

Chapter III

COBBLESTONE BUILDINGS

By DELIA ROBINSON

Nearly eight hundred cobblestone structures were built in North America, ninety percent of which were built in New York State within an eighty mile radius of Rochester. The cobblestone era began, matured and ended approximately between the completion of the Erie Canal and the beginning of the Civil War. This period in Western New York was one of growth, experimentation and creativity, exemplified by the craft of cobblestone masonry. The era did not usher in a new architectural style but rather utilized popular styles such as Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic, Italianate and Octagonal constructed with this "new" building material.

The plans and ideas for the buildings came from two sources: the builder's manuals of the day and popular periodicals. The builder's manuals were written by such men as Asher Benjamin, Minard LaFever and Andrew Jackson Downing. In the Rochester area there was at least one other source of building plans available and subscribed to by many. The "*Genesee Farmer*", later known as the "*Cultivator*", was published in Rochester in the mid-1830's and 1840's and focused its articles toward the rural dweller. As it grew in popularity the editor received requests for information on cobblestone construction and farmhouse floor plans. The editor published these requests and received replies from architects; farmers; masons; carpenters; and just interested, imaginative readers. In that many of these plans were submitted with efficiency and economy in mind for the rural dweller, the plans were based on architectural styles but were by no means purist. Many of the plans were accompanied by comparison cost lists for wood, brick and stone construction. In introducing his plan one man wrote, "*small stone of almost any shape, found in quarries or lying scattered on the surface well laid in good time will make as good walls for buildings as any other.*"

as evidenced by the moss covered cottages of our fatherland. . . show the wisdom of our ancestors in building."

In Orleans County most of the cobblestone structures could be classed as either Federal or Greek Revival, or a transitional style between the two. Greek Revival was by far the favored of the styles, but in Orleans County, at least, most of these structures were modified and adapted to a farmhouse style. Many of the homes were the so-called story and a half style with a one story wing, or cottage style with low pitched roofs and low frieze windows near the roof, with decorative iron grills. These were creative modifications of the Greek precedent.

Cobblestone was a building material in which stones set in decorative mortar treatments were used to enhance the beauty of the architectural style. In the beginning stages field cobbles, as part of the rubble wall, were laid in rows and enhanced with minimal decorative mortar, as seen in the photo of the Clarendon Blacksmith Shop. With gradual refinement of the craft in the 1840's, the use of water-rounded stone was prominent with experimentation in mortar and stone patterns such as the herringbone and depressed hexagonal, -two patterns which are believed to have originated in Orleans County. The Riches Corners school was an excellent example of herringbone design. At the end of the period the finest wall texture is found, like that in the Loveland School, using small water-washed lake cobbles as a veneer to the rubble wall.

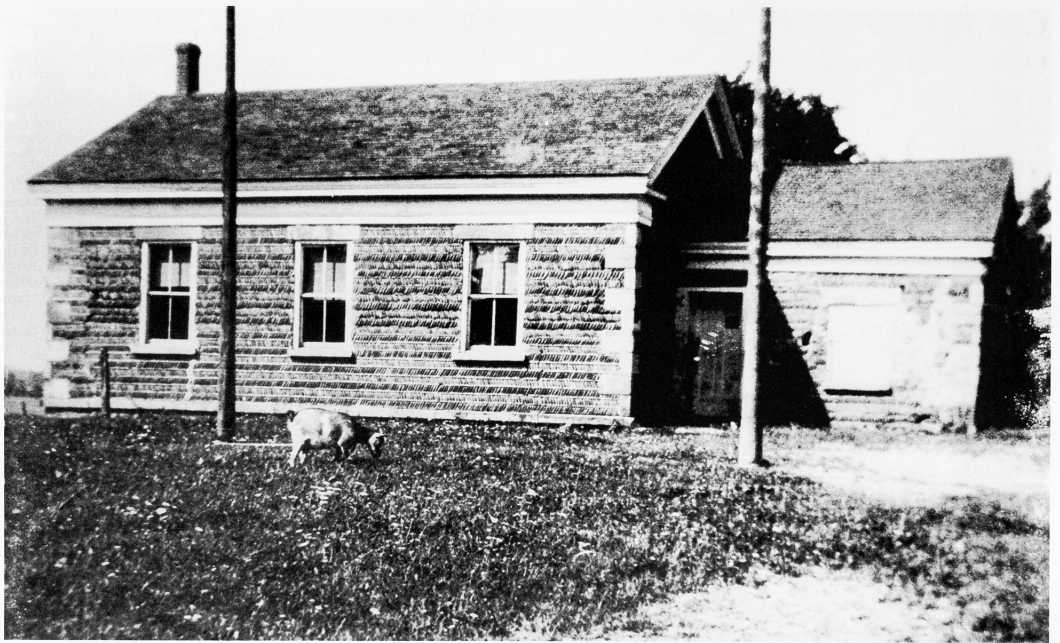
Slightly over one hundred cobblestone buildings were constructed in Orleans County. In addition to the private homes constructed there were twelve schools, including one academy; two blacksmith shops; two houses of worship; a parsonage; a barn; an inn; a Masonic Meeting Hall; several smokehouses; a flour mill and a foundry. Orleans County can be proud that ninety-eight of these structures are still standing and that it is the home of the Cobblestone Society, the only organization formed to promote interest in and disseminate information on this creative nineteenth century building style.



LOVELAND SCHOOL HOUSE 1847 - c. 1942

Teachers and pupils posed for this 1897 photo in front of the Loveland District #6 school in Albion. According to school records of forty years before, the district began negotiations with Artemis Loveland to purchase one-half acre of land for the purpose of building a new school. The record books show that the land cost \$62.00 and that it was

voted to raise \$400.00 to build a cobblestone school which would measure 28' x 34'. The school stood until the 1940's on the corner of the Telegraph Road and Gaines Basin Road, one and one-half miles west of Albion, just south of the railroad.

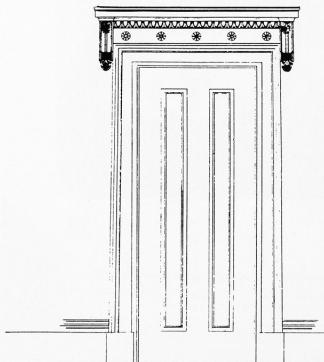
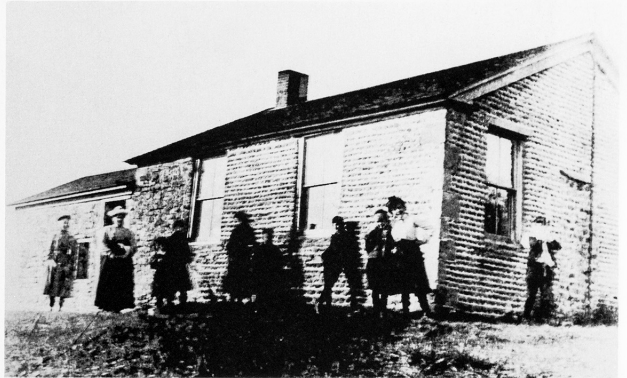


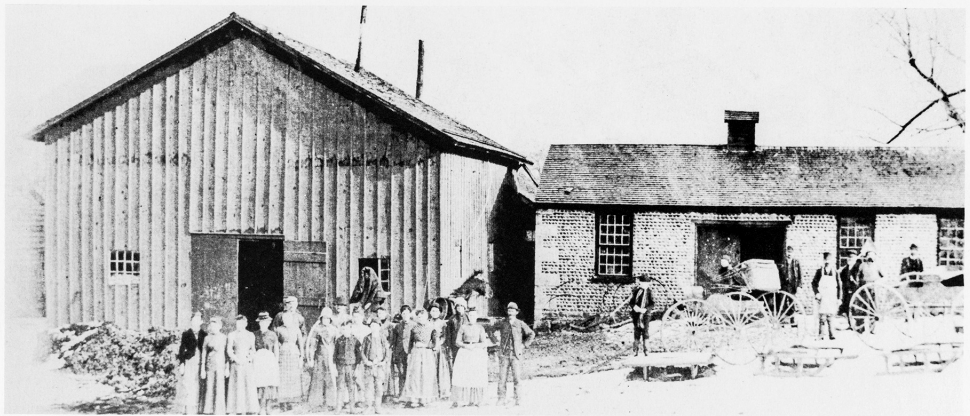
RICHERS CORNERS SCHOOL 1846 - c. 1961

On January 13, 1846 the school board for Riches Corners School District #5 in Albion voted to "raise \$525.00 to build a school house according to the plan adopted by the district". The east side and north end were to be faced with lake stone. The pattern in which the lake stone was laid has been labeled herringbone. Legend has it that Cyrus Wetherill, a local mason, originated the pattern during the middle of the cobblestone era. Following centralization in the 1940's and 1950's the school was sold to private interests who demolished the school - only the vacant lot remains.

DISTRICT #15 SCHOOL c. 1840 - c. 1978

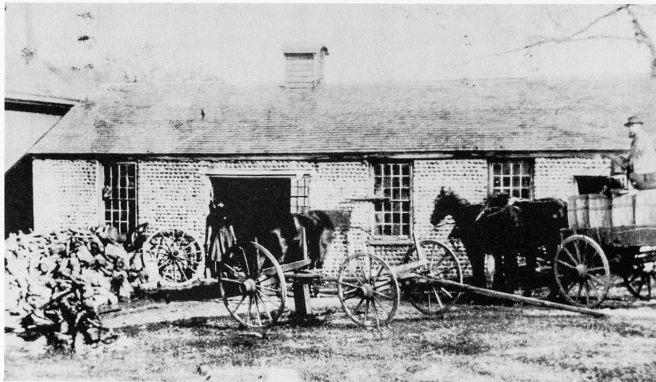
These two photos show Barre District #15 Cobblestone School which was built during the 1840's on the west side of Crane Road at the end of Trench Road. Only the shell of the building, which was plastered over, was still standing in May of 1972 when the lower photo was taken. The structure was bulldozed down near the end of that decade.





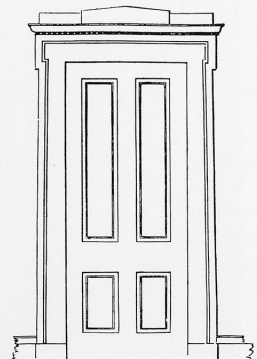
MILLVILLE BLACKSMITH SHOP c. 1840 - c. 1900

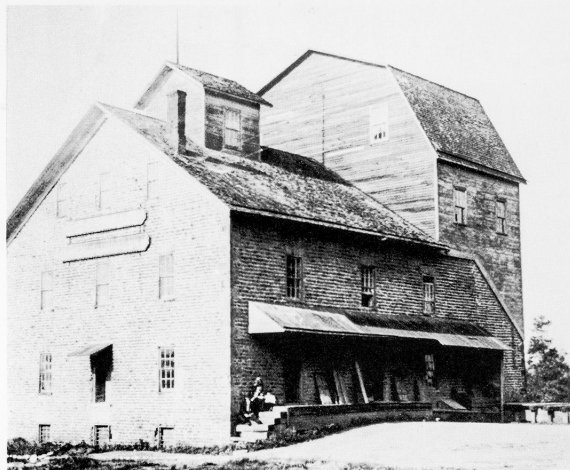
Two cobblestone buildings have been destroyed by explosions in Orleans County, one by accident and the other by plan. Workers gathered for these 1880's photos in front of the Millville Blacksmith Shop. The shop built about 1840 stood just south of the Millville corners on the east side of the Millville-East Shelby Road. William Hey owned the shop near the turn of the century when a farmer, as legend has it, brought in some damp dynamite. The smithies attempted to dry the dynamite by warming it - the result was the death of one man and demolition of the Millville Blacksmith Shop! In addition, local stories tell of Walter Brown who owned a cobblestone house near Brockville in the Town of Murray. Mr. Brown was disturbed about paying the taxes on the house and set a charge to eliminate his problem. The house was demolished in the 1940's and, as yet, no pictures of the structure have been found.



CLARENDON BLACKSMITH SHOP c. 1834 - c. 1950

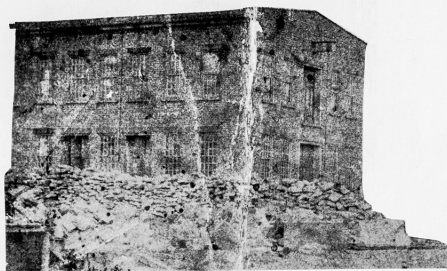
The Clarendon Blacksmith Shop, built about 1834, stood in the hamlet of Clarendon on the west side of Holley-Byron Road opposite Church Street. During the 1880's, it was run by Marvin Braeman and at the time this photo was taken Ralph Bowen was the smithy. The shop was torn down in the 1950's by Tracey Smith and only the vacant lot remains.





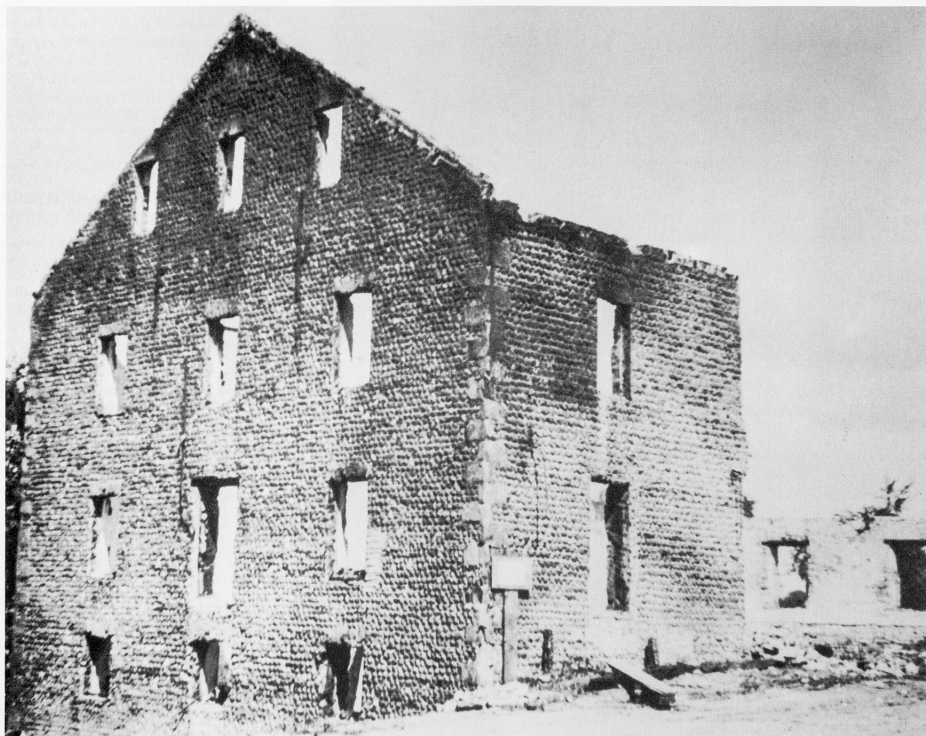
DANOLDS MILL 1837 - 1926

In 1837 W. P. Collins and James Leighton built a flour mill in Eagle Harbor in the Town of Gaines. The mill, the largest cobblestone structure ever built in Orleans County, stood on the east side of the Waterport Road between the Canal and the Ridge near Otter Creek. The structure burned in 1839, but was rebuilt and subsequently owned by Ardel O'Hara, Charles A. Danolds & Sons, the Powell Brothers, and, finally, J. Ray Totten. In September 1926 fire once again claimed the building which was not rebuilt. Only a small portion of the basement wall remains, and that has been incorporated into a business building on the site.



CURTIS FOUNDRY c. 1845 - c. 1895

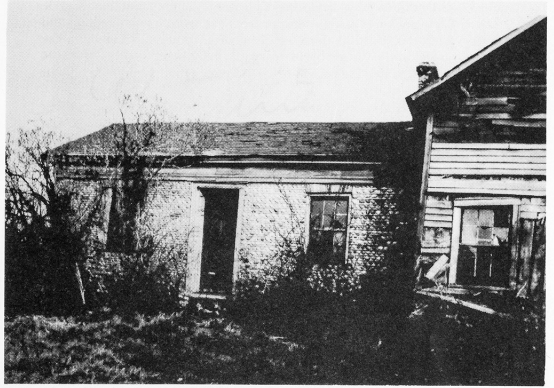
About 1845 Hiram Curtis had a large cobblestone building built north of the Canal in Albion to house his foundry. In this building he operated a business of making plows and, later, mowing machines which serviced most of Orleans County. By the turn of the century the building had been torn down and today the Lake Country Pennysaver building occupies the site.





SMOKEHOUSE c. 1840 - 1963

This 1840's smokehouse stood on the Hartley Johns property on the east side of Eagle Harbor-West Barre Road, near the Depot south of Eagle Harbor, before it was torn down in the 1960's.



HARRISON HOUSE c. 1833 - c. 1965

This house which incorporated an 1830's cobblestone wing stood on the northwest corner of Peter Smith Road and the Ridge Road in the Town of Murray. For many years it was the property of the W. Harrison family and was torn down in the 1960's. This photo was taken by Gerda Peterich who became interested in the preservation of such structures as early as the 1940's.

