

Mid-York Memoranda



AN UNFAMILIAR VIEW of a quite familiar structure. Started in 1847 and completed in 1851 this unusual building in Bouckville, now owned by Robert H. Palmiter, was built as a speculative business venture by a stock company, one member of which was William Coolidge. Having bought out the other company members he rented store space to several enterprises and finally sold it to Lewis Coe who operated a store here. One of the previous occupants was the firm of Burhans and Bliss later to be known as Burhans and Black of wholesale hardware fame. Palmiter purchased the property from Coe and it presently serves as his residence as well as his place of business.

Cobblestone buildings belong unmistakably to New York State where hundreds can be found along the Lake Ontario plain and in the Finger Lakes region. About 14,000 years ago the glaciers of the ice age retreated northward into Canada while depositing countless roughly rounded cobblestones which had been partly polished in the ever moving mass. These small stones were considered a minor nuisance by the first settlers to reach Western New York after the American Revolution. These pioneers built wooden homes of logs or hand-hewn timbers and some wall over the original entrance, bears the date 1844 together with several names, some of which have become illegible due to the ravages of erosion. Among those which may still be read are, D.B. & J.T. Stevens and C.T. Boward, also the letters 'J.S. Zartz' (or perhaps, the later may be a date; Mar. 12)

An early history of Madison County mentions a Carriage manufactory being commenced in this area in 1835 by Messrs. Howard and Markham which later became a blacksmith shop only. At still a later date E.P. Embury ran a general store here.



COBBLESTONE STORE AT PINE WOOD BUILT IN 1844

times of the flat or squared field stones.

A generation later in 1825 the Famous Erie Canal transformed Western New York into a prosperous agricultural region. It also began a construction boom of major proportions bringing masons, carpenters and joiners to build both the canal and cities like Rochester and Syracuse that mushroomed along the route. With prosperity; a new influx of masons; and a local abundance of cobblestones; the stage was set for a unique new development in architecture, namely the cobblestone wall.

Sometime between 1825 and 1832 the first crude attempts were made by masons using this new material. At first the rougher cobblestones were gathered from adjacent fields and laid up in rather uneven rows. By 1832 the art had advanced to a degree where a number of homes proudly bore date stones and mortar was being treated between the stones in a variety of patterns and shapes.

The Cobblestone store at Pine Wood was built, to house a wagon makers shop, according to its present owner, Miss Lillian Krebs. A date stone, set in the

Whether these enterprises were housed in the present building is questionable. Miss Krebs's records indicate that there have been but three types of business conducted under its roof, the wagon shop first then a Tavern under several managers and owners. The last tavern keeper being Louie Merchant who sold the property to Mathew Krebs in 1922, it having been unoccupied for the five years immediately previous to the sale due to the "Dry" state of the Town of Eaton during that period. Since the Krebs purchase it has served as a grocery store, first under his management and from 1955 to the present by Miss Krebs.

By the 1850's the cobblestone mason had become a highly skilled craftsman but the era of cobblestone construction was rapidly coming to an end. Smaller perfectly matched stones took much more time to gather, sort, and lay. With a few exceptions the Civil War in 1861 marks the end of the cobblestone era. The new industrial age of factories and mass production was the death knell of nearly all handicrafts, including cobblestone masonry so unique to New York State.