

Cobblestone homes, never to be built again. .

By Tom Gable

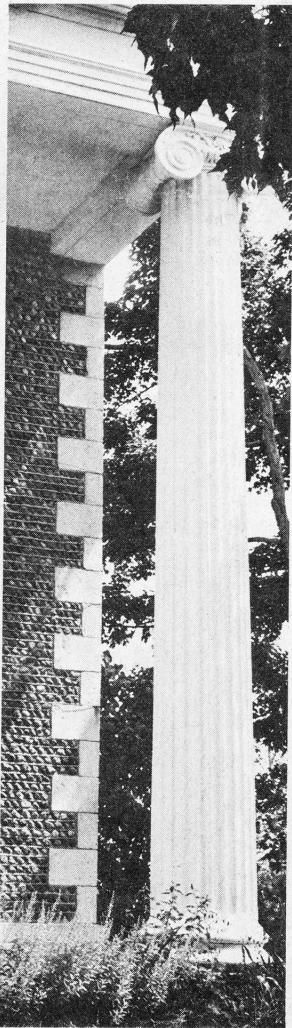


Cobblestone porches are for contemplation and reflection.



The Lawrence Gracey home, near Geneva, on 5 & 20, is an excellent example of cobblestone mastery. Built in the Greek Revival Style, the lake-washed red sandstones were carried from the shores of Lake Ontario. Cost of con-

struction is estimated at \$2,100, but 100 years ago the masons would work for \$1 a day plus lunch.



The graceful white columns of the homes accent the cobblestones beautifully, with the corner quoins (made of limestone) adding stability to its appearance. (Harkness home at Bellona.)

It's true! The some 1,000 cobblestone buildings that still stand, can never be duplicated. No matter how much money you have, you couldn't have one built, even by the best mason in the world.

The reason lies in the mortar that holds the structure together. No one knows the secret that went into the making of the mortar. Unlike today's cement, the mortar that was produced by masons over 100 years ago was so strong that it has never shown any sign of crumbling. The mystery of this perfection is that it gets harder with time and now you could say that it is as hard as solid rock!

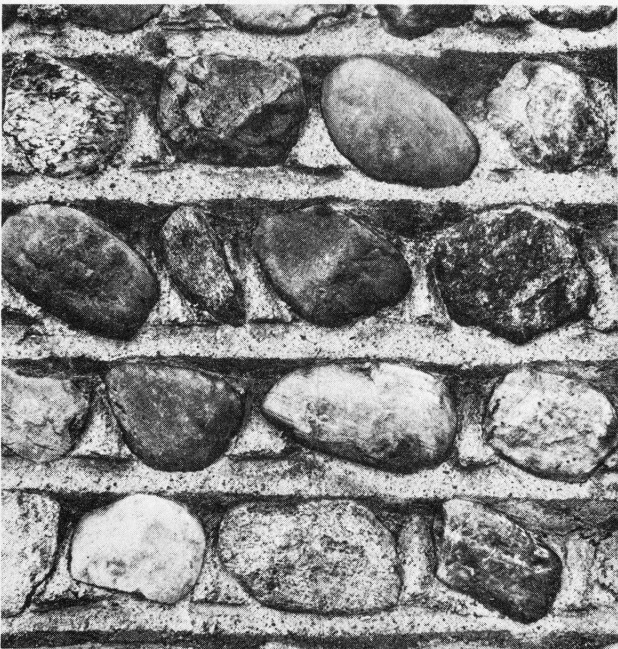
A few facts and some theory lead to the belief that the mortar was made by depositing burned limestone in a six foot square pit, dissolved in water, covered with cow manure and sand and allowed to slake over the winter. After the substance would sit about a year, the way that the mason knew it was ready for use would be to stick his trowel in the mortar. If it would not stick to the trowel and pull

out clean, it was ready.

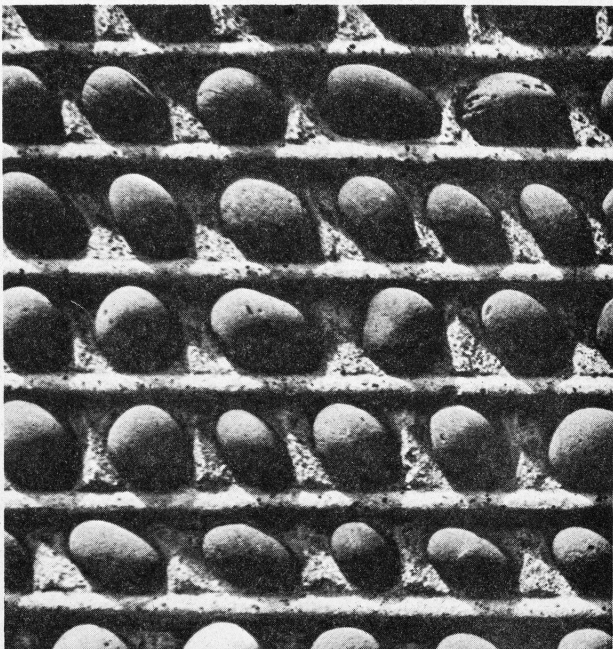
The cobblestones themselves varied from house to house, but one fact was true to all. They were glacier deposits. The stones were gathered from the fields originally because they were so numerous and a great bother to the farmers working in the fields. The enormous amount of stones (usually granite, some limestone) left by the glacier as it stopped in this area, is the chief reason why this is the only part of the world where cobblestone buildings can be found. The majority of the buildings are within a 60 mile radius of Rochester, south of Lake Ontario.

The cobblestone homes that are so irreplaceable were built generally between 1825 and 1870, although it is not known exactly when the first one was built.

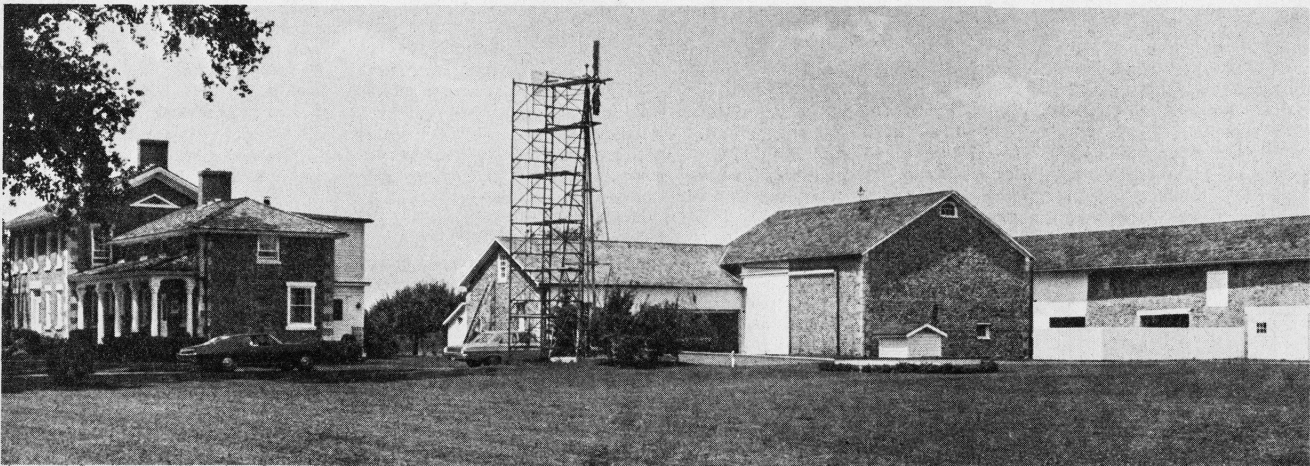
Most of the homes were built in the Greek Revival Style architecture with some being built in Victorian.



The houses were made by laying the cobblestones horizontally, between thick layers of the exceedingly hard mortar. The walls would range in thickness usually from 16 to 24 inches, leaving no doubt about its strength.



The perfectionist of years ago might have selected these very small, red sandstones with which to build his home. Can you imagine how long it would take to find these stones, match them perfectly, and build the Gracey home?



Cobblestone barns as well as cobblestone homes are a rarity. The Gleason home and barns on Rt. 96, near Phelps, could very well be the only ones of its kind. Farm is shown with the old windmill, under restoration.