

The Fun of Fixing Up An 1834 Cobblestone

By JEAN GIAMBRONE

Virginia Scully says she has a lot of appreciation for contemporary architecture and furniture.

But she appreciates even more the way it was in homes almost 150 years ago — especially after having had a little taste of the "primitive" life and recognizing "in awe" the hard work and craftsmanship that went into building a home in the early 19th Century.

She and her husband, William D. Scully, an attorney, feel lucky that in 1956 they were able to buy for their home an 1834 lake-washed cobblestone on Walworth Road, Ontario — virtually in its original state.

Previous owners had made no architectural changes. They did get rid of woodburning fireplaces and substituted "up-to-date" woodburning stoves somewhere along the line. And one limited electric circuit had been run into the house.

But when the Scullys moved in during June, 1956 the woodburning stoves were gone with the previous owners and the Scullys just "stayed warm as best we could" until a central heating system was installed in November.

Before their move the Scullys had the first bit of indoor plumbing hurriedly put in — a first-floor powder room from which they could also draw some water for cooking on their one hotplate in the kitchen. The rest came from a pump at a backyard well. The Scullys still enjoy using that.

Those first days in their cobblestone are still remembered as "part of the fun" the family, now including daughter Ellen, 15, has had in fixing their house.

"It would be wrong," says Virginia, who serves as historian for Ontario,

Rochester at home

"to say we restored the house. Actually, we have hung onto the many, many things that went into the construction of the house . . . but we've also made changes to suit ourselves for convenience."

The kitchen is modern — but still with a touch of the old. A high half wall was built to separate the work section with its many modern appliances from the breakfast area where a primitive hutch table, almost as old as the house, is the focal point. New pine cupboards, installed by Scully, are both convenient and have an aura of old-fashioned warmth.

The living room is huge, made possible with the removal of partitions separating the original kitchen and a woodshed. (An adjoining structure, once the milkhouse, is now the woodshed.)

The room now includes a new woodburning fireplace with hearth and facing constructed from stone and brick taken from other parts of the house. On one side of the room there is a new multi-paned bay window.

Making the new bay window was easy, Virginia says, because it meant opening the only wooden side of the house. On the other hand, the decision to open an upstairs wall to create the master bedroom was another matter.

It took brute strength and hacking with heavy tools to open the 22-inch deep wall that separated the bedroom area from the closed-off underpart of the peaked roof line. When they finally made their opening, the Scullys had the roof lifted up for higher ceiling space.

The work upstairs led to more conveniences such as a modern bath



The dining-room floor was scraped to its original wormwood by the Scullys. Virginia built the corner cupboard during five days of a severe snowstorm when traveling was impossible.

with a walk-in combination shower-stream room.

The Scullys were intrigued with the idea of having an old house and

furnishing with antiques when they started their venture.

"But when we got into the job (and
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the Scullys have done just about all of the work and planning themselves) we really were overwhelmed with the craftsmanship, realizing the many hours and really hard labor that went into building a house like this. People those days didn't have the tools we do now. And moving those fieldstones as we've done from time to time . . . well, it's hard to imagine how they were lifted and put in place, Mrs. Scully says. While it's been Scully, not known to have a carpenter's or mason's talent before his move into the cobblestone, who has tackled most of the building jobs, it's Virginia who's done her own "awesome" share of decorating.

For almost every room in the house she's made huge and handsome colorfully braided wool rugs — round ones, long runners, area ovals. There's also an assortment of hand-hooked rugs, most made by a friend, but a few also made by Virginia. She's also crewed pillows for furniture.

For the most part Virginia has done the painting and wallpapering in the house. Scully has lessened the job a little with horizontal wainscoting in the rooms. On the other hand, Virginia has chosen in some instances to make the room even cozier by wallpapering the ceiling. In the dining room, however, the ceiling was her husband's project. He put up a random plank pine covering to match the wainscoting in that room.

In some rooms the fieldstone of which the house was built (it was covered with the cobblestone) was exposed on the walls. In some instances, the Scullys covered it over with wallboard, then painted or papered.

But in a small center room they call the jug room and which has a cornice with an assortment of antique jugs, Virginia papered right over the stone. She deliberately chose a small patterned

paper because "it creates an illusion that sort of hides the bumps of the fieldstone."

But again, it's fun to run your hand over the wall and feel the bumps.

Furnishings throughout the house are mainly antique-Chippendale, Hepplewhite and primitive that once had coat after coat of paint, but which the couple has brought back to its original warm wood beauty.