



Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Welch in the doorway of their cobbleshed home on the Marion-Williamson Road, the second they have restored and furnished.

THE WELCH'S HAVE A THING ABOUT . . .

Cobblestones

Text and Photographs
By TALIS BERGMANIS

"Fixing up an old house is the sort of thing you do only once," says Mrs. Thomas Welch. "The next time you hope you can afford to have it done."

She speaks from experience. Six years ago, the Welches bought an old cobblestone house on the Marion-Williamson Road in Wayne County. It was basically sound and nearly everything was original — floors, woodwork, doors, even plaster.

But it needed scrubbing, patching, caulking, stripping, painting, and a few other things. The Welches spent most of their spare time in work clothes.

A few years after they'd finished that, a cobblestone just a mile down the road went up for sale. They bought it and were in pretty much the same place as four years ago. Only this cobblestone was larger and in much worse shape.

One wall of the kitchen years ago had caved in, so the owners had used the room as a garage, moving their kitchen activities to the

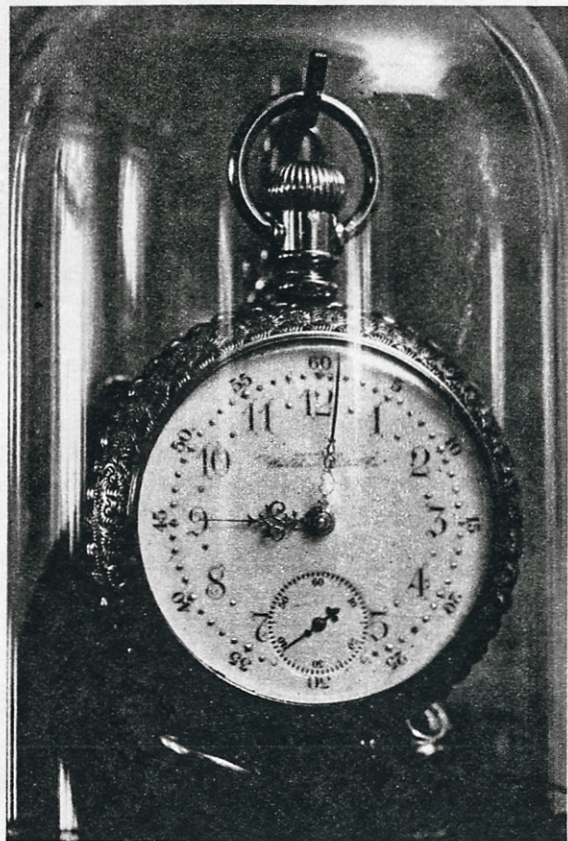
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They fixed up one house
just in time to start on another

*Ten-foot long table was
specially made for the
dining room by local
Wayne County
craftsmen.*



Mrs. Welch, who redecorated the house, chose the fabric for the lamp and chair to match the walls of the upstairs bedroom.



This pocket watch, under glass dome, belonged to Mrs. Welch's grandfather.

COBBLESTONES

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dining room. Most of the molding and woodwork was gone ("Who knows where," says Mrs. Welch. "Maybe for firewood.") as was the large staircase leading to the three upstairs bedrooms. In the space it had formerly occupied was a makeshift stairway.

So the Welches contacted Carl F. Schmidt, Scottsville architect-historian-artist and leading authority on cobblestone architecture. Schmidt drew up plans for converting the garage back into a kitchen and for replacing the stairway.

The Welches then brought in workmen to build a fireplace and dutch oven; lay a floor of Georgian brick in the kitchen; install a 20-foot-long kitchen work area, panel the basement recreation room with 22-to-24-inch-wide, 150-year-old barn siding.

Instead of hiring a large crew for a whirlwind job, the Welches used local craftsmen. The woodwork was done by carpenters from Williamson Lumber Company. A Marion mason, Don Goebert, built the fireplace, poured the basement floor, and laid the kitchen floor. ("We didn't want the bricks evenly, perfectly spaced and it was hard getting someone to do an uneven, but good job.") And a Port Gibson old-timer, Charles Spanganberg, made the table and refinished some of the furniture.

During the renovation, which took about a year, the Welches lived in their older cobblestone down the road. They moved into the present place just last winter.

It's furnished mainly with antiques, many of which were used by Mrs. Welch's Canadian ancestors. She's a native of Toronto. Mr. Welch was born in nearby North Rose and has spent most of his life in the area. Always attracted by the region's cobblestone houses, he says it was almost necessary that he eventually live in one.

