

Historical Homestead Open House Sunday

PHELPS—Lawrence C. Gleason of Route 96 east of Phelps has completed restoring and re-decorating the cobblestone house he purchased early in 1965.

On Sunday between the hours of 2-6 p. m. he is having an open house for the benefit of the Explorer Post 46 and Troop 215 Cadette Scouts of the Phelps Girl Scout Neighborhood.

The boys and girls in the two troops have tickets which they will be selling this week as well as at the time of the open house. The boys will take care of the parking and the girls will be taking care of the tickets and acting as hostesses in the various rooms of the house. William Lutz and Mrs. M. T. Vitum, advisers of the respective groups, will be supervising them.

Mr. Gleason, who is president of the Gleason Works in Rochester, which was founded by his grandfather, William Gleason.

The Gleason Works, which makes beveled gear equipment, observed its 100th anniversary last year.

Mr. Gleason, who was born and brought up in Rochester, took over the presidency in 1958 on the death of his cousin, E. Blakeney Gleason. He was educated at Bordentown Boarding Institute in New Jersey, Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and Purdue University in Lafayette, Ind., and has been connected with the Gleason Works for about 35 years.

He has a son and three grandchildren living in Rochester and a daughter and grandchildren in New Jersey.

Living in an apartment in Rochester for a time, he had wanted to get outside the city and was interested in buying some country property. He had been looking around for a year and a half when he heard of this farm of 70 some acres with cobblestone buildings. He purchased it from some people named Simpson. This family had planned to come to the area to live but after buying the property changed its mind. The Simpsons had purchased the property from Mrs. Edgar Hicks whose family had owned it since 1910.

At that time Mrs. Hicks' father George Seager of Rochester purchased three adjoining farms, with Mrs. Hicks, her brother, Carl Seager, the George Seager family each living on one of them. The Gleason house is the center one of the three, the one to the east is built of limestone and the one to the west of cobblestone.

The Gleason house is reported to have been built about 1812. This was built in three sections, the kitchen area having been built first then in later years the dining room section was added and finally what is now the main section.

There are no permanent records of the exact time of the construction but it was started before the limestone house was built and that was erected in 1816.

A man by the name of Jonathan Swift had owned the property in the olden days and erected the buildings. Not much can be learned of the Swift family.

Carl F. Schmidt, retired architect living in Scottsville, in his new book, "Cobblestone Masonry", refers to the house as the Swift - Gleason House. According to Mr. Schmidt it was built in the 1840 area, which probably was the time of the completion of the house.

The house is built of fieldstone of various sizes coming from the farm. Many cobblestone buildings in the area were built from cobblestones from Lake Ontario. The difference in the two being that those coming from Lake Ontario were all the same rounded size while the Gleason buildings are irregular in size.

Mr. Gleason took down an old wood shed at the rear of the kitchen area and Mr. Schmidt designed an addition in keeping with the design and period of the house for a small addition to house the rear entrance, closet space and a washer and shower rooms. The shingles on the house are hand split, the same as covered the roof when it was new. He also dropped the ceiling throughout the house

by six inches in installing new ceilings.

There are four fireplaces in the home. In the early days the pioneers built shallow fireplaces so the heat would circulate through the room. Mr. Gleason has restored the fireplace to the dining room which had been taken out. The Hicks had rebuilt the fireplace in one of the living rooms and the other two needed little restoration.

Small window panes are throughout the house. The front door is surrounded by small leaded colored glass. The floors throughout the house are pine. Some had to be replaced so Mr. Gleason used pine and refinished all of them. A horse shoe knocker is on the rear door. Square headed nails are visible in many places.

A modern restoration was done in the kitchen. It had only a cast iron sink and wooden cupboards in it when Mr. Gleason bought the property. He had built-in cupboards installed, a nook for the refrigerator, and the walls are paneled. There is a breakfast nook in one corner. The floor covering is of red brick. A center island has been built to give more working space. A charcoal grill with exhaust is also a part of the kitchen. The cast iron hardware on the doors is either still the original iron or restored.

In the restoration there was evidence of seven different staircases in the house.

The walls throughout the downstairs and bedrooms are in soft tones of red and white, green, and blue. The wood work throughout the house is painted white.

New bookcases were built in one of the living rooms.

The chimneys at the front door have been restored. A winding stairway leads to the second floor. In the upstairs bath Mr. Gleason has had a steam bath installed.

In one of the upstairs bedrooms Mr. Gleason has bookshelves with many old books, an original McGuffey Reader, natural history and many children's books.

Of antiques Mr. Gleason says he has only a few. Most of the house has more modern furnishings, including the newer six foot six inch long beds. There are oriental rugs on the down stair floors.

He has some pewter and old glass, blue figurines. On the mantel in one of the living rooms, he has an antique clock which is between 100 and 150 years old and matching vases. They are in onyx and gold.

In the dining room there is a Williamsburg reproduction table and antique chairs by Hadeen in Rochester.

There are also some antique side chairs and an antique side table in one of the living rooms that belonged to Mr. Gleasons' great uncle when he was president of Harvard University.

Some iron kettles and coal skuttles add to the antique theme. A spool bed in the master bedroom and a cradle belonging to his great grandfather dates back at least 125 years.

An unusual feature of the buildings on the property is the three connecting barns which are all built of cobblestone. Although Mr. Gleason will not have any use for the barns except as a garage, he is restoring them. New roofs have been put on the barns and other outbuildings, including the smoke house and corn crib, which have been restored. A windmill has also been restored.

The lawn has been landscaped and replanted to grass. In the rear of the property there is a large area where gravel and dirt was taken out when Sampson Naval Base was built in Seneca county. Here Mr. Gleason has built a pond on which he plans to have some ducks. The rest is reseeded to grass.



The Homestead