



Medina Sandstone Society

Dedicated to Historic Preservation and Community Service

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SandstoneSociety.org

THE STORY OF MEDINA SANDSTONE

When settlers first arrived in Orleans County during the 1820's, one of the valuable natural resources they found was sandstone which could be quarried along the banks of Oak Orchard Creek in the vicinity of what would become the village of Medina. Medina still has one church, a former hotel and five homes that were built in that early, pre-commercial quarry period.

Around 1823 the construction of the Erie Canal brought laborers to our area and excavation of "Clinton's Ditch" exposed the vast quantities of sandstone which lay just below the surface. John Ryan recognized the potential of that natural resource and he started the commercial sandstone business in the county when he opened the first quarry in Medina. Manned mostly by recent immigrants from Ireland, England, Germany, Poland and Italy, quarries gradually expanded eastward to Albion and then to Hulberton and Holley. At the peak of the industry in the 1880-1910 period there were as many as 48 quarries with a peak employment of 2000 men. Second only to agriculture,

Medina sandstone was the most important sector of the Orleans County economy for about 80 years!

Shipped by Erie canal boat and railroad lines, the quarries produced stone that paved city streets from New York to Buffalo, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Kansas City and even down to Havana, Cuba. Medina sandstone was widely recognized as the finest stone for paving, curbs, steps and platforms because it never polished smooth (as granite does) and it resisted wear from horse and wagon traffic. Stone for streets and other utility purposes amounted to as much as 85% of quarry output. Building stone represented the remaining 15% of quarry production. The last active quarry closed in the 1950's. The industry started to decline after World War I and the Depression because of the increasing use of concrete blocks for buildings and asphalt paving for streets. But the lasting legacy of these quarries is in the ↓

Medina sandstone used to construct beautiful homes, churches, government buildings and many other structures throughout western NY and elsewhere in adjacent regions.

The Medina Sandstone Hall of Fame proudly displays many photos of these spectacular and historic buildings. It's open Monday-Friday in Medina's City Hall at 600 Main Street. There are also maps and walking tour information available at sandstonesociety.org.