

Historic Structures Visited

Cobblestone Tour Brings 1,100 to City

By MILDRED JENNINGS

Public response was terrific! The Fifth Annual Cobblestone Tour in Ontario County, sponsored by the Cobblestone Society of Albion, mushroomed beyond all expectations on Saturday.

The tour from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. attracted a grand total of 1,100 persons. A similar program in another area last year listed 450 visitors.

The tourists came from all parts of the state and nation and from as far away as Geneva, Switzerland. It proved beyond doubt the mounting interest in historic cobblestone structures.

Six outstanding cobblestone houses in the immediate area of Geneva were open for the tour. Eight others in the area were viewed from the outside.

The tour started from historic LaFayette Inn where tickets and booklets were available. However, demand for the booklets was so great that the supply dwindled soon. So large was the crowd that the tour was delayed somewhat in starting. Tourists began to arrive in the city as early as 11 a.m.

About 600 of the visitors were served luncheon at LaFayette Inn. The remainder of the overflow crowd were accommodated at other eating places in the area.

Prouty-Chew Museum on S. Main St., served as a headquarters and resting place for the visitors. Miss Laura Merritt, director of the museum, reported 270 persons visited the museum during the afternoon.

The guest book lists the visitors as from Vermont, Canada, Pennsylvania, New York City, Albany, Owego, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo and other cities. The director noted that a large number were from Buffalo. Assisting Miss Merritt in greeting the guests were Mrs. John Cain and Constance Lightfoote.

Robert W. Frasch, president of the Cobblestone Society, declared that the interest shown in the tour was "highly encouraging and went beyond all expectations."

He said, "I didn't believe it would be such a big tour. It's very gratifying."

He attributed much of the success of the tour to the advance publicity given it by the newspaper, radio stations, and TV within a wide area of the country.

Emphasis was placed also on the fact that this is the only tour of its kind in America for the cobblestone building is a trademark of upstate New York. Each year the Cobblestone Society of Albion sponsors this tour to raise funds for its restorations and museums.

The 1965 tour, held in cooperation with the Geneva Historical Society, included an unusual variety of these rare homes from most impressive Greek revival mansions to typical cobblestone farmhouses.

Announcement was made that anyone who bought a ticket for the tour and was unable to secure a booklet may obtain one by writing the Cobblestone Society, Albion, N.Y. Mr. Frasch said that about 200 more booklets are to be printed for the

tourists.

The tour started appropriately enough from the widely-known historic structure, LaFayette Inn, owned by Ray and Ollie Moore.

The Inn takes its name from General Lafayette of the American Revolution. The present structure was built in 1820 as a private residence. In 1825 Lafayette stopped here while revisiting America.

Facing Pre-Emption Rd., is the two-story portico of four Doric columns which support the Greek pediment gable. The pediment is pierced by a fine elliptical fanlight featuring a simulated keystone.

The original balancing wings on each side of the portico are hidden behind modern additions. Especially noticeable is the cupola with its corner pilasters and fine decorative termination. Only a few Greek Revival buildings preserved their cupola to this day. The 12-pane glass windows are capped by flat pedimental lintels.

The Tuttle - Fordon House at the junction of the old Genesee Turnpike, Routes 5-20, and Pre-Emption Road, and directly across from the Inn was open for the tour.

Lt. Colonel Joseph Hammond Tuttle, whose father had operated a log tavern at this crossroads from 1790 until his death in 1833 inherited this land and carefully planned his own home built of cobblestone according to his specifications.

Mr. Tuttle was his own architect. The family treasures a photograph taken before 1915 which shows the front of the house as Mr. Tuttle built it.

After several owners the property was purchased by William F. Fordon in 1907. In 1915 the original one-story building was enlarged with two stories. Mr. Fordon removed the south wing, raised the roof with its fan window and added the stuccoed second story. The original front pillars are now on the southern side. The impressive two-story portico of today has pillars that were brought from Pennsylvania. The original roof section and fan window were retained.

The cobblestones are of the variety gathered from nearby fields and the solid stone members (corner stones called "quoins" lintels and water table) are of finely-hewn limestone. The water table is echoed in the stucco band dividing the first and second stories.

The Barron - Gracey House, 1848, or "The Cobblestones" as it is called, is one mile west of Pre-Emption Rd., on the north side of Routes 5-20. It is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence W. Gracey.

The Barron family is said to have come from England before 1800. They traveled westward along the Genesee turnpike and build a log cabin on this site beside the highway.

The house was built in 1848 by Thomas Barron, well known farmer and orchardist of that time. Family tradition says the cobblestones were carried on the return trip after a load of wheat was hauled to the port at Sodus. Construction took two years with stones carefully sort-

ed for both size and color.

The house remained in the original family until the 1920's. Since 1938 it has been the home of the Graceys who have been told about the existence of old papers which indicated that the original cost of building the house was \$2100. The gracious front entrance boasts a three-inch beveled door, flanked on either side by the original stenciled glass windows. Woodwork is particularly interesting because of the small cornice erected over each door and window.

This porticoed Greek Revival mansion with its balanced, recessed, columned wings is said to be one of the finest cobblestone houses in existence. It is preserved in its original state.

The following caption appeared below an enlarged picture of this cobblestone house at a photographic exhibit of cobblestone houses by Miss Gerda Peterich in the Memorial Art Gallery as well as the Eastman House in Rochester a few years ago:

"This pretentious building testifies to the social elegance of the era. Its elaborate Ionic portico overshadows the fine masonry of lake washed red sandstone cobbles. Finer techniques developed gradually to the point where textures were secondary in beauty to architectural detail which becomes more and more predominant."

"Stones were not of local origin and do not reflect the soil of the immediate vicinity of the dwelling. They were transported from the shores of Lake Ontario and were extremely finely selected for size and color and were laid with the highest skill."

"This is one of several in a scattered area of these proud, large houses, very well executed and showing very fine architectural detail. However, their beauty does not depend primarily on cobblestone technique, but on their lines, proportions and stylistic detail. The Gracey house is late in date, in mature Greek style."

It was chosen to be pictured in the magazine of County Government of New York State when the historian Sheldon Fisher wrote of Ontario County.

Tucker - Lewis - Poole House was also open for the tour. Known as "Bellwood Farm" it is about two miles south of Geneva on the east side of Pre-Emption Road. Present owners are Mr. and Mrs. Ralph H. Poole Jr., who have a drawing of the farm as it looked in the time of Erastus Tucker.

"Bellwood" is an impressive cobblestone home. Although the original cobblestone house was probably built in the 1830's, slightly more than half of what one sees today dates from the extensive additions of 1905.

This land was first cultivated by Silas Tucker who purchased it from his prosperous father-in-law, Jephtha Earl, in 1826. Both men later built impressive cobblestone homes. Mr. Earl's house still stands seven miles south of Geneva on Route 14A. Silas Tucker built his cobblestone house here and developed a farm of 150 acres. Two more generations of Tuckers were to live here.

The transformation from homestead to country estate took place in 1905 when Perry Tucker sold the property to Mrs. Katharine Belle Lewis of Buffalo. Using her wealth from Pennsylvania oil and gas fields, she added the northern half of the house in perfectly matched cobblestones. The interior was completely changed to the elaborate woodwork and spacious rooms of the present.

Two additional cobblestone buildings were added after 1905. Of these only the remarkable summer house (gazebo) with its second story porch remains.

The grounds landscaped by Mrs. Lewis contain both formal and informal gardens. An excellent view of Seneca Lake and surrounding hills adds to the settings.

Mr. and Mrs. Poole have owned Bellwood since 1942 and have enlarged it from 274 to 600 acres. They raise Herefords in an extensive beef cattle breeding and feeding operation.

Also open was Rippey-Banfield House, 1854. This unique house is located on the western side of Route 245 at the corner of Leet Road. It is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Banfield who are currently in the midst of alterations and restoration.

This is the only house on the tour which is not of the Greek Revival style and the only cobblestone house built in the Italian villa style which reached the height of popularity during the late 1850's.

The entrance hallway is graced by a stairway of rare beauty. Its walnut and mahogany bannister curves upward and continues around the second floor hallway. The dining room now finished except for the cove molding has just acquired its

third ceiling. The Banfields removed 13 coats of wallpaper and found as many as 23 layers in one place.

The living room not yet remodeled has very elaborate acorn moldings matching those on the exterior. The two front windows have rare three-sash frames. Base molding and lower window sash were both designed to be raised to permit direct access to the front porch which was removed several decades ago. The kitchen partially completed has combined original wood work with modern conveniences.

Fine Greek Revival woodwork enframes the deepest splayed windows in this house.

The heavy eaves brackets with acorn shaped pendants are hand carved. The entrance door has a straight lintel and does not differ in proportions from a Greek Revival portal.

The John Klein House on the west side of Swamp Road, south of Route 245 Gorham, and the home of Dr. and Mrs. John Klein, was open for the tour.

The dining room is furnished in antiques from Pennsylvania. A Hepplewhite table is an old Quaker family piece. The student desk belonging to Dr. Klein's grandfather Isaac Sharpless, once President of Haverford College. Under the old mantle is a Pennsylvania dry sink.

The collection of silver spoons and silver is also heirloom.

The living room has a very fine paneling around the windows and show the original floors as does most of the house. Two spacious bedrooms upstairs have very distinctive antique beds.

This house is in general characteristics similar to the Rhodes house, although here the four-window pediment front faces the road. Front and sides are laid up with an equal amount of cobbles per area covered, that is, four rows to a quoin (corner stone). Back and back wing show three rows to a quoin. There is a blind window on the west wall of the house. Of special interest is the roof with its Victorian multi-color design of slate shingles.

Booklets distributed contained a map of the tour and information and description on the historic structures. Historical notes were by Robert W. Frasch. Architectural introduction was by Gerda Peterich of Syracuse.

Houses viewed from the outside were Everett M. Rhodes House, one half mile south of Route 5-20 on Number Nine Road; the Niels-Jensen House on Route 245, one mile east of Stanley; the Cobblestone Smokehouse, on the southern side of Lake-to-Lake Road and just east of Route 245 near Stanley; the Dr. Freeman L. McEwen House which stands on the south side of Lake-to-Lake Road just east of Route 245; and the Luigi Morabito House just one half mile east of Gorham on the Gorham Road; and the George Stell House half way between Gorham and Rushville on the south side of Route 245; the Clark Rex House, home of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Rex, on Route 245 about two miles northeast of Rushville; the Whitman-Fox-Snyder House, 1849, on the north side of Town Line Road and now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Snider.

Hosts and hostesses in homes open for the tour were:

LaFayette Inn, Dr. and Mrs. Canuteson, Sue Burton, Mr. and Mrs. William Phillips, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Haight, Howard Pratt and Walter Almquist; Tuttle-Fordon House, Miss Christine Fordon, Mrs. Jake Rosen, Mr. and Mrs. John Brush, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Brown;

Barron-Gracey House, Mr. and Mrs. Larence Gracey, Mrs. Walter B. Jewett, Mrs. William Allen, Mrs. A. C. Haussmann, Miss Gerda Peterich of Syracuse; Miss Ethel Smith of Rochester, Mrs. John E. Farwell, Mrs. Norman C. Lutz, Mr. and Mrs. S. Malcolm Weed, or Rochester; Mrs. R. James Milne of Penn Yan and Mrs. J. C. Henning of Geneva.

Bellwood Farm - Mrs. Ralph H. Poole Jr., Mrs. Evelyn Suchecki, Mr. and Mrs. Bornarth, Robert W. Frasch.

Rippey - Banfield House - Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Phillips, Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Church, Mr. and Mrs. O. W. Shelgren Sr. O. W. Shelgren Jr.

Klein residence - Dr. and Mrs. John Klein, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Mason and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hason, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Warner, Mr. and Mrs. Cary H. Lattin and C. W. Lattin.