

*Susan Hume works on braiding a rug similar to the one her mother made for the dining room floor.*

# Cobblestone in Morton

Text and Photographs by TALIS BERGMANIS

Gordon Hume works at Distillation Products Industries days, farms his 240 acres evenings and weekends, and somewhere in between putters around the house, knocking out walls, reshingling roofs, and installing furnaces and water pipes.

His wife, Inge, is a kindergarten teacher at Kendall Central School. She has refinished most of the furniture and all of the woodwork in their home and she braids 100-pound rugs in her spare time.

Their four daughters—Sandy, 18; Susan, 16; Sarah, 9; and Stacy, 4—keep their underwear in a 20-drawer apothecary in the family room.

The Humes are not the Typical American Family.

And their home is not a split-level in a subdivision. It's a solid 134-year-old cobblestone house at 17237 Kenmor Road in Morton.

Like the other 250-plus cobblestone buildings in the area, it's a relative rarity in American architecture. Nearly all of the cobblestone

buildings in the country are within a 60-mile radius of Rochester. Most were built between 1825 and 1860 by masons originally brought from New England and Pennsylvania to work on the Erie Canal. After the canal was completed, many switched to building houses.

"We're only the third owners here," says Mrs. Hume. "These places stayed in the farm families for years. It was built by the first settler in Kendall who's now in the cemetery across the street.

"When we moved in, the place was so bad all our friends thought we were crazy. Doors blew open and there were huge spaces around the windows. The laundry room was so cold the washer used to freeze up. Sarah spent the first winter in her snowsuit. You see, the farmers didn't keep the place up too well. As long as the roof didn't leak, they were satisfied. They put their income back into tools, seed, and livestock.

"The house was full of tiny rooms. I guess they were easier to heat, but it was like living in

large closets.

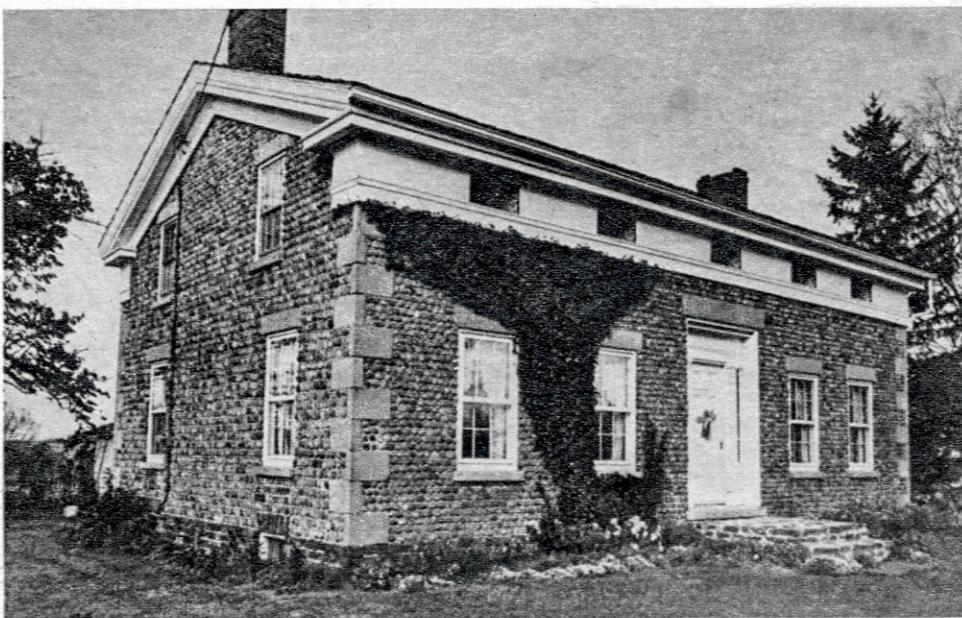
"See those cupboards? Gordon made them from four walls we tore down to make decent-sized rooms.

We also insulated the attic, installed new window sashes, repapered every room, stripped about ten coats of paint from the woodwork and floors, reshingled the roof, installed a gas furnace for part of the house, put in both bathrooms, and completely tore the inside out of the family room—right down to the stone.

"This stone—actually field rubble—makes up most of the two-foot thick walls. The smooth, round, lake-washed stones on the outside of cobblestone buildings are like a thin veneer.

"The interior stones look good, but we get some drafts when the wind really blows. There's no insulation, and I guess there are cracks here and there. At first we also had trouble with the crumbly mortar inside, but we sprayed the walls

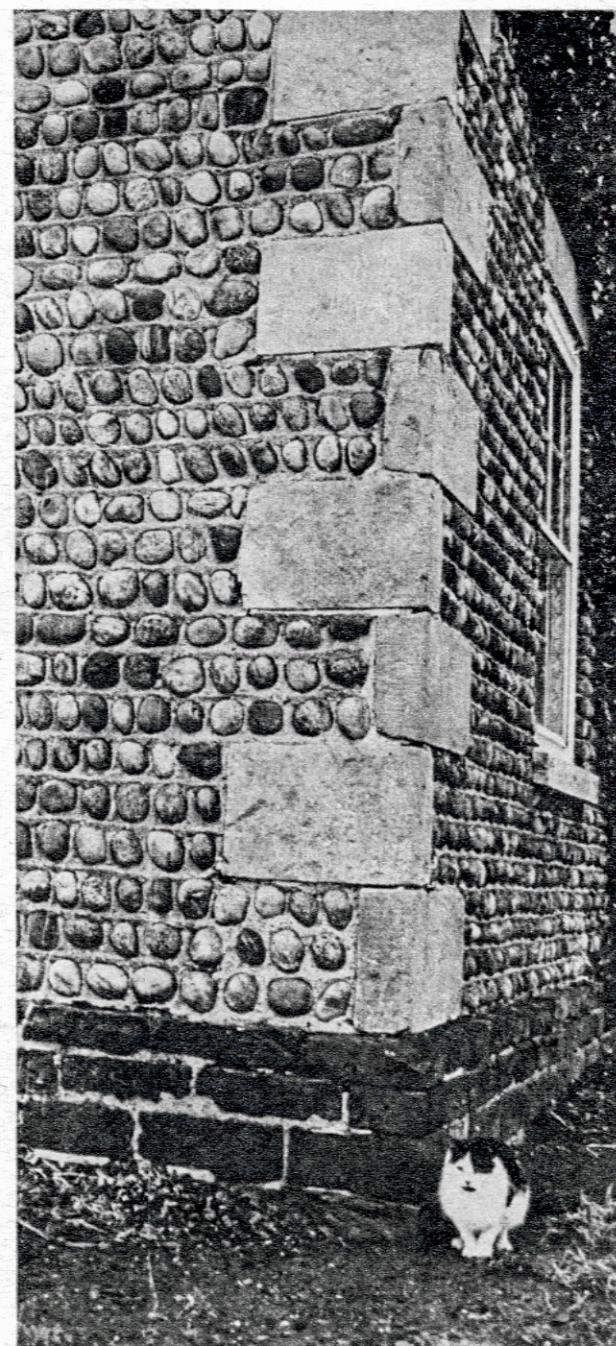
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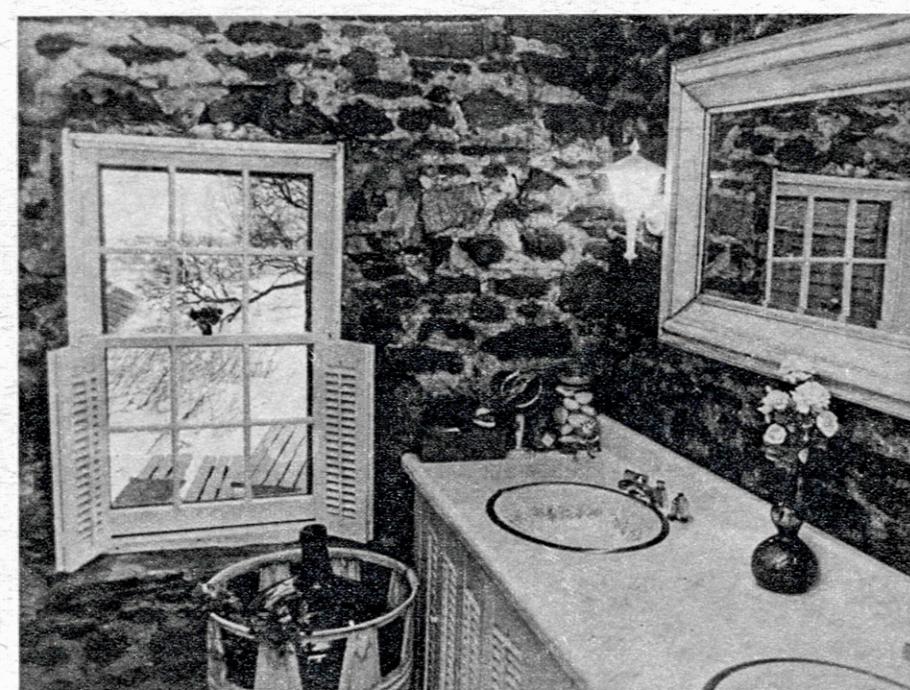
The Humes' 133-year-old house is at 17237 Kenmor Road in Morton.



Stacy, 4, shows off her antique rocking horse in the family room.



Gray limestone quoins form the corners.



Old laundry room walls were stripped to stone for bathroom.



*Ivy makes a strong pattern up the front of the Hume home.*

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with a sealer and we haven't had any problems since—except when we try to hang something."

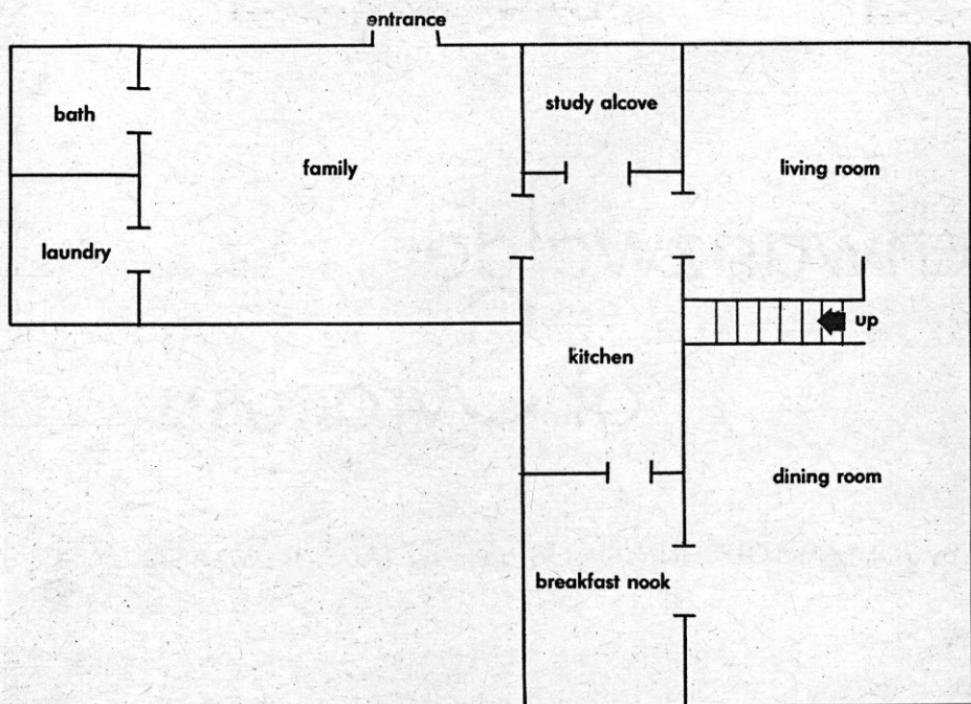
More often than not, that something is an antique piece of copper or an ancient print in a mellow pine frame. The house is furnished almost entirely in Early Auction.

"We had just bought a lot of Danish modern when we moved here about eight years ago and it just didn't fit. We were trying to decide what to do when a friend got me interested in antiques. She was an auction addict and used to store a lot of her stuff in our barn until she'd get the nerve to take a 'bargain' home to her husband.

"I started going to auctions with her, but at first I didn't like antiques. I guess you have to refinish a few pieces yourself and see what a difference it makes before you start appreciating them. Well, one thing led to another and I suddenly realized I was refurnishing our house. And this old stuff fit better than the modern, so we gave away or sold the Danish."

The Humes now have a home that would give Mies van der Rohe fits. It's full of arrow-back, plank-bottom and ladderback chairs; cannonball beds; hand-carved merry-go-round horses; cherry and/or pine cupboards, buffets, chests-of drawers, night stands, and blanket chests; spinning wheels and yarn winders (seven each. Yes, seven, and watch it, you antique-gobbling housewives, you're getting the paper soggy); and enough copper to start a magnificent moonshine operation.

"Copper's one of my weaknesses. We were thinking about putting all our copper on the fire-



*Many small rooms were removed to make spacious series of rooms downstairs.*

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place, but I'm afraid that would pull the whole thing down."

So the copper cauldrons, platters, pans, boilers, kettles, and coffee pots (at least two dozen of the latter two) sit around the house in chunky piles.

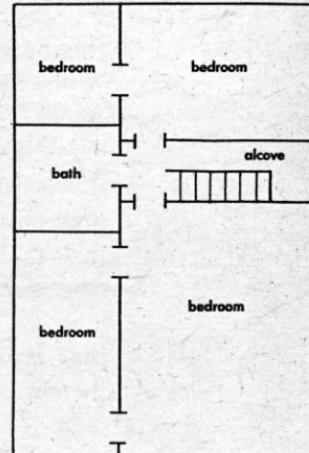
"We accumulated nearly everything before auctions and antiques started to catch on. With few exceptions, we haven't spent more than ten dollars on any one piece.

"Like our buffet — it's all cherry with hand-carved designs on the front — cost a couple of dollars, and the dining room table was \$2. One was covered with layers of paint and the other with tar, but you still couldn't get deals like that today.

"When I think of what's happened to auctions in just the last six years, I'm honestly startled. Sure, you can get a good deal now and again, but not often enough to furnish a house. The prices are horrible. In fact, we haven't bought anything major in three or four years, now.

"See, my hands are even getting soft again. I refinished without gloves and after a houseful of furniture, they were pretty tough. I could refinish all day and didn't even mind the chemicals practically burning my skin off.

"It's taken about eight years to make the place presentable, but it's been worth it. Now it's hard to resist showing it off. When someone walks by and says 'That looks like a nice house' I feel like running out, dragging them in and giving them a tour."



*This is the floorplan for the Humes' upstairs.*