

THE BULLETIN

Cortland County Historical Society

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Upcoming Events

Lunch & Learn

April 11, 18, 25
May 2, 9, 16
July 11, 18, 25
August 1, 8, 15
October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
November 7

Attic Treasures Sale—
June

Fall Dinner—September

Cobblestone Structures in Cortland County (First in a series)

By: Richard F. Palmer

In 1973, one of the few cobblestone houses in Cortland County fell victim of Cornell University's plans to establish a massive farm operation in the Town of Harford. It had been neglected for years and didn't fit into the scheme of things. Built by Nathan Heaton, an early pioneer, it was located at 565 Daisy Hollow Road.

Nathan Heaton, was believed to have built the house sometime prior to his death. He and his wife, the former Susan Hart, had four children. Their first born was James, born in 1820 and died in

1880 in Woodstock, Ill. Caroline, born in 1822, became a school teacher. She married William H. Richardson and died in Canandaigua in 1890. Luana, born in 1824, married Hiram J. Messenger in 1842 and died in 1886 in New York. Adeline was born in 1835 and married George W. Brown. It is likely they resided in a wooden frame house prior to the cobblestone house being built.

Public-spirited, Heaton had served on a three-member committee appointed to purchase land and erect a building for the Union Church of Virgil Flats in the 1830s. He was elected a New York State Assemblyman in 1840, but died while still in office, on April 19, 1841 at the age of 54. He left no will. In June, 1841, his widow relinquished her right to the estate to her son, James, and a neighbor, Daniel Phillips. She died June 10, 1865 at the age of 65.

The house, a few miles south of Dryden, was on land purchased by Cornell University for development of its farms. The house had been unoccupied for years, and had fell into a state of disrepair before the sale. It had been ravaged by vandalism. With windows broken and doors left open, snow, wind and rain accelerated deterioration.

One of only five cobblestone structures in Cortland County, it was built by pio-



As it appeared in the early 1900s. Photo courtesy of the Harford Historian.

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Cobblestone House Continued

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neer Nathan Heaton between the time he moved to Daisy Hollow in 1824 and the year he died, 1841. He and his wife are buried in Harford Cemetery.

These and other facts are gleaned from the files of the Cortland County Historical Society. The cobblestone house appears along what is today Daisy Hollow Road, on the 1855 map of Cortland County. At that time it was occupied by Edward Mulks, who purchased the property in 1853 from James Hart Heaton, son of Nathan, in 1853. He paid \$4,000 for 103 acres with buildings and appurtenances.



Cobblestone house as it appeared in 1971. It was demolished two years later. Cortland County Historical Society photos.

In the early 1970s it became apparent that the house, by then long abandoned and neglected, would probably be demolished as Cornell University established its agricultural farm there. Interest in the house was

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aroused, and in the fall of 1970, Larry Doe of Dryden, a Cornell University employee, became took photographs and attempted to learn more about it. He then contacted historian Barbara Bell, a reporter at the Ithaca Journal, for ideas. No written history of the house could be found.

Starting with retired farmer Clyde Cotterill of Dryden, with the assistance of others, Bell compiled names of former owners starting with retired farmer Clyde Cottrell and others who might know something about the house. Also contacted was Ray Rockefeller of Dryden, a local historian, who wrote a popular folksy column in the Dryden Herald called "Rock's Rambles."

Bell said, "We checked libraries and made telephone calls to 30 or more persons. We wrote to many people and visited some, and with Rockefeller we visited the house itself. We were able to trace direct ownership back 80 years or so and collected a number of comments from the memories of former residents of Daisy Hollow. It wasn't until Mary Dexter of Cortland delved back into the records that concrete information was found about the years before 1900. Miss Dexter first checked the 1855 census for Harford and found one, and only one, cobblestone structure listed - a house (No. 144) valued at \$600 and owned by 35-year-old Edward Mulks. This meant a search of old deeds. Nowhere was the actual construction date recorded."



1855 Cortland County map shows location of house on what is now known as Daisy Hollow Road. It is identified as Edw. Mulks, barn is located across the road.

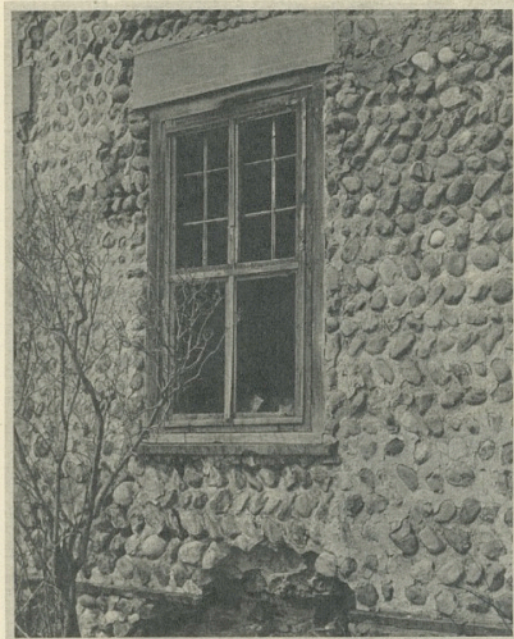
Before the cobblestone house was sold to Cornell University it had numerous owners after Mulks. These included Harry Robinson, Austin Gilbert, Albert Richardson, a man named Howe, Clarence Conrad, Luther Holden and his father, Benjamin Holden. Mrs. Herbert Tyler of West Brookfield, Mass., recalled that she resided there between 1929 and 1932 and papered and painted every room. She was a member of the Richardson family.

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Cobblestone House Continued

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Mrs. Leland Burch of Dryden said she often visited the Holdens at the cobblestone house. Her father was born and raised nearby and was a friend of the tenants of that day. Mrs. Holden always had big red geraniums flowering on the broad windowsills, Mrs. Burch recalled. Luther Holden was all, well-built and pleasant, "probably 45 or 50 years old." Later this farm was owned by the Cotterill family, local farmers, who used it as a tenant house.



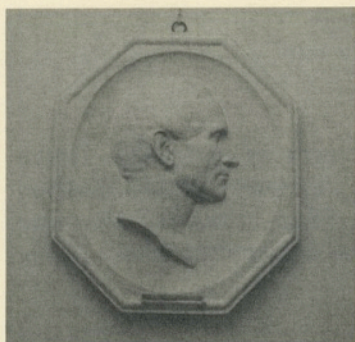
Detail of the side of house. Cobblestones were gathered from nearby fields.

Unfortunately it wasn't until almost too late the house the interest of architectural historians. Due to its remoteness it even the most noted historians of cobblestone houses. Although unusual for this area, hundreds of cobblestone houses exist in western New York. On the facade there were some rows of stones laid in herringbone pattern. There were at least two rows of elongated cobbles on one side wall between the first and second stories. The cobblestones obviously were not sorted and used by size as photos show large, medium and small ones mixed throughout. Traditionally they would have been picked from nearby fields.

It was unlikely the house would be restored. The natural wear of the ages, accelerated by vandalism and open to the weather, made it impractical. It was just standing in the way of progress. But Mary Dexter termed it "a unique legacy from the past."

Concerned over the fate of the house, the Board of Directors of the Cortland County Historical Society wrote a letter to Cornell University President Dale Corson. He said the house was in poor condition and to preserve and make it useful would cost more than the university was willing to invest in it. At the time several farms in the area had been purchased to be used by the New York State College of Agriculture. The DeWitt Historical Society was approached about it, but they had no interest as it was not in Tompkins County. The Cortland Standard on June 14, 1971 commented: "Unless a donor appears to save it, the cobblestone house is doomed." And so it was, that the house finally fell to the wrecking ball two years later.

(This story was compiled from several sources including an article by Barbara Bell published in the Ithaca Journal on April 17, 1971 entitled *A Cobblestone Landmark*; a historical paper tracing the history of the house by Mary Dexter for the Cortland County Historical Society; *Harford Cobblestone House is Rarity in Cortland County*, Cortland Standard, April 8, 1971; Cortland Democrat, Sept. 30, 1933 and May 18, 1951; *The Chapin Book of Genealogical Data*. Compiled by Gilbert Warren Chapin, Vol. II P. 1327.)



Check your attic and other hiding places to see if you have any plaster busts or medallions like the picture of this plaster profile of Horatio Ballard. These medallions were sculpted by Edward Chase Clute and are in the collection of CCHS. Clute also did the plaster sculpture of Major General Samuel G. Hatheway which was the model for the marble bust of General Hatheway that is in our collection. We are interested in discovering more about Mr. Clute, who was a friend of Francis Bicknell Carpenter. One of his daughters remained local and his grandson seems to have not had any children. His daughter's name was Ella Clute Butler, and his grandson was Edward Clute Butler. If you have examples of Mr. Clute's work or have additional information about him or his family, contact Tabitha at 607-756-6071.