

by William Aeberli

The real beauty or rustic quality of a cobblestone wall is less likely to be appreciated if we overlook the selection of stone material the masons chose to use and how they dealt with it. These are the fine points of cobblestone architecture.

Each cobblestone building has its own characteristics. Most annoyingly, automotive transportation (even at minimum speeds) can give us only a fleeting glimpse of these separate identities.

Identities place these unique stone walls in different categories according to their periods of construction.

To begin a close perspective then, first examine the photo of the Chugg-Merrill house as seen from across the road. We are looking at the east wall.

Now, carefully study the close-up photo which depicts the exterior west wall and a slight portion of the frontage

facing the Ridge. Does anything come to your attention?

Beginning at the base of the dwelling, notice the very rough courses of stones about two quoins in width followed by neatly troweled courses continuing upwards to the first floor windows.

Here, you will notice three courses of specially-selected, thin cobblestones carefully laid in herringbone pattern. The mason, in this case, provided the wall with a most pronounced and artistic division.

This herringbone pattern or band breaks up (but does not detract from) the harmony of courses across the entire surface and vertically as well.

Notice too, that the lintels are of the same thin stone material but laid in a slight arch. Now, take note of the second band of thin stones just above the base of the second story window sills.

Then proceed to where the roof meets the cornices. Again there is another three-course band, finishing with a fourth and last herringbone pattern about a yard or so below the peak.

The first and second bands run around the west wall and all the way across the north wall facing the road. There is no continuation of herringbone across the east or south walls, except the usual thin stones laid up for a lintel on the east side.

Obviously, the thin stone material was of limited supply and by preference, the rare stones were troweled into the front and west walls. But why not the east wall?

Again, examine the east wall as shown in the larger photo. Notice there are no upstairs windows.

We were told that many years ago, a much larger (east) wing was attached to the house. The exact date is not known, but it was probably prior to the Civil War. We doubt that the wing was built at the same time the building was laid up, although it could have been.

Nonetheless, the present

Slow Down For A Good Look At Cobblestones!

owners discovered a fireplace in the east wall open to the outside but with firebox facing inside; the interior section (in present dining room) was plastered over.

This gives evidence that the wing was used for a Summer kitchen and a wood shed. Incidentally, the cellar has an eight-foot ceiling.

The base of the (present) porch is of original cobblestone material. Below the porch or what was once a larger wing, was a cistern.

The cistern was filled in and closed off many years ago by the previous owner, Henry Chugg.

The Chugg-Merrill farm house is located at 16184 on the south side of the Ridge in Murray, a little over one mile from the Hotel. The Cobblestone belongs to the Middle Period.

Henry Chugg lived in the old stone farm house for 40 years. Now 74 years old, Chugg moved here in 1923. Previously the Smith name was attached to the dwelling. He tended 20 acres of fruit trees and grew produce.

Four years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Merrill, a young couple with six children purchased house and farm when Chugg decided to sell his 40 acres.

"He was most concerned about the old farm," says Martha Merrill, "we gave him our word that we wouldn't allow the property to remain idle. Chugg still keeps his bees here and is a frequent visitor."

"The orchards are very old and need to be replaced with new stock. But the land is good and produce from it definitely helps supplement our income," she adds.

"We believe the farm was the right investment and hope our plans of self-sufficiency by returning the farm to maximum production works out!"

Many people in their 30's are choosing the rural environment instead of adapting to the urban sprawl. And, many are turning their interests (even by small degree) back to agriculture.

Mrs. Merrill, the former Martha Nellis, was born and raised on the Ridge in West Clarkson near the county line. She is the daughter of Mrs. Richard Nellis of 9703 Ridge Rd. West.

Another daughter, Kathleen (Mrs. Amos Lane) also lives in a cobblestone house.

We failed to mention Kathleen and her husband as present owners of the old Ed Blacklock house which appeared in our Feb. 4 issue.

It's delightful that the Nellis girls are keeping the cobblestone heritage "all in the family."

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To The Editor:

Concerning the article about the Cobblestone House at 9996 Ridge Road, I wish to make a few comments.

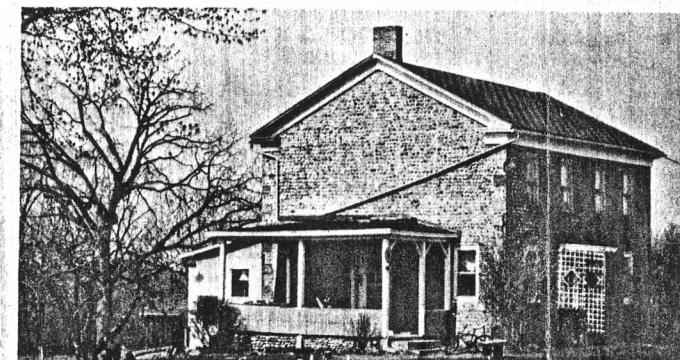
1. I am sorry you are not aware of the names of the present owners (we were fortunate to buy the house in 1969).

2. As a "native" of Clarkson, I rarely have heard the "old-timers" refer to this house as the Blacklock residence; usually it is known as the Hathaway house.

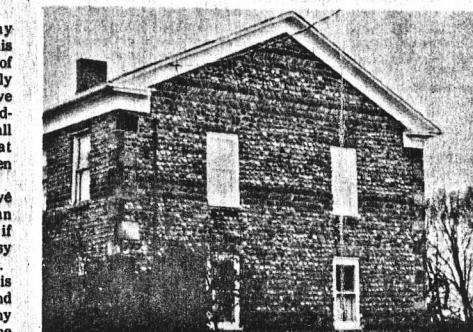
3. There are three doors on the east side of the house. The original interior was three rooms: One door and one window for each room.

4. The northwest corner of the present yard is solid cobblestones, either from a previous building or in preparation for an additional building.

5. In the process of cleaning



DRIVING BY—Chugg-Merrill Cobblestone on the Ridge in Murray can be seen as a lovely house, but much of the detail is missed, requiring a closer look at a slower pace.



CLOSE-UP—Examination at closer range shows the intricate detail of the western wall, with especially thin stones set in a herringbone pattern.

Kathleen Nellis Lane
9996 Ridge Rd.