



STONES FOR 'PASTIME FARM' IN ALBION WERE GATHERED NEARBY

HOUSES OF WESTERN NEW YORK

By Ellen Taussig

# Cobblestones of 'Pastime Farm' Once Echoed Song of Canalers

*Low bridge, ev'ry body down*

*Low bridge, we must be getting near a town,*

*You can always tell your neighbor*

*You can always tell your pal,*

*If he's ever navigated on the Erie Canal.*

—1817

IN THE heart of the Medina sandstone country of Orleans County, its 75 acres mowed but not planted, stands "Pastime Farm," home of Mr. and Mrs. Cary Lattin.

Sunlight and shadows of unusual rock elms play over the vari-colored cobblestone walls of this distinguished residence built in the early 1840s. And a half-mile west, the Erie Canal traces a lazy pattern across fields of oats and wheat.

History hangs as heavy in the air as the scent of Sweet William in the Lattin garden, or the sound of a ship's bell off a canal boat ringing dinner time from the porch.

**COBBLESTONE HOUSES** originated in Western New York. They were built by masons who came here to help construct the locks and abutments of the canal. Afterwards, many settled in the area.

But the history of "Pastime Farm"—for years it was known as the Bullard-Lattin farm—antedates the 363-mile waterway that joined eastern and western commerce.

It begins when Brigadier Bullard emigrated from New England to Orleans County in 1812, and bought the land from the Holland Land Co. It is believed he first raised a log cabin on the property, but about 1920 he built a small clapboard house, standing on the land today.

**BARTLETT LATTIN**, the present owner's grandfather, came from Connecticut by canal boat to Orleans County in 1831. He married into the Anderson family, which had arrived in the spring 21 years earlier by ox sled.

Mr. Lattin bought the house in 1887, and added the white clapboard back part.

Restive looking through the original many-paned windows, his wife sold a cow for \$12 and had sash panes installed throughout.

The walls of Pastime Farm are 18 inches thick. Cobblestones used in the building are a mixture of water-washed stone and fieldstones, the former predominating.

**BRIGADIER BULLARD'S** son, John (Jockey) Bullard, who lived to be 95, often related how he helped gather them as a boy along the Ridge Rd. and the shores of Lake Ontario.

The stones, ranging from rose through tan to gray, are of various sizes, and on the front elevation of the house are laid four courses or rows to each quoin (a projecting end block used decoratively). Clever applications of the mortar in a V-shape projects the stones, enabling them to catch and cast intriguing shadows.

The quoins are of red sandstone, about 12 inches high and 18 inches long.

**SIDE ELEVATIONS** are constructed of larger fieldstones, laid about three courses per

quoin in height and flush with the masonry wall—without any indication of horizontal jointing. Some stones are so large that they extend through two courses.

Cobblestone houses of the later period emphasized this jointure and featured smaller stones. Earlier structures show even larger stones and less demarcation between the courses.

The doorway of the house, which is included in a special folio of cobblestone architecture doorways by the authority Carl F. Schmidt, Rochester architect and artist, has a recessed wooden transom, flanked by graceful Greek pilasters and side windows.

**TWO BITS** of whimsy in connection with the windows are that first, the usual mutins (slender wooden or lead bars dividing the panes) have been entirely omitted and the small panes placed flush; secondly, the lefthand window is a "fake"—the glass is there but it's boarded up in back.

(Apparently, even the long, sometimes monotonous course of the Erie Canal failed to quench the puckish spirit of a grounded mason.)

But a graceful wrought iron lantern over the green door with its bead molding, and a shock of corn on the knocker, are very welcoming. The wide steps are of limestone.

Airiness is provided by white shutters echoed in the deep cornice frieze pierced with ornamented, cast iron-grilled windows. The glass windows slide into the walls.

The deep cornice at the sides of the house is varied by a handsome 4-foot return (cornice extending from corner toward center wall).

**CLEAN YOUR BOOTS** on a quaint footscraper and come inside Pastime Farm on Gaines Basin Rd. You'll find the original 12-foot-wide basswood floors, sanded and varnished, resembling new wheat.

Come into the parlor and observe the inside trim of those windows through which Grandma Lattin was determined to see the fields and sky through solid panes of glass.

The casings of the windows are composed of simple flat boards with a decoration called "dog ears" at the top; this is surmounted by a molded piece forming a cornice of regional Greek Revival profile. Dignity without undue elaboration.

Extending to the floor, the casings enclose a plain panel below the 14-inch deep window stools (sills). The window jamb is finished with a simple splayed wide board.

**THE LATTIN HOUSE** is an example of what an interest in history (he's Orleans County historian); devotion to the traditional; appreciation of fine craftsmanship in any era, and meticulous care can produce.

Walls are hung in reproductions of fine old papers, sophisticated flower designs predom-

inating. Three-inch-wide cornices in the three bedrooms and original black hardware are pleasing accent.

Mrs. Lattin, the former Avis Wilson, her mother, nee Fannie Wyman, and her aunt, Mrs. Herbert Kilner, hooked and braided enriching rugs for Pastime Farm.

Portraits on wood of Lattin women, painted before 1850, look serenely down from gold frames on walls.

**WHEN LATTINS** and Wymans ventured westward, they brought—via ox team, canal and packet boats—beds, chests, chairs, tables and a grandfather clock that would galvanize even a modest house into a fine residence. The Wyman clock—with works of wood—keeps excellent time today!

Great Grandfather Joseph Lattin was a cabinetmaker, and a fine blanket chest he made stands at the foot of the Lattins bed.

Written on the back—clear as the morning light—is Great Grandfather's new address: "J. A. Lattin, Albion, Orleans County, N. Y. Care of Howard & Thurston (nearby canal packet dock).

Can't you almost hear the old song echoing across the meadow?

*I've got an old mule and her name is Sal*

*Fifteen years on the Erie Canal*

*And every inch of the way I know,*

*From Albany to Buffalo.*