, a couple of years ago when Joe had the trim painted, his investigative research by scraping, provided the correct dark red color scheme it now has. Hence, the window casings at the Universalist Church have always been kept painted a pinkish brown color to blend with the color of the stone. No other color would be authentic or improve the appearance. Likewise, Swan Library trim has been painted to blend with the masonry, a drastic improvement over the era it was white.

This summer the Court House (1857-58) and County Clerk's Office (1882-83) have been re-painted. Exterior brick walls have been painted red while the trim has been painted white. The overall appearance is generally pleasing. However, I dare say around the turn of the century and before, the trim color of both of these buildings was probably light gray to blend with the limestone lintels, sills and other decorative stone trimmings while the brick was left natural.

Don't get me wrong, white is appropriate and even authentic on some buildings. It does please me though that certain property owners in the Historic Court House District are more cognizant of authentic colors on their buildings than they were in the recent past. As this district relates to tourism any attempt to reproduce a 19th century atmosphere is advantageous.

If you own an old house or other historic structure, don't automatically assume that the trim, siding, etc. has always been painted white. Check it out! Try scraping carefully different areas to see various layers of paint and its color. Indeed, our sense of color is different than our ancestors. We all think white trim is the only appropriate color on cobblestone houses and for most it probably is authentic, but I can think of several cobblestone homeowners who have found various shades of gray for first and second coats of exterior trim.

In essence, authentic colors add greatly to the overall character, charm and integrity of our local architectural heritage. The overall pleasing quality of such an original color scheme has improved an entire neighborhood as Albion Baptists have most recently proved. They can be justly proud now of the appearance of their beautiful edifice.

Herriven, highlighted a six run rally. A single by Doug Bashford and a sacrifice by Tony Fazzolari accounted for the other two tallies. Parada finished with four hits and Beyer three for K of C, which also got two apiece from Fox, Balcerzak, Washak, Feltz and Annable. Parada at second and Annable in the outfield also both had strong games defensively. Bashford had three hits and Jack

eight inning to oust Maui Inn from the playoffs by a narrow 6-5 score. Tierney singled home Carey, who had reached on a double, with the winning run in the home half of the eighth inning for K of C. The Knights missed a golden opportunity to win the game in the seventh as Maui got out of the jam when outfielder Jeff Eisenheimer threw a perfect strike to catcher Bob Guzik for a clutch inning ending

Wins To Join Division II Finals