



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?

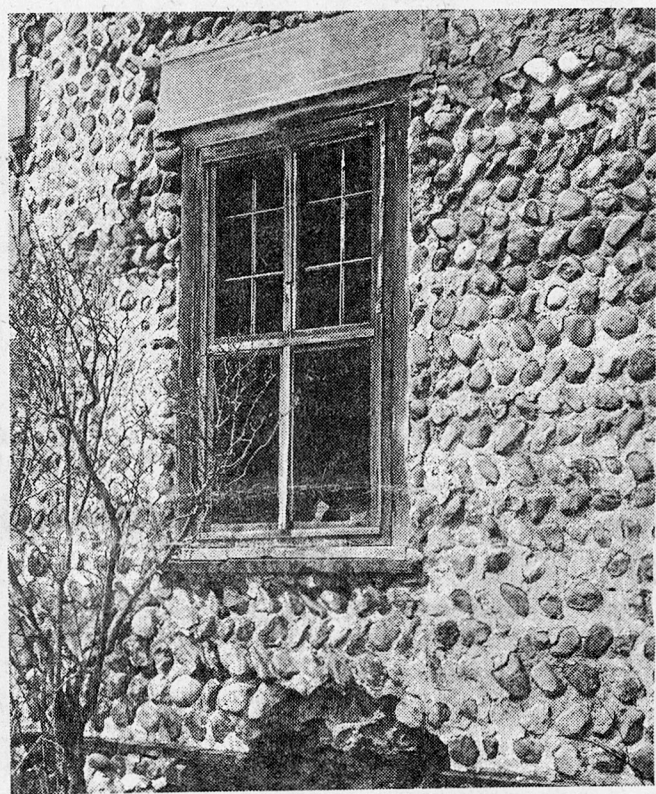
Miss Mary Louise Dexter of the Cortland County Historical Society found in the county clerk's office and in the surrogate's records evidence pointing to the first owner — Nathan Heaton; and at least three historians of the county give information about this man and his position in the community. H.C. Goodwin's "Pioneer History of Cortland County" (1859), H.P. Smith's "History of Cortland County" (1885), and an unpublished "History of the Town of Harford" (c. 1921) by Miss Frances I. Stowe have all contributed to knowledge of Nathan Heaton, supporting Miss Dexter's thesis that he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 Universalist.

That he was a man of substance in the community is attested 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. 144 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 locates 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.