



Harford Cobblestone House Is Rarity in Cortland Area

The pioneers who settled in Cortland County did not make a speciality of building cobblestone houses; hence, the sturdy old specimen that stands on the Daisy Hollow Road near Harford is a rare example.

The windows are broken and the wind blows through the swinging door, but the walls look as if they could stand through another century. It is a large, rectangular house with a chimney at each end and with space for five windows along the second story front.

The cobblestone house was drawn to the attention of the Cortland County Historical Society by Ray Rockefeller of Dryden, who had explored the place and had written an article for the Dryden Rural News, Jan. 6, 1971, but at that time he had known nothing of its history.

The fact that the house stands on a 1200-acre tract now owned by Cornell University and under development as an agricultural project raised questions: Who built this house? When? What is going to be done with it?

Miss Mary Louise Dexter of the Cortland County Historical Society found in the county clerk's office and in the surrogate's records evidence pointing to the first owner — Nathan Heaton; and at least three historians of the county give information about this man and his position in the community.

H.C. Goodwin's "Pioneer History of Cortland County" (1859), H.P. Smith's "History of Cortland County" (1885), and an unpublished "History of the Town of Harford" (c. 1921) by Miss Frances I. Stowe have all contributed to knowledge of Nathan Heaton, supporting Miss Dexter's thesis that he was the builder of the cobblestone house.

Sometime before 1815 (Miss Stowe says 1807) Nathan Heaton settled at Harford Mills, and either in 1814 (Stowe) or "before the year 1820" (Smith) he built the grist mill which was the first one in that district. It was in use as long as he lived, and afterward was used as a shed for a newer mill, built by John C. Davis in 1841.

In 1824, 1828, and 1829 Heaton

bought parcels of land, a total of 103½ acres in Lot 71 and Lot 72,

both on sides of what is now Daisy Hollow Road. The first purchase included the land on

which the cobblestone house now

stands. Nathan Heaton had been

married to Susan Luana Hart,

and their oldest child, James

Hart Heaton, had been born

about 1818. Three daughters

were born subsequently —

Caroline, Luana, and Adaline.

When Heaton began to build

the house, or when it was

completed, is not a matter of

record, but he was evidently a

public-spirited citizen with a

reputation for construction. Miss

Stowe says that he was one of a

committee of three appointed to

buy land and erect a building for

the Union Church of Virgil Flats

— the first church edifice in

Harford, dedicated in 1833 — the

joint effort of three

denominations, Methodist,

Congregational, and Universal-

alist.

That he was a man of sub-

stance in the community is at-

tested by the fact that in 1840 he

was elected to the New York

State Legislature, one of two

assemblymen from Cortland

County. Nathan Heaton was a

Whig, and this was the party of

Governor William H. Seward,



also elected in 1840. Unfortunately Nathan Heaton could not long enjoy the responsibilities of political office, for on April 19, 1841, while at home on leave from the Legislature, he died.

He died without a will. In June,

1841, his widow relinquished her

right to the administration of her

late husband's estate, which was

taken in charge by her son

James and a neighbor, Daniel

Phillips. An inventory listed

assets amounting to about \$900,

which was not enough to pay

Nathan's debts, although the list

of personal property is a long

one. It includes crops, farm

vehicles and implements, 250 sap

buckets, a martingale, and

livestock consisting of cows,

heifers, calves, sheep, lambs,

hogs, pigs, and oxen. Among the

household items are a clock, a

cradle, and a "house organ."

The executors were granted

permission to dispose of real

property as might be necessary

in order to pay the debts, and

here the 103½ acres were

evaluated at \$2,000.

When James Heaton's three

sisters were married and their

mother, too, was married again,

their interest in Nathan's estate

was signed over to James, who

apparently spent some years in

Owego receiving legal training.

By 1850 he had returned to

Harford to practice law and to

live in the cobblestone house

with his wife and young sons,

Nathan and Nathaniel.

What wide horizons beckoned

James in 1853 is not known, but

in that year he sold the house and

all the property (103 acres on Lot

71 and Lot 72, buildings and

appurtenances, "being the same

farm" Nathan Heaton died

seized) to Edward Mulks for

the sum of \$4,000.

As Miss Dexter points out, the

Census of the Town of Harford,

N.Y., for 1955 indicates that

dwelling No. 147 was constructed

of cobblestone and was the only

such structure so composed in

that town, being the residence of

Edward Mulks. And the Cortland

County map of 1855, which

shows the property with the

owners' names, shows the Mulks

home on the west side of the

Cortland-Owego Road (i.e.

Daisy Hollow Road), Lot 71,

Town of Harford, N.Y.

This leaves unanswered the

question "What is going to be

done with it?" Will Cornell University, recognizing a unique legacy from the past, restore its windows and its battered interior and find a use for it? Perhaps its days now are numbered.

The Daisy Hollow Road, approached either from Virgil or from Route 38 out of Harford or Dryden, would make a pleasant drive on a spring day, especially if one could see a 140-year-old cobblestone house.