

Thursday, January 28, 1965

Mid-York Memoranda

by Scott Phoenix

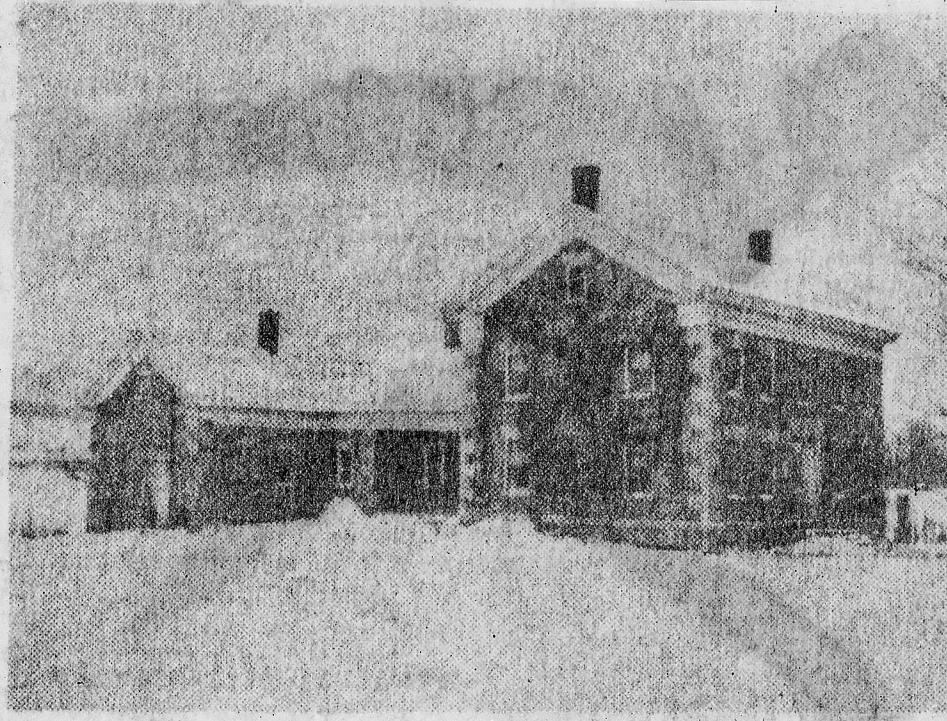
MORE ABOUT COBBLE STONES

—As mentioned last week, cobblestone structures are most numerous in western New York State and thus Madison County might be said to be on the eastern fringes of the area which found the rolling stones so economically and aesthetically useful. Still, we find that though the examples are few and far between, the variety of types of buildings is as great as could be hoped for.

Homes and barns, business places and hophouses, smoke houses and dug wells and of course, foundation walls for all the aforementioned buildings whose superstructure was of more prosaic materials. This stone work is a lasting reminder of a period when the pace was more leisurely and if it took three years of spare time work to produce a cobble stone house that was all-right too. Such was the case in several instances where local homes were built by the men who built the Chenango Canal locks during their regular working day.



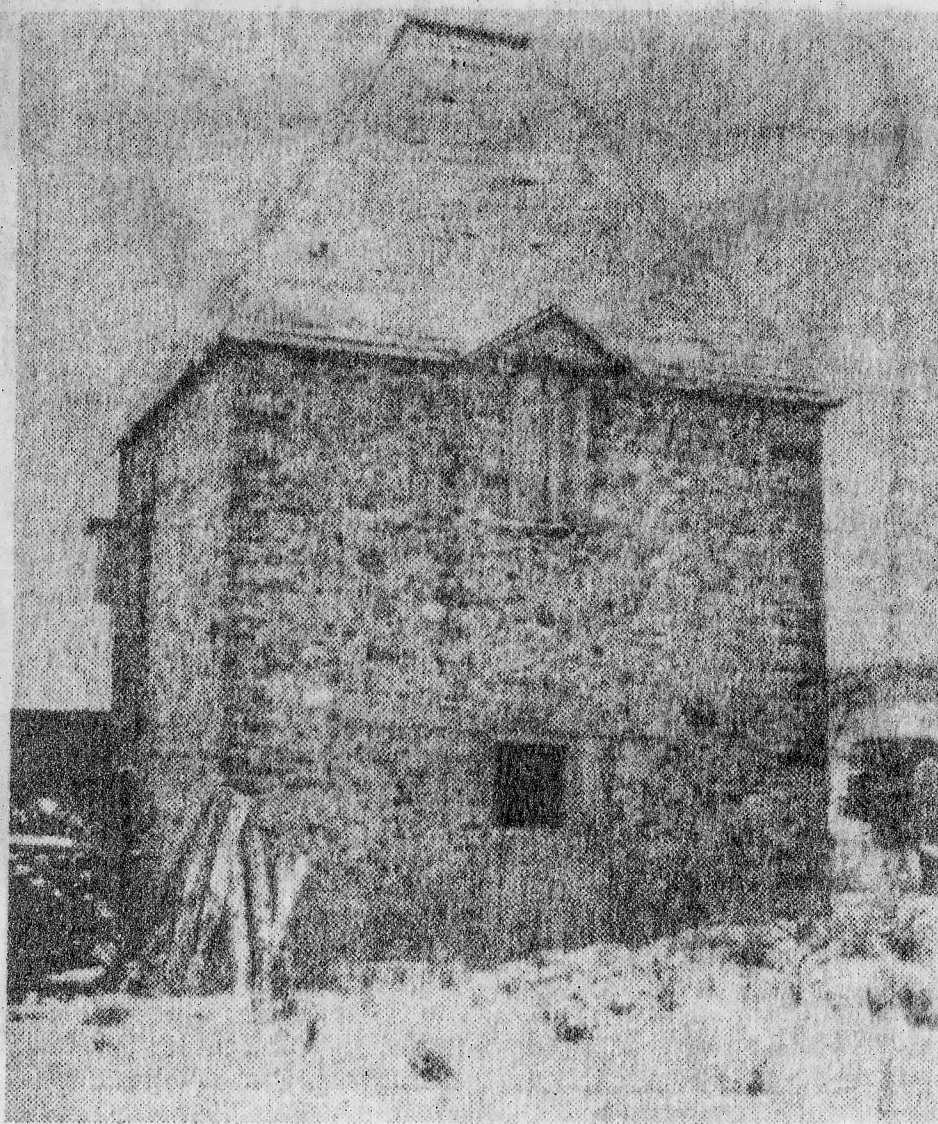
This Octagonal Cobblestone House on Route 20 in Madison was built in 1836 by William Cleveland who also was responsible to a great degree in the construction of the Cobblestone Store in Bouckville.



JAMES HOWARD, Farmer and Canal Boat owner built this outstanding example of cobblestone architecture in 1840 on the Valley Road between Bouckville and Solsville. His great granddaughter, Mrs. A. M. Edgerton, has entertained several members of the Cobblestone Society in the 125 year old house.



DONALD J. CARNEY recently purchased this house built for Burton and Phelps in 1842 by Capt. T. Williamson, an engineer who worked on the construction of the Chenango canal. A cylindrical smoke house which used to stand behind the main structure no longer exists but a small cobblestone barn on the present John Phelps farm is still standing. These two buildings are located on the Bouckville-Solsville Road.



Hop House Just North of Randallsville

Today in the crossroads hamlet of Childs, forty miles west of Rochester on U.S. 104, the Cobblestone Society uses three cobblestone buildings as a headquarters and museum to preserve and exhibit the remaining examples of this lost art.

An 1834 church in Childs, Orleans County, is preserved by the Society as an outstanding example of early cobblestone work. It has wooden sills and lintels with irregular limestone blocks to square the four corners. Suddenly the cobblestone wall had become popular as homes, schools, churches, barns, and even cemetery vaults were constructed. Soon the rougher field cobblestones were not good enough for popular taste and Lake Ontario shores were found to be an inexhaustible supply of very smooth lake cobblestones polished to perfection by constant wave action. Records tell how farmers took day long trips by oxcart to gather a load of lakewashed cobblestones and many such trips were required for one building. The 1849 schoolhouse museum in Childs, Orleans County, is preserved by the Cobblestone Society as an excellent example of the later cobblestone work with its smooth lake cobblestones as small as eggs, laid in perfect rows, with finely cut stone sills, lintels and corner stones (Quoins).