

COVINGTON OBSERVES ANNIVERSARY (cont.)

deciding just where to settle, the great eclipse of 1806 took place. When the strange darkness came over the land (just as the sun was totally eclipsed), Little Beard, a chief located at Cuylerville, died from injuries received in a drunken row. The Indians thought it was his spirit darkening the sun to kill their corn. On account of his untimely death great terror and excitement prevailed. They even shot arrows into the air to break or penetrate the darkness. When the eclipse began to pass off, their joy knew no bounds.

Mr. Cruttenden settled near the Big Spring, a few rods south of where Pearl Creek empties into the Oatka. He built a cabin and cleared some ground, also planted some wheat, changing work with his only neighbors at Wright's Corners. He returned to Vermont in the fall and came again with his wife and son in the spring and found his land and cabin claimed by a squatter and was obliged to locate one-half mile to the northwest. Timothy Cruttenden came in 1813 with his son Julius and bought the Marshall Davis farm, now Raymond Kelly's. Jonathan Peterson settled on the now former Horace Bradley farm; his mother, Mrs. Sarah Peterson died in 1865 at the age of 102 years 3 months, and was buried in the Pearl Creek Cemetery. The first grave dug in what is now this cemetery was that for Edward, son of Jairus and Eunice Cruttenden, who died Nov. 24, 1813, age 5 years. Other early deaths were Ellen Cruttenden, who died April 1, 1816, age 1 year, and Mrs. John Noble, on Feb. 19, 1821, age 23 years.

In 1813, Benedict Brooks I came; he was always known as Squire Brooks. He was a veteran of the War of 1812, as was Dr. White. They, with Gurdon Miller, William Cruttenden, Abel Norris, William Norris, Thomas Tygart, and Alexander Douglas, led by Captain Jairus Cruttenden, enlisted from Covington. Their families suffered during their absence. The fear that the British and Indians would come in and burn and plunder the settlement caused great anxiety. Most of the active fighting was done around Buffalo, and we are told that when an engagement was taking place at Buffalo and Fort Erie, every peal of cannon could be heard and it was common for dishes to be jarred by the concussion. Mr. Tygart was taken a prisoner and sent to Halifax. Mr. Brooks at the close of the War came to Pearl Creek and settled, purchasing 267 acres of Stephen Wilkinson at \$7.00 per acre. He subsequently enlarged his farm to 600 acres. Wilkinson was brother to the famed Jemima Wilkinson, the 'Universal Friend.'

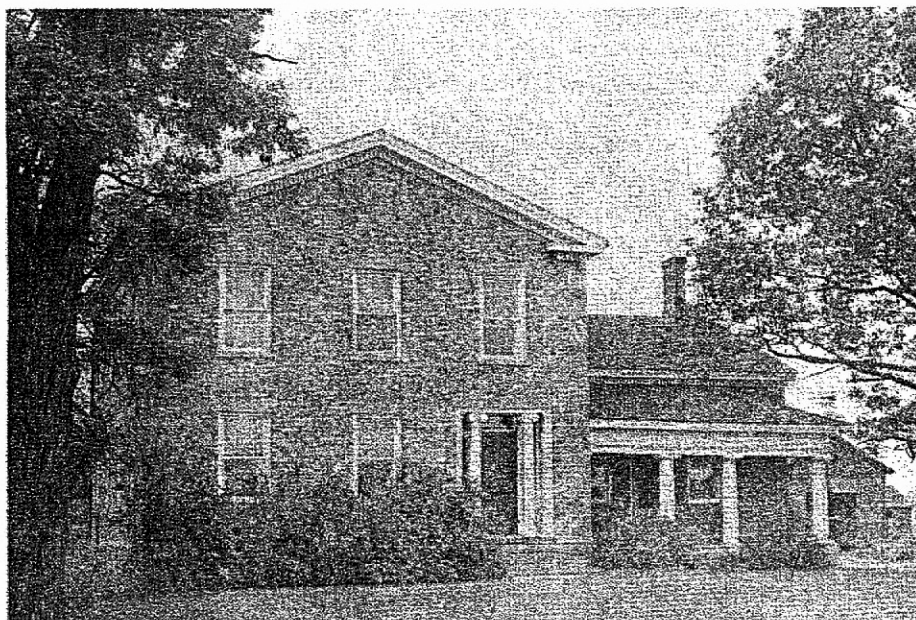
A Cobblestone Landmark

The sesquicentennial tour concluded at Pearl Creek with a visit to the three fine old homes, those of the Dean Ewell, Jeffres, and Brooks families. Each is an architectural treasure representing vastly different periods and styles of construction. Added to the graciousness of the occasion was the most generous manner in which the owners opened their homes and served as guides.

First, to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dean Ewell. The only facts definitely known of the history of the Ewell house is that taken from Beer's 1881 county history, when it was still in the possession
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of the Gorton family. "John H. Gorton was born in 1827, has lived one year in California and has been a resident of Covington 43 years. His father is Samuel Gorton. His mother was formerly Betsey Hamilton. Both were born in Edinburg, Saratoga County, the former in 1796. Mr. Gorton has held the offices of assessor and justice of the peace. Mr. Hamilton, Mrs. Gorton's father, was prominent in Saratoga County and held the offices of supervisor, justice of the peace and member of the Legislature. After their marriage they removed to Onondaga County and ten years later to Covington."



DEAN EWELL COBBLESTONE HOUSE
1840

The present house was built by Samuel Gorton in 1840 and his family occupied it more than three-quarters of a century. It was built of cobble stone put through an iron ring. If the stones were too large for the ring, they were too large for the building. It took six years to erect this house, one of the historic cobblestone houses believed to be found only in western and central New York. According to Carl Schmidt, Rochester architect, "The finest examples of cobblestone buildings are found between Utica and Buffalo. The period of this construction began about 1825 and ended about 1865. The examples of this construction are found almost entirely between Buffalo and Utica and extend south from Lake Ontario about 30 miles." He attributed the few examples outside this territory to builders who had migrated from this area. The stones were usually set in rows. This kind of building has been a lost art since the Civil War.

Alexander MacFarland was the builder or mason who built this house. (The date is above the doorway.) The south living room has the beautiful large fireplace, it has the deep window seats, and back and front stairways. The original paper is still on the front hall. The house still boasts the plank floors, highly polished, and
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is furnished throughout with beautiful antique furniture. (The interior trim of the living-room door and window frames are splendidly designed with corner decorations of four hearts meeting at a center, overlaid with four smaller hearts in a similar position.)

Another similar cobblestone house as the Ewell home stands about one-half mile west on Route 19, and is owned by Frank Coefield. It would be impossible to find masons who could build houses of this type and the cost would be prohibitive. Masons in those days received \$1.25 a day. It took between 10,000 and 15,000 stones alone to be used in fronts of some of these homes, and prospective home builders would gather stones for as long as three years before they had enough to build a cobblestone abode.

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Gorton had only one son, John, who never married and after his death the property ownership passed out of the Gorton family. Mr. and Mrs. Dean Ewell purchased this farm thirty years ago next March (1953).

The Lawrence Jeffres Farm

Located about three-fourths of a mile north of Pearl Creek on a gravel highway is the present Lawrence Jeffres farm. Its origins go back to the earliest settlement in the valley. In 1825, one Jedediah Walker (died January 14, 1841, 79y), his wife Olive (died August 8, 1855) and son, Jedediah S. Walker, from Rutland, Vermont, moved to Covington and bought Deacon Nathaniel Brown's place, adjoining William Miller's. Deacon Brown had resided there several years and William Miller married his daughter. Mr. Miller migrated in 1810 from Sherbourne and settled three-fourths of a mile north of Pearl Creek on the Warsaw-LeRoy road. Miller entertained travelers, sold goods, made potash (the first in the neighborhood), sold it for \$175 a ton in Caledonia, and ran a line of stages.

The ashery where the potash mentioned in the above paragraph was made is located across the road to the East on the present Jeffres farm. It still has a considerable depth of ashes and measures about fifty feet long and thirty feet wide. Mr. Jeffres says that it still grows excellent crops. During a rainy spell this land becomes soggy and many times the farm machinery has bogged down in it. At one time, Lawrence Jeffres's father, Charles Jeffres, nearly lost a horse in the ash pit. A deed, dated 1826, transfers this ashery from William Miller to Jedediah Walker.

Hannah Brown, the same mentioned in the history of the Town House, as being one of the first founders of the Congregational Church, deeded in 1826, 37½ acres for the consideration of \$700 to Jedediah Walker. As shown by different deeds, the property has increased both in acreage and value. One deed, dated March 5, 1836, from Jonathan and Abigail Peterson to Mr. Walker (son of the first Jedediah) lists 100 acres at \$4300. In 1908, Eunice Zehring, the daughter of Jedediah S. Walker (Jan. 9, 1809 - Feb. 25, 1881) and

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