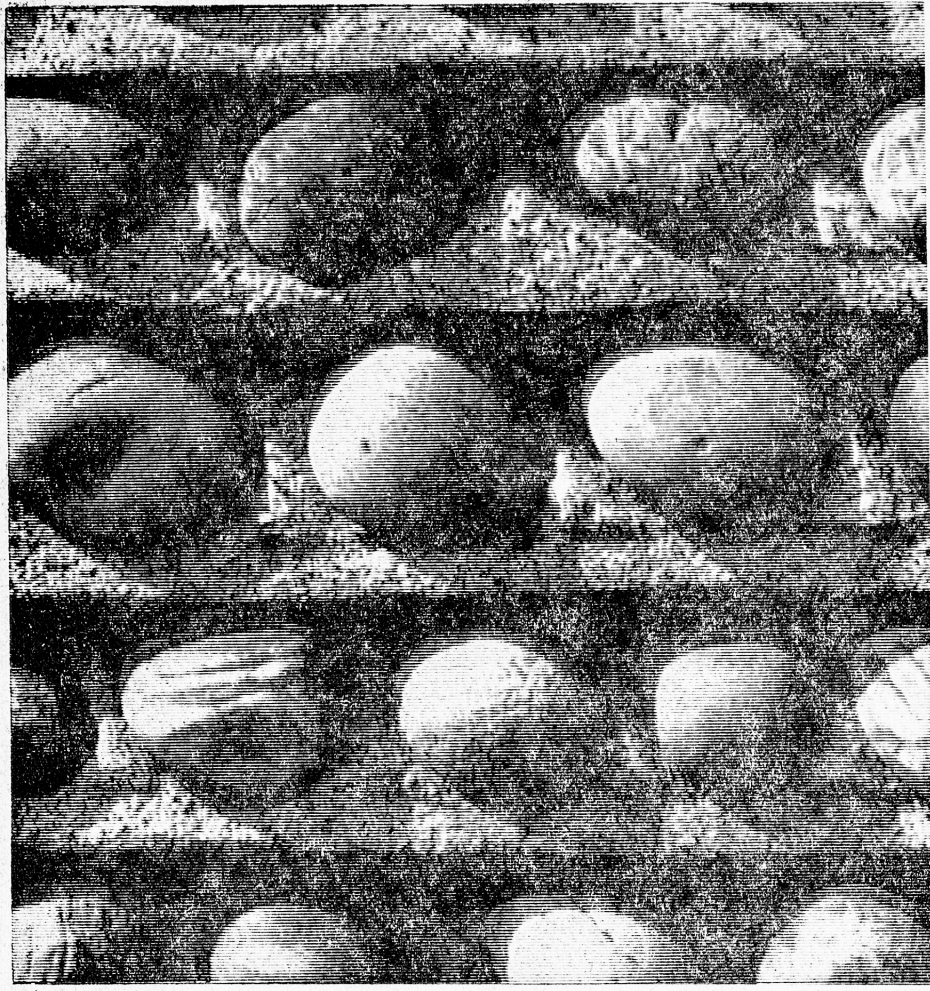
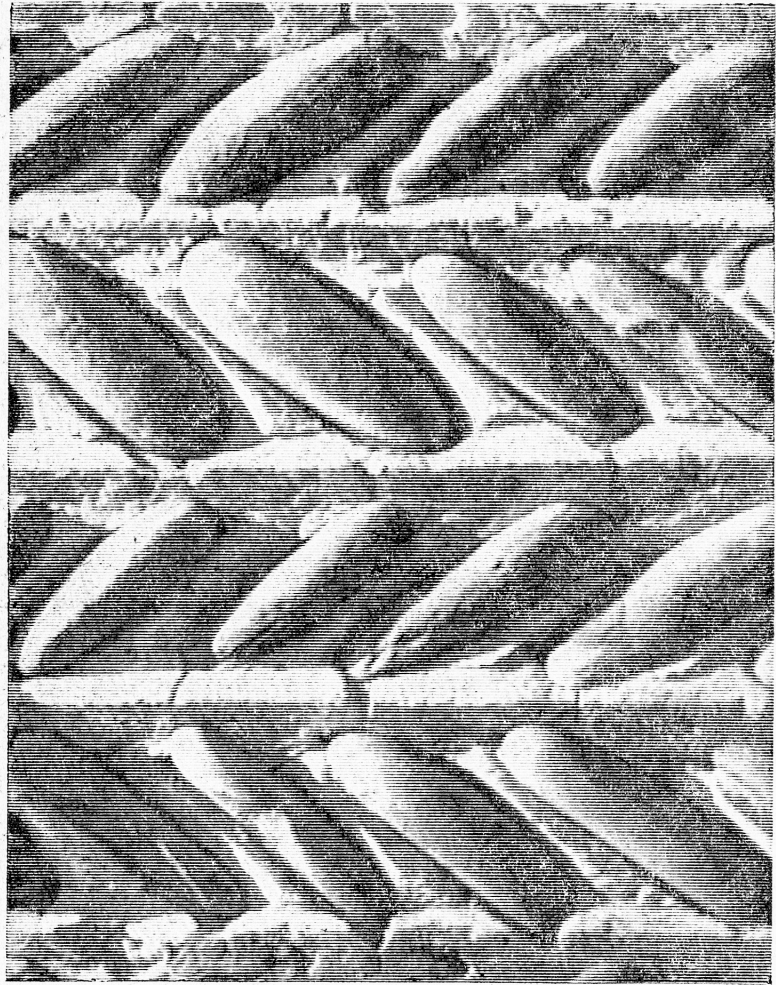


Cobblestone Walls-Earmarks of History

Row-by-Row in Patterns



Round cobblestones in neat pattern.



Masonry using oval stone pattern.

This Masonry Form Arrived About 1825

Until about two decades ago, cobblestone houses were accepted by upstate New Yorkers without much thought, according to Carl F. Schmidt of Scottsville author of articles on the subject.

Only a few people, says Schmidt, realized that "here developed a type of masonry wall

of unique beauty and interest and with but few exceptions this type of masonry wall is not found elsewhere in our country."

There are a number of cobblestone houses in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and in Ontario, Canada, and research reveals that most of them were introduced in those areas by people who migrated from the New York State cobblestone area.

There is no particular secret in cobblestone masonry work. Small stones are laid in horizontal rows. Masons have used small stones in walls for centuries and some of the French examples closely resemble the local cobblestone work. In England there were walls built of small stones called "flint heads".

The first cobblestones were built of fieldstones dropped by the glaciers that once covered our state. These stones were a source of trouble for farmers trying to plant their fields. Children often helped clear the fields and size and pile the stones.

Masons were plentiful in this area during the cobblestone period. The Erie Canal construction brought many of them into the area and in many cases these men stayed on.

Cobblestone masonry can be easily traced through its periods of development. The early period (1825-35) had stones of varying sizes, shapes and colors. The mortar joints were a wavy irregular line formed into a flat V-shape with the sharp edge projecting. This form of V-joint became popular with the masons. During the latter part of this early period the masons selected their stones more carefully for uniform size and laid them with straight horizontal joints.

In the middle period, through 1845, masons began to mix round or oval water-washed stones from the lake shore area with their field stones. Finally, colors were matched and mortar joints were reduced in width. In the late period, through the 1860s, the lake-washed stones of same color and size were carefully selected.

In the early period the stones were an integral part of the wall, part of the construction, and later they were merely a veneer applied against a structural stone wall. It is believed that in the middle period, when craftsmanship and skill were balanced, the best work was done.

It was a fascinating work of the mason's art and the methods were never recorded. So the art is lost, even though present day masons could doubtless relearn the methods without great difficulty, if required.

3 Homes, School Are Good Examples

CHILDS SCHOOL HOUSE

The schoolhouse in Childs was built under the direction of William J. Babbitt and bears this inscription: "School District No. 5 — Town of Gaines A. D. 1849. Wm. J. Babbitt, Esq. gratuitously superintended the erection of this building and made the district a present of this bell."

This schoolhouse is now the property of the Cobblestone Society and plans are to restore the building as a typical schoolhouse of the 1840-1850 era. The cobblestones in this building are of the small water-washed variety about one and one-half inches high, of various colors with grays predominating, and laid in courses about two and one-quarter inches high. The cobblestones are laid five courses to the quoin height with a wide "V" shaped horizontal joint. There is but a slight indication of a pyramidal embellishment between the vertical joints. The quoins, window lintels and sills, and the lintels above the doors, are red sandstone. This school, like a number of houses in the Gaines area has a projecting red sandstone sill course.

The cobblestones on the side elevations are the same type of stones as the front, but larger, and laid four courses to the quoin height, with a similar horizontal joint.

The schoolhouse has two front entrance doors and is finished with a three-member entablature, the design of which is Greek Revival in proportion, but the moulding profiles are in the Post-Colonial character.

MRS. INEZ WARD'S HOUSE

Next, east of the Universalist Church is the small split-level cottage of Mrs. Inez Ward. It was built during the late 1830's or early 40's when the masons were beginning to favor the water-washed variety of cobblestones and most of the stones are of this type. They are of various shapes sizes and colors laid four courses to the quoin height. The horizontal "V" embellished with a short bead made with a metal tool. The quoins are red sandstones with a smooth face and rough edges. This house also has a four-inch high brick header course above the window openings.

The cobblestone work on the side walls is an entirely different pattern which is frequently

found in this area. There are no horizontal or vertical joint embellishments but each cobblestone is set in a hexagonal depressed area. Sometimes the vertical sides are longer than the two upper and lower angular sides. The result is entirely different from the general practice during the cobblestone era. A similar pattern was used in the basement walls of Chartres Cathedral but on a larger scale.

Note this house has a hip roof, a type of roof that was rarely used in western New York State. It was once owned by Horace Greeley.

MAURICE WILSON HOUSE

In this house the mason selected various colored water-washed stones of various shapes and sizes and laid them in horizontal rows. But he used the hexagonal depressed pattern peculiar to the Town of Gaines, without horizontal or vertical joint embellishments. The courses are about three and one-half inches center to center of cobblestones. The lintels above the windows are four-inch high brickheaders. Roughly cut red sandstones were used for quoins and vary in size from thirteen to sixteen inches high and from seventeen to twenty-three inches long.

The cobblestones on the sides are larger and vary considerably in size. The courses vary from four and one-half inches to five inches from center to center of stones.

SAUNDERS-HARMER HOUSE

One of the most charming of the cobblestone houses is the Saunders-Harmer house built in 1844, by Isaac V. Saunders, and now owned by Miss Florence Harmer. The narrow gable end of the main centerportion of the house faces the highway and on each side are one-story wings with porches across the front. The entrance, on the east side of the main two-story center section, is composed of a six panel door flanked by wide mullions and narrow sidelights. In front of the mullions are two beautiful small Ionic columns, and in each jamb a pilaster, which support a delicately designed three-member entablature.

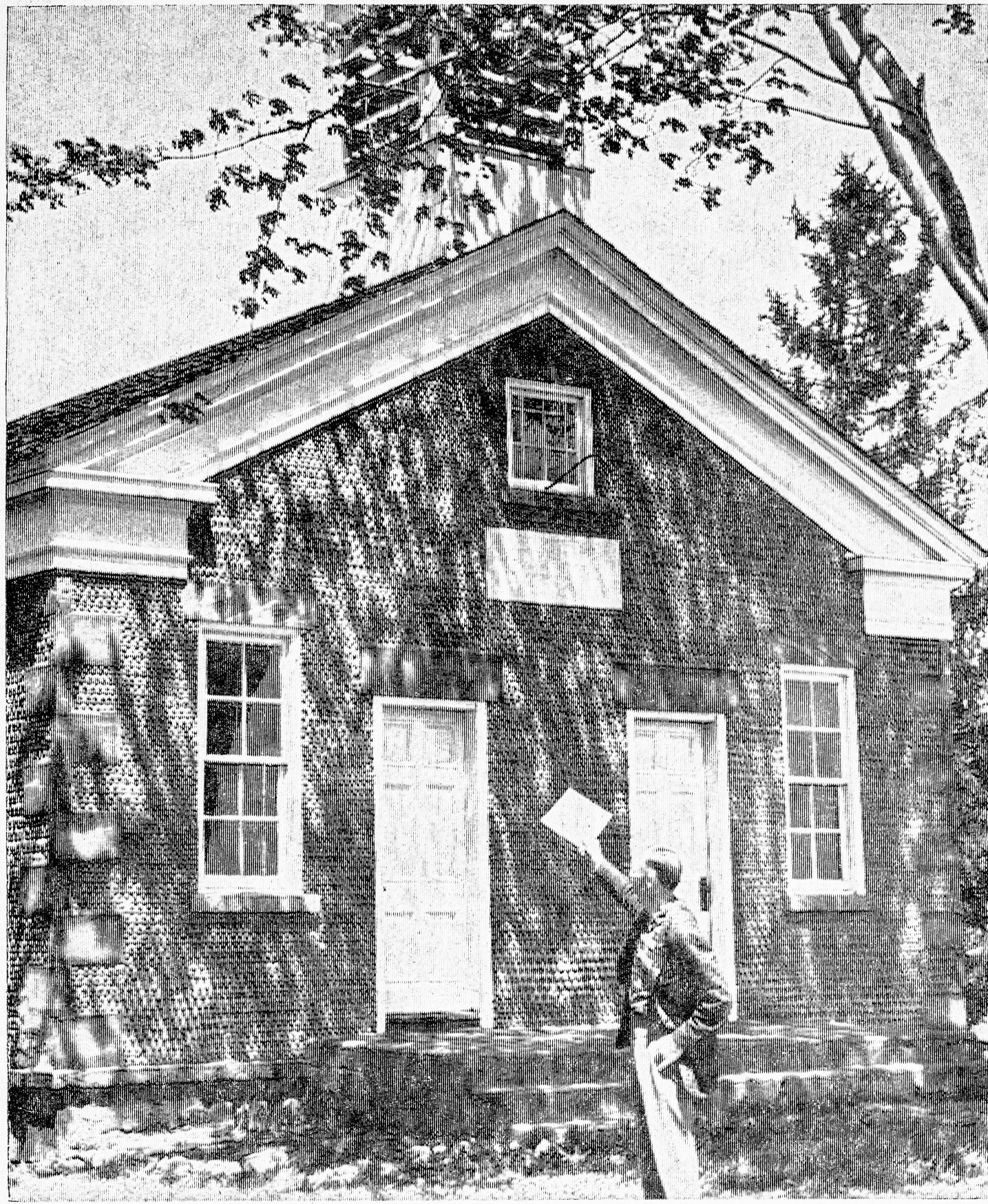
On the front, and on the side elevation above the porches, the mason used thin long oval shaped cobblestones laid in a herringbone patterns. The height of the cobblestones vary from three and one-half to three-quarters inches thick and are of various colors, laid up three courses per quoin height. The horizontal joint is a "V" shape and some of the vertical points between the cobblestones are embellished with a bead made with a metal tool. The quoins, lintels and sills are gray limestone.

Under the porches the cobblestones are small round water-washed stones, of various colors, laid five courses to a twelve-inch quoin height. The horizontal joint is a wide "V" shape with a "V" shaped vertical joint.

On the rear elevation the mason used the unique local hexagonal pattern without a horizontal joint.

Cyrus Withral was one of the masons employed on this house and he was paid seventy-five dollars for his services.

The exterior and interior details of this house are worthy of study and are a mixture of Greek Revival and Post-Colonial mouldings and in good scale with the entire design.



1849 Cobblestone schoolhouse museum at Childs.

Book of Milestones Is Being Compiled

"That teacher is a peninsula," said the littlest boy as rain washed into the school room the day the hurricane blew in the school window. Miss Julia McAllister of Holley, retired teacher, likes to recall incidents of the years she taught in the District No. 5 Cobblestone School at Childs.

The gale-force winds that day bent the large pine tree outside the school window to the ground. All through the storm the children sang "God Bless America" until they were hoarse. There were so many incidents that made school an adventure in family living.

During the war years the students carried rich earth in buckets from the farm across the Ridge Road to make a Victory Garden beside the school. The parents were invited to a Thanksgiving dinner where everything served was grown in the garden except the turkey and jello dessert. "I got to be quite a baseball player, too," Miss McAllister reminisces.

The teacher at the cobblestone school was adopted into the community. "Why I got stuck in the snow in the driveway and stayed all winter with the Maurice Wilsons," she said in stressing the hospitality of her school district. As teacher she always remembered shut-ins with a few flowers and the florist always seemed to have bargains for her. May Day was a special occasion when baskets of flowers were distributed by students.

In an effort to recapture the milestones at the cobblestone school a group of interested Cobblestone Society members is getting material for a scrap book that will recapture the school years of each teacher beginning in 1849 when the school

was built until it closed in 1956. It will be made in display form.

From the diary and account book that Walter W. Balcom of Gaines kept as school trustee from 1863 to 1875, one question that has bothered museum heads can be answered: Was there ever a school clock in the niche above the teacher's desk? In April, 1863, Trustee Balcom has listed: "Dr. to key for school clock 13c." At the same time he charges Dist. No. 5 with "eight lites of glafs at five c per lite 40c; one po. puttey 8c; Dr. to setting lites 24c; Dr. to one po chalk 6c; one cup (tin) 20c; one pail 38c and one broom 50c."

The summer term opened in May. The diary notes: "Sarah Williams left school August 24, 1863, kept 61 days — \$17. R. Parmely paid seventy dollars for teaching winter school, kept three months."

When School Commissioner Phillips inspected school on Nov. 4, 1864 there were 186 books valued at \$62.48. In 1875 "the hol number of scolars that attended some portion of time, 53; the hol number of scolars over 5 years and under 21 is 76."

"1873 Dist. No. 5 received \$146 public money. The tax for fuel \$37.50; for contingent expenses \$25; tax for teachers wages, winter school \$60; tax for teachers wages, summer school \$26; to liberty money \$3.26."

Shortly after it cost "\$26.11 to paint the school, for 50 p paint \$6.50; 4 gal oil at \$1.10 — \$4.40; turpentine 40c; Thompson Dr. to paint 37 h \$4.81; for painting \$10."

In trying to compile a list of teachers we glean from the diary-account book the names of Miss Bass, Mrs. Dods, A. E.

Cobblestone Library

by
Robert W. Frasch

During the past three years we have been establishing a permanent collection of all publications, articles, manuscripts, photographs and data about Cobblestone buildings. This will make our library in Childs the research center for anyone who wants information on cobblestone buildings and architecture. More than 400 cobblestone buildings have been located and the files will include a separate folder for each building. The Cobblestone Society with the cooperation of Carl Smith, author, architect and historian, has published a booklet *The Preservation and Restoration of Cobblestone Architecture* and a folio of sketches *More Cobblestone Entrances*. Several important collections of photographs and manuscripts have been added to the permanent collection. Blueprints of the cobblestone Universalist Church at Childs and its belltower have been made by Olaf William Shelgren Jr., Buffalo architect, and member of the Cobblestone Society. The architectural drawings are a first step in the planned preservation and restoration of the church. Working with Mr. Shelgren in planning the museum in the church basement this winter will be Carl Schmidt of Scottsville, County Historian Cary H. Lattin and Gaines Historian J. Howard Pratt.

¹ Correct name is Carl F. Schmidt (1894-1988)

Balcom, R. Parmely and James Pusey.

Curtis Murray who attended the cobblestone school adds to the teacher list: William Bates, Carl Hakes, Miss Katherine Rowley, Miss Nellie McIntee, Mrs. Dora Eckler, August Behrend, Miss Anna Kirby, Frank Thurber, Miss Capstick, Mrs. Florence Bates Barnum, Miss Margaret Pettit, Mrs. Florence Lattin, Mrs. Clarice McComber Hill, Mrs. May Hollenbeck, Robert Bridgeman, Miss Julia McAllister, Mrs. Phoebe Beales and Elwood Lawrence.

Among the teachers contributing to the Scrapbook is Mrs. Dora Eckler, 91, of Gaines who taught in the Cobblestone School in 1905.

During the next year a committee headed by Mrs. Richard Canuteson, RD 4, Albion will canvass the families of the teachers of Dist. No. 5 for materials that can be used in the school museum and scrapbook. Photographs, especially those of each teacher with groups of school children are needed, programs of events held in the school and the years each teacher taught or any other information pertinent to the school is desired.

SCHOOLBELL RINGS FOR A CENTURY

When Gaines folks listen for the schoolbell to ring out over the countryside on summer Saturday afternoons, they think of William J. Babbitt. To them it means also that the Cobblestone School Museum is open for visitors. Its melodious tones have called them for more than a century.

Above the double-door entrance of the school is this inscription: "School District No. 5, Town of Gaines, 1849, Wm. J. Babbitt, Esq. gratuitously superintended the erection of this

Provisional Charter Granted

The Cobblestone Society is now operating under a five year provisional charter granted April 28, 1961 by the Board of Regents of the State of New York. The charter was recently framed and presented to the Cobblestone Society by Cary Lattin, Orleans County historian and will be hung in the headquarters to be established in the Gaines cobblestone school, according to Robert Frasch, president.

The charter incorporates J. Howard Pratt, Bertha Canuteson, Marguerite Harding, Homer C. Brown, Curtis L. Lyman, John D. Brush of Webster, Carl Schmidt of Scottsville, Cary H. Lattin, Curtis C. Murray and Ora L. Woodcock and their associates and successors as a non-stock educational corporation under the corporate name of the Cobblestone Society to be located at Gaines, Orleans County, N.Y.

The purposes of the corporation are cited in the charter:

To acquire the title to or the custody or control of cobblestone or other historical types of building;

To establish a museum and a library as a headquarters for the collection and dissemination of information concerning the cobblestone art and all related aspects of regional art and history;

To preserve, restore and maintain examples of cobblestone and related architecture; and

To promote public knowledge of and appreciation for the historical and architectural values of such buildings and to promote and encourage historical research in this field.

The charter further provides that the incorporators shall act as the first board of trustees, empowers them to establish by-laws and that the organization shall operate exclusively for educational purposes.

Since the Cobblestone Society was chartered it has secured the cobblestone schools at Childs and Gaines and is now the owner of the Universalist Church, Ridge Road, Childs, all historic landmarks. The more than \$3,000 invested in restoring the buildings has been earned by holding annual tours of cobblestone buildings, country auctions and membership fees. There are now over 300 adult and nearly 50 student members of the Cobblestone Society.

School of Yesteryear

Woe be unto the student that dropped a marble in the Cobblestone School at Childs for it would end up in the teacher's corner. The floor is built at a decided slant toward the teacher's desk in the front of the room. The school is of pioneer structure.

This slanted floor is repeated in the West Barre Methodist Church where the building has a Byzantine look with rounded ceiling corners over the square area, used also in the roof structure.

The seats in the Cobblestone School are on skids so that they could be moved to the sides of the room for games, square dances or other entertainments.

Long recitation benches flank the front of the room.

Material on these pages written by Eleanor Weeks Wilder for Cobblestone Society, except where otherwise noted. Research work by Mrs. Richard Canuteson. Photos courtesy of Orleans Dept. of History, Buffalo Courier-Express and William Monacelli.

building and made the district a present of the bell."

Wm. J. Babbitt came to Gaines in 1812. As the first blacksmith, he was a craftsman and his smithy, a favorite pioneer gathering place. Shrewd, glib of tongue, he soon began to represent his neighbors when they came to grips with the law. He not only won cases but earned a reputation as a "pettifogger" in the town where there was not attorney.

He was active in having the Town of Gaines set off from Ridgeway in 1816 and, in the same year, was granted application to establish a post office on his farm, thus becoming the first postmaster. He served as Gaines Supervisor in 1834, and was a justice of the peace for 23 years. He also served his section as an assemblyman.



FUND-RAISING—An auction was held to raise funds for the Cobblestone Society's work. Lending a willing hand, left to right, are J. Howard Pratt,

Cary Lattin, Maurice Wilson (chairman), Mrs. Richard Canuteson and Richard Canuteson.